

Connecting generations through music

BY LORRAINE MARKS FIELD

In a world where generations often seem separated by technology, busy schedules, and differing interests, music remains one of the most powerful ways to bring people together. As a grandmother in a blended family of sixteen grandchildren and the founder/conductor of the Florida Intergenerational Orchestra, I have witnessed firsthand how music creates connections that transcend age, background, and experience.

For more than two decades, the Florida Intergenerational Orchestra has embraced a simple but meaningful philosophy: generations play in harmony. Our orchestra welcomes musicians of all ages, from young students just beginning their musical journey to retired adults who are rediscovering a lifelong passion for music. When these musicians sit side by side, something extraordinary happens. Age disappears, and what remains is a shared purpose, mutual respect, and the joy of creating something beautiful together.

As grandparents, we are always looking for ways to build meaningful relationships with our grandchildren. We want to pass along family stories, values, and traditions. Music provides a unique pathway for that connection. Whether singing lullabies to a baby, attending a concert together, sharing favorite songs, or



learning an instrument, musical experiences create lasting memories that often remain vivid for a lifetime.

I have seen this connection unfold not only in my own family but also within our orchestra. Young musicians learn patience, discipline, and respect from older members who have accumulated decades of life experience. At the same time, older musicians gain energy, enthusiasm, and fresh perspectives from their younger counterparts. Friendships form naturally, often surprising both generations.

As the grandmother of sixteen grandchildren, I treasure every opportunity to share music with them. Some enjoy singing, others enjoy listening, and a few have explored playing instruments. While their interests vary, music provides a common language that allows us to connect. Even when grandchildren live far away or have busy schedules, a shared musical experience can bridge the distance.

Research has shown that music offers significant benefits for people of all ages. For children, music enhances cognitive development, improves concentration, and encourages creativity. For older adults, musical participation can support memory, reduce stress, and provide important social engagement. When generations make music together, these benefits multiply. Participants experience a sense of belonging and community that is increasingly valuable in today's fast-paced world.

One of my favorite moments as a conductor occurs when I look across the orchestra and see a teenager sharing a music stand with a retiree, both working toward the same musical goal. In those moments, the barriers that often divide generations simply melt away. They are not young or old. They are musicians, collaborators, and friends.

Attend a concert together. Sing songs from your childhood. Encourage a grandchild to learn an instrument. Most importantly, create opportunities to make music a shared experience.

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The Florida Intergenerational Orchestra was founded on the belief that music can strengthen communities by bringing people together. Over the years, we have watched families perform together, grandparents play alongside grandchildren, and friendships blossom between individuals who otherwise might never have met. These experiences remind us that we have far more in common than we sometimes realize.

As grandparents, we have a special opportunity to nurture these connections. We do not need to be professional musicians. We simply need to share

our love of music and invite younger generations to participate. Attend a concert together. Sing songs from your childhood. Encourage a grandchild to learn an instrument. Most importantly, create opportunities to make music a shared experience.

In the end, music is far more than notes on a page. It is a bridge between generations, a source of joy, and a gift that can be passed from one generation to the next. Through music, we discover that while our ages may differ, our hearts often beat to the same rhythm.

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Florida Intergenerational Orchestra



Lorraine Marks Field is the founder and conductor of the Florida Intergenerational Orchestra, a unique ensemble that brings musicians of all ages together under the motto,

"Where Generations Play in Harmony." A dedicated music educator, music therapist, conductor, violinist, and advocate for lifelong music-making, she has spent more than two decades fostering connections through music in South Florida. Lorraine is also the proud grandmother in a blended family with sixteen grandchildren, whose lives continue to inspire her belief in the power of music to unite generations, strengthen families, and enrich communities.

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