



Nat King Cole's daughters keeping music alive in South Florida schools

Twin daughters live in Boca Raton



Casey and Timolin Cole, the youngest daughters of music legend Nat King Cole, created Nat King Cole Generation Hope, a non-profit foundation to benefit music education in South Florida. (Susan Stocker, Sun Sentinel / August 20, 2009)

By Patty Pensa
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BOCA RATON - Timolin and Casey Cole were only 3 when their legendary father, [Nat King Cole](#), died. Still, music anchored their lives.

Cole's twin daughters remember other musical greats -- [Dean Martin](#), [Ella Fitzgerald](#) and [Sammy Davis Jr.](#) -- as regulars at their Los Angeles home. They played piano like their father and went to symphonies, operas and outdoor music

concerts with their mother.

"All of our wonderful childhood memories centered around music," Timolin Cole said.

The Cole sisters, who live in [Boca Raton](#), are now working to keep music in South Florida schools. Concerned about budget cuts affecting the arts, the women launched the nonprofit Nat King Cole Generation Hope a year ago. Their mission is to promote music by helping schools in Palm Beach, Broward and [Miami](#)-Dade counties replace worn instruments, offer field trips and provide music instruction.

Having the nonprofit bear their father's famous name was crucial, both for his memory and for the donors it could attract, said Timolin Cole, foundation president.

Cole was an accomplished jazz pianist whose silky baritone captured a wide audience despite the ubiquitous racism of the era. His career spanned three decades, from the 1930s to the 1960s, and included a brief stint as host of his own television show.

"Our father, with his universal appeal, has touched so many people with his voice," Timolin Cole said. "What he was able to do as an African-American in those times was really incredible. With the foundation, we hope to resurrect the importance of music in the school curriculum."

Though the Cole family had talked about starting an education-based foundation for about a decade, plans were set in motion after Casey Cole moved close to Timolin Cole in Boca Raton. The sisters spent their inaugural year raising money and meeting with school administrators.

Already, the foundation has donated a baby grand piano to Forest Hill Community High School in West Palm Beach. They plan to give donated violins to the elementary-level Plumosa School of the Arts in [Delray Beach](#).

The Cole sisters say they intend to offer assistance based on need, giving special attention to students whose parents can't afford to buy instruments or pay for lessons.

Music in elementary schools is most lacking, said Tom Pearson, Palm Beach County's arts education administrator.

Band programs start in middle school and continue through high school, leaving the younger students with little time devoted to exploring instruments.

The district, with 161 schools, works with five foundations that provide money for music education, Pearson said. For the 2009-10 budget year, funds to buy new instruments dropped 30 percent, to \$140,000. The decline means each school will be able to replace only one new instrument over the year instead of two or three.

"It's tremendous that they want to pick up this project and try to work with students," Pearson said.

Broward School District officials met at the end of the most recent school year with the Cole sisters and discussed launching programs in various Broward schools, said Joe Luechauer, the district's music curriculum specialist.

They also discussed the possibility of bringing electronic music labs, sound studios, guitar and drum programs, and other programming to the schools, Luechauer said.

"We were very encouraged by their enthusiasm and support of the arts in general," Luechauer said.

The Cole sisters' foundation plans to add scholarships and become nationwide advocates.

Casey Cole said the sisters' goal is to find "hundreds of people [as] interested in music education as we are."

For more information, visit natkingcolefoundation.org.

Staff Writer Kathy Bushouse contributed to this report.
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