



Muskoka Lakes Music Festival

When Toronto Symphony Orchestra violinist Atis Bankas invited a number of classical musicians from all over the globe to teach at a summer music camp he ran on Lake Rosseau, he could never have imagined where it might lead. They took him up on his offer in 1996, but they wanted to play somewhere at night, so Bankas began a summer music series at Windermere.

Its success lead Bankas to ask local impresarios Gary Froude and Gayle Dempsey to help manage a larger event he would call the Muskoka Lakes Music Festival, which had its premiere season the following summer.

In the years since, the festival has expanded its repertoire beyond classical to include music from many other genres. It has spawned musical and fine arts education programs, entertaining and teaching with performers and artists of the highest caliber.

The festival's music bursary program transformed into the Kaleidoscope Arts in Education program, which brings artists of every discipline into Muskoka classrooms to enrich young lives and spark creativity. The program has won the Trillium Award for Arts and Culture and been recognized by organizations such as the National Arts-Smarts Network and UNESCO.

"The festival board and staff have worked so incredibly hard for more than a decade and I think really have made a significant difference in Muskoka," says Gayle Dempsey,