

## MUSIC

# 'Sundays at Sherwood' puts classy classical cap on weekend

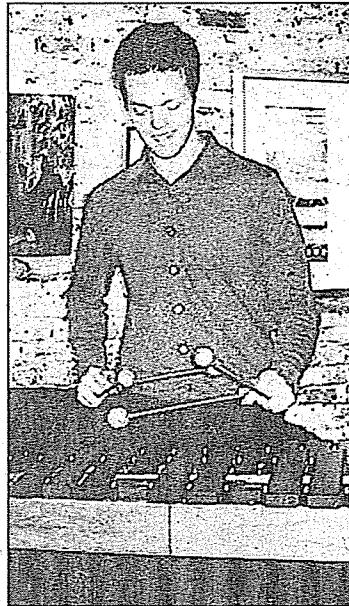
By Louis R. Carlozo  
and Nicholas Leider

Tribune staff reporters

The Sherwood Conservatory of Music has been teaching music since 1895, welcoming students of all ages and levels of experience. Now it's helping make classical music more accessible through its "Sundays at Sherwood" concert series—continuing this Sunday with Matthew Coley in an hour-long marimba recital.

Coley, 27, hasn't wasted a minute since graduating Northwestern University in 2003 with a master's in music. Last year, he won third place at the Minnesota Orchestra Volunteer Association's young artists competition. He's also competed in Linz, Austria, at the 2006 International Marimba Competition and has performed with the Rockford Symphony Orchestra, OperaMODA and St. Alphonsus Church.

If the name sounds familiar, it may be because you've seen him dance too. Coley recently joined Thodos Dance Chicago and com-



Matthew Coley plays his marimba Sunday as part of the ongoing monthly series of concerts at the Sherwood Conservatory of Music.

bines both of his artistic passions in his multimedia ensemble Sonic Inertia Performance

Group.

With the Sunday show, "It's another way to take the marimba and get it out there to people who have not heard it before—at least live," says Coley, who has taught at Sherwood since February. "The idea is to represent the marimba as an accompanying instrument: transcribing piano parts for marimba and showing it can be done."

As for what makes the venue special, "There are so many parts of the Chicago community represented there," he says. "You're reaching a very diverse audience, some of them who don't get a chance to go to Symphony Center. Here, you can see the musicians for free."

Also appearing with Coley will be cellist Bjorn Berkhout and clarinetist Todd Nikow; the concert lineup includes Brett William Dietz' "Metamorphosis: Six Pieces for Marimba" and an original Coley composition, "Circularity."

Sherwood hosts more than 120 free events every year; future events include an open house (Nov. 4); Martine Benmann on

**Matthew Coley, marimba**

**When:** 3 p.m. Sunday

**Where:** Sherwood Conservatory of Music, 1312 S. Michigan Ave.

**Price:** Free; 312-427-6267

cello and Laura Fenster on piano performing Cesar Franck's Cello Sonata (Nov. 12); and an all-school holiday concert (Dec. 9). "Sundays at Sherwood" offers spectators a chance to meet the artists afterward.

All told, it's a varied lineup for a music institution dedicated to leveling the playing field for listeners—and aspiring artists.

"We place a lot of importance on the live enjoyment of music," says Darcy Walker, Sherwood's executive director. "We believe there is nothing like seeing the actual creation of music. And in order to keep the world of performance music alive, people have to see for themselves how engaging a live performance can be."

That goes hand-in-hand with

Sherwood's self-styled mission. "We want to take the mystique away from classical music," Walker says. "We don't want people to think you have to be a child prodigy to be here. 'Conservatory' is in our name because we take the teaching of music very seriously, but we look forward to teaching people from all backgrounds and experience levels."

About two-thirds of Sherwood's students are under 18; pupils of African, Asian, and Latino descent make up 56 percent of the student body. What's more, no one pays full freight for lessons, and nearly 25 percent receive additional support through financial aid or merit-based scholarships.

Besides having open enrollment, Sherwood aims to boost music appreciation as a community music center.

"If students can at least gain an appreciation for the music, they may continue to go to concerts," says Dileep Gangolli, artistic director of the Sheridan Chamber Players, which he founded in 2001. "Sherwood is

[serving] a very valuable function, especially in a city like Chicago."

Today's Sherwood Conservatory has changed considerably since it was founded by famed pianist and Franz Liszt pupil William Hall Sherwood. In his day, the school trained collegiate-level musicians who aspired to be professionals.

But the decline of public music education led the conservatory to shift to community-wide programs in 1986. Since then, the school has expanded its faculty and classes. While Sherwood is no longer a degree-granting music school, it nonetheless fills a vital niche.

"What's really interesting is how so many programs offer different things to everyone," says Erica Lessie, who has taught there for six years. "For people who can't afford lessons, [Sherwood] provides scholarships based on income. And actually many of the adult students are well off, so they can give back to the school and help support the scholarship programs."

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