

They learned Ma's lessons

Young cellists get instruction from the master

By **LESLIE FLINT**

Special to The Journal

Eight young cellists, including three from Montgomery County, had the opportunity to meet a legend last week at the third World Cello Conference at Towson University.

Abi Loutoo, 10, and Samuel Yooun, 11, from Rockville and Laura London, 11, from Bethesda joined five children from Arlington, Va., in a master class with renowned cellist Yo-Yo Ma.

All of the youngsters are students of John Kaboff, a well-known cellist and teacher in Washington.

The conference's honorary president, Janos Starker, invited Kaboff to the conference and suggested that some of his students perform.

The children were chosen

based on their dedication and commitment to practice, said Kaboff.

The young cellists have individual lessons at least twice a week and a group lesson every Saturday. In addition, they are required to practice on their own for about 30 minutes a day.

"The practice is worth it because sometimes you fall apart if you don't practice," said Abi, who has been playing since she was 5 years old.

She called Ma one of her biggest influences and said she has many of his CDs.

Abi said she was very impressed with Ma and she liked him because "he didn't make you feel like he would beat you if you didn't get it right."

During the class, Ma instructed the children on how to be

aware of the other parts that are being played at the same time as their own and how to become part of the music.

To illustrate this concept, Ma played with them and often switched parts.

"It was really neat, because we each got to play with him," Laura said.

They responded to Ma's teaching because listening to each other is something they have been working on in their lessons, said Kaboff.

Ma also gave the youngsters lessons on breathing and relaxing when playing before a large crowd. Abi said she usually does not feel a lot of pressure when she plays, but plans to use the tips Ma gave the class.

"Even though we had practiced



For The Journal

Abi Loutoo, Samuel Yooun and Kendall Lowrey got some pointers recently from world-renowned cellist Yo-Yo Ma.

a lot we were still nervous at the beginning of the class, but [Ma] was so nice we got less and less nervous," Laura said.

Ma also answered questions from the children and played some of his favorite pieces during

the class.

The cello conference, which lasted eight days, ended Sunday and drew an estimated 15,000 people to 63 events, including master classes, recitals and symposiums.