

## **SFUSD and Hardly Strictly Bluegrass Partnership Evolves**

For over a decade, SFUSD sixth graders climbed on buses every fall and headed to a special youth performance of Hardly Strictly Bluegrass (HSB) at Golden Gate Park. The HSB music program at the Hardly Strictly Bluegrass Festival was a fabulous opportunity to expose San Francisco sixth graders to American roots music at an influential point in their lives. Music inspires an understanding of other times, places and cultures that can be found in no other medium, and the HSB program has been a stellar example of that.

This beloved annual tradition was started and funded by Warren Hellman, who was a legendary community collaborator and decades-long champion of the San Francisco Unified School District. It brought him great joy to combine his passion for inspiring public school students with his famous love for bluegrass music. Following his death in 2011, the Hellman family proudly carries on Warren's philanthropic legacy by continuing to spark a love of music in San Francisco's public school students.

With an eye toward building on the best of this tradition, while deepening student learning about this rich musical genre, SFUSD leaders approached the HSB team about ways to evolve this educational partnership. Using SFUSD's mariachi program as a model, they developed a plan that will be rolled out this year in classrooms across the city. Given that eighth graders spend the year learning about American history, the 17-18 SFUSD Bluegrass Program will focus on this student population at middle schools that have opted into the program.

To launch the new program, HSB is supporting social studies and music teachers with curriculum that integrates the social and geographic characteristics of Appalachia with the rich tapestry of American music including jazz, blues, rock and roll, and of course, bluegrass. These lessons will be paired with performing artists who will visit classrooms to perform and answer student questions. This deep and intimate exposure to Americana artists and music will be followed by an end-of-season family concert at an SFUSD venue.

For the first time, this year's festival is proud to feature the talented students of SFUSD amongst its roster of admired performers. Students from Ruth Asawa School of the Arts World Music + Dance department will perform selections from their diverse repertoire on Sunday at 4:25pm on the Bandwagon stage, an ideal inspiration to kick start this program.

Warren Hellman's legacy and spirit of collaboration lives on through this multi-phase and multi-dimensional approach. The expanded partnership will allow students to gain an even deeper appreciation and understanding of American musical traditions with the hopes of inspiring the next generation of musicians, songwriters, and patrons.