

A Vocal, Body Percussion Lesson



PHOTOS & STORY BY KAREN BOSSICK

Ski racers and other athletes are used to being reminded to ground themselves in what's called "the athletic stance."

On Thursday folk singer Moira Smiley encouraged choir members at Wood River High School to adopt the same stance.

"You have to have that groundedness in your legs and sing on down through your legs," she told them. "That's what good singing is all about."

Smiley and fellow singers Inga Swearingen and April Guthrie visited several schools in the Valley last week as part of the Sun Valley Center for the Arts' outreach to schools.

They took Woodside and Hemingway elementary school students on a trip across sea, singing for them the distinctive chant-like, open-throated sounds of Bulgarian music meant to carry the voice for long distances.

And they filled the gymnasiums with a harmony so exquisite that even teachers were nodding their approval rather than firing stern looks at antsy kids.



Top Left: Dani McLaughlin, Breanna Gillard and Destiny Murphy giggle as they try out VOCO's body percussion techniques.

Above: Inga Swearingen and Moira Smiley show Max Stimac's vocal students how to turn their bodies into drum sets.

On another afternoon, they showed Max Stimac's vocal students at Wood River High School how to use different parts of bodies as drums.

"The opportunity to work with them and learn what you can do with your voice and body was really cool," said Isabella Stimac.

The trio took their multilingual singing to the Sun Valley Opera House Friday night, weaving a web of exotic rootsy songs culled from Eastern Europe and their own pens.

The kids proved they were up to the challenge as they joined in singing Smiley's "Stand in the River." Sarah Arters contributed a solo part and so did Caleb Gavin, who blew the audience away with easy folksy way he projected himself and his voice.

"I had no idea what to expect. But it was so unique," said

"The opportunity to work with them and learn what you can do with your voice and body was really cool."

-ISABELLA STIMAC

Joann Boswell. "I loved the combination of traditional Appalachian-type song with more unusual songs from Bulgaria to Bosnia to Sweden."