



Photo by Jim Bradley/The Washington Times

Michael S. McCary, Wanya Morris, Nate Morris and Shawn Stockman playing the drums with Gloria (left, front).

Boyz's therapy, a cappella style

By Cesar G. Soriano
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Boyz II Men learned something new about music Thursday. "It's unbelievable that music is such a healing power. It eases the mind," said singer Wanya Morris during a visit to the Art and Drama Therapy Institute, Inc. The three-year-old center in Northeast Washington uses performing and fine arts as a therapeutic technique for enriching the lives of mentally handicapped adults.

Boyz II Men experienced the power of music as therapy first hand during their visit to the Institute, the brainchild of Dr. M. Muggy "Do" Dickinson and Dr. Sirku Sky Hiltunen.

"Before I came here I really didn't know what to expect. I was really surprised," said Mr. Morris, a member of the R&B acappella singing group.

During their afternoon visit, Boyz II Men toured the facility, greeted the institute's clients and performed a rendition of the Beatles' hit, "Yesterday."

"We're glad the arts has an honest and sincere effect on everybody," said Shawn Stockman before taking the stage. Mr. Stockman later joined one of the Institute's clients on a pair of congo drums in the Sammy Davis Jr. Music Room.

Boyz II Men make an effort to stop at financially troubled communities at many of the cities they tour, says ADTI spokesman Matt Pasater. "They like to bring a positive image to a community that has

negative connotations."

"A lot of handicapped people have been mistreated because of ignorance," says singer Nate Morris, Wanya's brother. "We haven't always been where we are now, so we know how important it is to give back to the community."

The group began its visit by watching a performance of Japanese Noh theater by the institute's clients in the center's auditorium.

Clients of the Institute performed vignettes from "Lemminkäinen's Mother" using traditional dancing, drumming and costumes. Dr. Sky, as she's known to friends, uses Noh theater because the dances require "meditative movement" that creates a soothing effect on her clients.

"We use masks because people feel safe behind a mask. They tend to reveal more of themselves when

they're hidden behind a mask," says Dr. Sky.

Dr. Dickinson, a third-generation Washingtonian, says the center is a result of a 22-year dream. "I've always been saddened by the services available to the [mentally handicapped], here we give them first-class ride.

"This center is a labor of love. It's divine intervention," she says.

For many, the group's appearance was a dream come true.

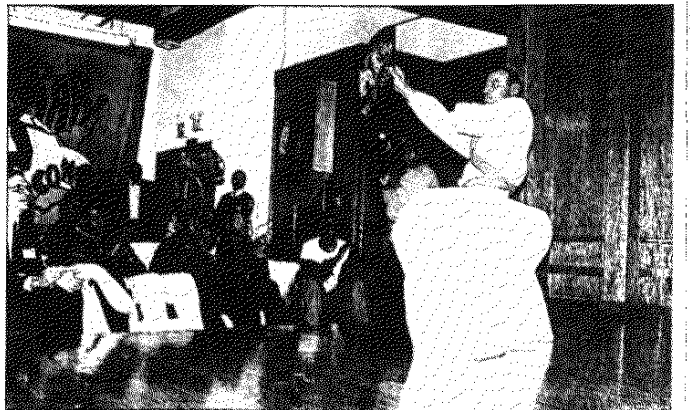
"I've never seen anyone famous before. I was shaking," said Lisa, a client of the Institute, after meeting the group.

"I guess it might sink in tomorrow," said Mary, a more unruffled fan.

After their visit, the group tried to sign as many autographs as they could.

"Keep doing what you're doing, because it's something very positive," said Mr. Stockman.

The quartet was in town for its performance at USAir Arena Thursday night, along with Babyface and Brandy. The group currently has two Top-20 hits on the Billboard charts, including "I'll Make Love to You" and the current No. 1 hit single, "On Bended Knee."



Members of Boyz II Men catch a performance of Japanese Noh theater at the Art and Drama Therapy Institute in Northeast Washington.

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