Tanzania Strings Class

VFTH

7/28/16

It’s been a life changing summer for some music professors who took their talent all the way to Africa.

Amy Bingham has more on the adventure in this week’s View from the Hill.

The language barrier, the cultural differences, it all melted away as WKU music professors engaged elementary students in Tanzania with the power of music.

 “Who goes to Africa to teach string instruments. That’s pretty amazing. It was an unbelievable experience.”

For WKU graduate assistant Emily Vaughn, this summer’s trip to Tanzania was her first time out of the country.

 “That was really scary for me flying over the ocean. I didn’t know what to expect, what the classrooms would be like, the kids would be like.”

University of Tennessee graduate assistant Shelley Armer felt the same way.

 “As a teacher there’s nothing like getting dropped in a foreign country and getting your teaching up to speed.”

WKU assistant music professor Ching Yi Lin trained Vaughn and Armer to lead a six week strings course for five to nine year olds at Majengo primary school.

 “They learned the very basics of holding the violin, the bow and some pieces we call pre twilight songs.”

 “We had very limited vocabulary. We knew how to say left arm, right arm, bow up, bows down, listen, watch. Everything else they learned through paying attention to what we were doing and showing them.”

Both Vaughn and Armer say the experience has made them better teachers.

 “I really connected with the kids a lot. Before I went to Africa it was harder for me to connect with people. Now I can connect with just about anybody.”

 “I’m much more confident in a classroom and leading group activities it was amazing.”

 “There were a lot of things to be nervous about but I think in the end music really speaks to everyone. Our key to unlocking all their hearts there.”

Sixty instruments were donated from around the country for this effort.

The group class in Tanzania was part of the Daraja Music Initiative that was started in 2015.

With this week’s View from the Hill, I’m Amy Bingham.

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