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In harmony: top musicians, students gather at camp

At the Allegro Orchestra Camp, talented young musicians are honing their skills and getting ready for a big concert. For the students it's all part of a two-week intensive music camp that pairs them with more than 20 of the Twin Cities' top professional musicians.

"They grow enormously in that two-week period," said Merilee Klemp, a camp instructor and professional oboist who has played with the likes of the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra and Vocalessence.

This year 125 students between the ages of 8-17 are participating in the camp in Wayzata. They come to work on their music skills, but also for the chance to learn from the area's finest. This year's camp conductors include Amir Kats, the artistic director of the Greater Twin Cities Youth Symphonies, and Marlene Pauley of the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra.

For many of the students, who don't have orchestral programs at their schools, this is a one-of-a-kind experience to play as an ensemble. It's also an opportunity to be surrounded by others who are passionate about music.

"There are some moments when everybody is on the same page, and the music just leaps off the page," said 17-year-old Michael Domingues of Plymouth.

Domingues, an Armstrong High School Senior, has attended this orchestra camp each summer since he was 12. Domingues says his music sightreading and his skills on the clarinet have improved each year, but it's the final concert that he really looks forward to each summer.

The camp concludes Thursday night with an orchestra concert that features the professional musicians performing side-by-side with the students.

Thursday's concert is free and open to the public. The concert begins at 7 p.m. at Wayzata Community Church.

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