

ENTERTAINMENT

Naples high school string quartet ready for the glass slipper at national Music Competition



Cassie Drake, right, and Tarik Marques rehearse with their quartet in preparation for the 2014 Fischhoff National Chamber Music Competition.

Anderson String Quartet: Next SWFL Cinderella at a national competition?

By *Katie Egan* of the *Naples Daily News*

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What: Fischhoff Competition fundraiser

for the Anderson String Quartet

When: 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, April 29

Where: Euro Pianos Gallery, 975 Imperial Golf Course Blvd.,

North Naples

Cost: Freewill donation

Info: To donate, visit www.gofundme.com/8hp834 or make checks payable to Misty Drake, 3831 27th Ave. S.W., Naples, FL 34117

Something else: Watch the semi-finals and final round of the Fischhoff Chamber Music competition live at www.fischhoff.org

The Anderson Quartet is the Florida Gulf Coast University of the Fischhoff Chamber Music Competition ? aka Cinderella.

The Quartet is not from Dunk City. They are from Naples. And unlike the Sweet Sixteen of college basketball, the Fischhoff competition, the largest in the nation, might not be familiar to many Southwest Florida residents.

But the four high school students hope to change that as they prepare for the quarterfinals of junior chamber music's most exclusive competition May 9-11 at the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Ind.

Selected as one of 24 groups ? and the only one from Florida to compete in the junior division ? they will face off against talent from pre-college schools that are the equivalent of the "Big 10": Juilliard, Curtis, New England Conservatory, Cleveland Institute, Interlochen Center for the Arts and Chicago Music Institute, among the other top U.S. music schools.

To qualify, along with 61 other applicants, the Anderson Quartet had to send in a 30-minute performance DVD.

"It took hours to do the video shots," Jennifer Drake, mother of quartet members Cassie and Misty, said. "The process was not easy."

When Misty Drake, 17, found out they were selected, the violin player said she couldn't believe it.

"I'm so excited. We're going to make memories," she said. "It's going to be

really fun."

The quartet will play from 11:30 to 11:45 a.m. on May 9. That night, 12 groups will be eliminated and put into a master class; 12 more will move on to play in the semifinals from 2:20 to 6:30 p.m. on May 10.

The final three groups will compete from 2 to 3 p.m. on May 11 for a gold medal, \$2,300 cash prize and a spot on National Public Radio's weekly program "From the Top," which celebrates young classical musicians.

"You're performing with your three best friends, and everyone is driving for something amazing together," said John T. Posadas, the Quartet's chamber music coach and member of the Naples Philharmonic. "There is a lot of give and take, but they have something special here, and they don't even totally know it."

Posadas is an adjunct professor of viola and chamber music at the University of South Florida School of Music.

The other members of the quartet are Noelle Torres, 15, who plays violin and attends Gulf Coast High School; Barron Collier High School student Tarik Marques, 18, who plays cello; and Cassie Drake, 15, who plays viola. The Drake sisters are home-schooled.

All four quartet members played in the Naples Youth Symphonia together under their conductor and mentor, Gregg Anderson, for whom the group is named. When Anderson put Symphonia members into groups of three or four, the Drake sisters and Torres, along with the group's previous cellist, were placed together, and that placement continued into the orchestra.

"Little by little, they were asked to play around town, and the more they did it, the more they loved it," Jennifer Drake said. They have been together for six years, although Marques didn't join Torres and the Drake sisters until their previous cellist left several years ago.

All four have been prize winners in the Naples Music Club's scholarship competition. They are also leading members of the Naples Philharmonic

Youth Orchestra and currently serve as mentors to the Naples Youth Symphonia.

The Anderson Quartet had never received weekly coaching with a regular chamber music coach before they met Posadas, who is coaching them at a reduced rate.

"They had the raw skills and a high level of basic chamber skills. I knew I could open their eyes," he said.

And he did.

"Two weeks in, by the third coaching, they realized 'Whoa ? there's so much more to playing things together than we thought,' " said Posadas, who has been coaching the quartet for about a year.

Among the realizations: They can't just study their parts ? they have to know each other's parts like the back of their hand, too. They must also speak with their instruments, not with their mouths. A quartet must move together and members must work with each other, meaning they also must learn when to lead and when to follow.

"It's very rewarding for me because I get to see them mature as people and players," Posadas said.

For the Fischhoff competition, they must perform two pieces from two composers from two time periods. The total amount of music must be at least 20 minutes long.

"We chose the first movement from a quartet from the Romantic era, Felix Mendelssohn's 'String Quartet No. 2 in A minor, op. 13,' and a few movements from Dmitri Shostakovich's 'String Quartet No. 8,'" Posadas said. "Two vastly different works in temperament, mood, style and historical eras.

"They were quite rattled by the harshness and raw emotion from the Shostakovich, but they soon grew to appreciate it."

Misty Drake hopes to own her own studio one day. Torres, Marques and Cassie Drake want to join an orchestra.

"The world of music is an amazing thing to be a part of," Drake said. "I want to share what I learned with the next generation and inspire them to be better than the last."

"Playing music is a good outlet," Torres said. "It's a huge part of my life."

Readers can watch the semifinals and final round of the competition live at <http://www.fischoff.org>.

A fundraiser on April 29 will help raise funds for Fischoff. See sidebar for details.