

NEW YORK

EDUCATION

Founders of Small Schools Find Themselves on a Learning Curve

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A roomful of elementary schoolchildren listened to the performance by Piaclava, a clarinet-violin-piano trio. Some children mimicked the motion of playing piano. Others twirled their hair and their name tags. Still others made hand motions in time with the music.

"We're learning our ABCs, and they have sounds," a prekindergarten teacher, Kristiana Verwoordt, said when the music had stopped, asking the musicians to show their sheet music to the children.

"Our ABCs have sounds, too," the violist, Jessica Meyer, said, playing a scale.

"How do you read that?" a little boy asked.

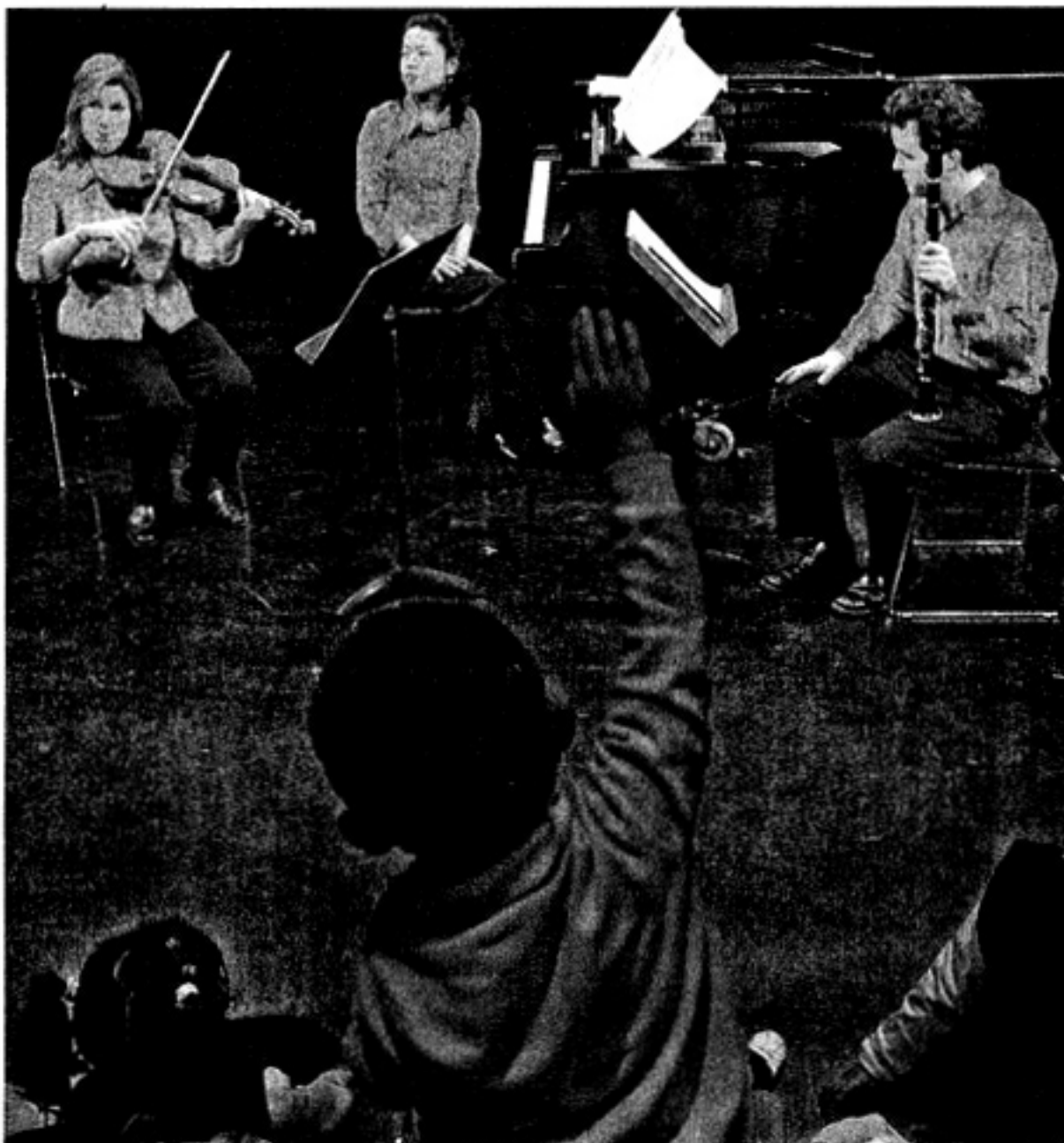
"We learn the alphabet, but in notes," Ms. Meyer explained.

The children, the musicians, and a Lincoln Center Institute teaching artist, who mediated the conversation, were demonstrating a teaching and learning technique called "aesthetic learning." The technique is to provide a framework for instruction in everything from music to math at the High School for Arts, Imagination, and Inquiry, one of the 52 new small public schools scheduled to open in September.

The leader of the new school, Stephen Noonan, and other aspiring principals throughout the city completed concept papers and proposals before the announcement of the new schools early this month. That, it turns out, was the easy part.

Between now and the opening day of school, Mr. Noonan isn't just perfecting aesthetic learning and coming up with the first work of art that will run through instruction in all classes for the first term of school.

Principals and the intermediaries at the organizations sponsoring the new schools will also spend the next six months wooing students and teachers, cementing private partnerships, learning how to cut through the education bureaucracy, devising plans of how to get along with other school leaders, and configuring school buildings.



Q&A A pre-kindergarten student raises his hand during a question session with the trio Piaclava after a performance of 'Three' ing how to cut through the education by Three.' The performance was arranged through Lincoln Center's "Window on the Work" program, which uses a learning

bureaucracy, devising plans of how to technique called 'aesthetic learning.' The High School for Arts, Imagination, and Inquiry plans to adopt the technique.