



Akropolis Reed Quintet perform as the Artist Series of Tallahassee's 2018 Artist-in-Residence musicians. AMANDA THOMPSON

Quintet introduces Havana students to musical stories

Amanda Karioth Thompson
Council on Culture & Arts

Capturing the spirit and glamour of the French capital in 1928, George Gershwin's musical composition "An American in Paris" describes a glittering city, filled with leisurely strolls and honking horns.

Students at Havana Magnet School recently got a glimpse of Gershwin's Parisian experience through a performance by the celebrated Akropolis Reed Quintet. "It's like a field trip at school. The students don't even have to get on a bus," said Havana Magnet's principal Delshuana Jackson.

The Michigan based Akropolis Reed Quintet was selected to lead the Artist Series of Tallahassee's 2018 Artist-in-Residence program which reaches thousands of students and adults, most of whom have limited access to live musical performances.

As part of the outreach program, the ensemble provided several educational music workshops in primary and secondary schools in Leon, Wakulla and Gadsden counties.

Jackson was eager to welcome the quintet to her school because she believes "we should educate the whole child. Tapping into their creativity, the arts help us to do that." The Artist-in-Residence program has become an annual tradition at Havana Magnet. "We look forward to it every year and we're very grateful for the Artists Series," said Jackson.

Melanie Mays, Executive Director of the Artist Series agreed. "We're trying to introduce classical music to people who

have never heard it before. We're creating the audiences of tomorrow and possibly future musicians because you never know who's going to be so inspired by it that they say 'hey, I want to be in band' or 'I want to be in orchestra.'"

Matt Landry was one of those kids. Currently Akropolis' saxophone player, he clearly recalls similar presentations when he was a child. "When you're young, you need to have influences that encourage you to do things. Every single person who grows up appreciating art and culture, it's because people have facilitated it for you. We did almost 100 education events like this last year and it should be able to really impact some students and get them engaged."

The quintet's secret for keeping young audiences engaged is a fast-paced and interactive program.

In addition to describing the five instruments in the ensemble and their qualities, the musicians also perform pieces representing a variety of different genres and styles. The workshop includes a musical reenactment of the children's book "The Best Story."

With a character list including a pirate, a monkey and a shark, there was plenty of comedic material for the quintet's clarinet, bass clarinet, bassoon, oboe, and saxophone to translate into sound.

This was Suzi Owen's favorite part of the presentation. "The story was really funny," giggled the fourth-grader. Seventh-grader Zane Phillips enjoyed it as well and was especially impressed by the bassoon, an instrument she'd never seen before. Suzi said "It makes me feel happy and inspired to do stuff."