

TO SEE

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wild applause when the melody finished.

The fourth-grade students beamed as they took it all in.

As she tucked her recorder into a cloth bag, Heather Bolze, who also plays piano and violin, said she enjoyed performing the song with her classmates.

"My favorite thing was playing the challenge part and watching [the BSO musicians] play it by themselves," the 9-year-old Rockville resident said. "It was very interesting."

Tal Katz, a fourth-grade student who also plays the clarinet, added he was thrilled to "work with professional musicians."

And it seemed the feeling was mutual.

"They were fabulous," BSO principal oboist Katherine Needleman said. "They were maybe the best group we've had so far. We actually had to add an extra part for them because they were so talented that they needed a little more difficulty."

Michael Lisicky, who plays in the trio with his wife Sandy, chimed in that he also found the students to be gifted.

"This was definitely an exciting experience," he said. "Just to hear 85 recorders playing along — there's nothing like it."

Whether they are playing an Irish folk song or a jazz number, the students benefit greatly from being involved in the "music-making process," Smoker said.

"It was also important for them to learn classical music isn't just for professionals," she said. "They got to experience it for themselves and they were a part of that music making."

In addition to Fallsmead Elementary School, Judith A. Resnick, Damascus, Seven Locks and Travilah are the other elementary schools participating in the "Theme and Variations" program this school year, Michelle Pendoley, assistant director of public relations for the BSO, said.

It is just one of the several "BSO on the Go" programs offered through the orchestra at The Music Center at Strathmore in North Bethesda, which sends small groups of the orchestra's musicians into county schools for classroom-based music education.

This school year, Pendoley said, the orchestra plans to make 77 appearances at 38 county elementary schools. The majority is public schools, but some private schools are also involved in the programs.