The Spring Concert: Two Nights of Amazing Music

On Thursday, May 30th, and Friday, May 31st, the Spring Concert happened in the Joseph Anzalone Theatre. There were over 400 students performing in ten different ensembles for friends and family.

Here are a few of the many highlights. Thursday night’s concert featured our artist-in-residence ensemble Western Wind collaborating with three Murrow choruses - with Women’s Chorus they performed Xango, with Madrigal Choir the sang Christus factus est and with Gospel Chorus they performed Daniel, Daniel Servant of the Lord; Both String Orchestra and Chamber Orchestra did works by Mark O’Conner as well as Drif en (String Orchestra) and Footprints (Chamber Orchestra); Jazz band did a tribute to Benny Goodman, Christina Charles (Clarinet) Jonathan Jean Baptiste (Drums) and dancers Christian Chica and Gabrielle Valentin were featured on the crowd-pleaser Sing, Sing, Sing. Friday night began with Beginning Chorus performing Mozart’s Alleluja; Ms. Christensen directed the Concert Band in Leroy Anderson’s classic, The Irish Suite; The Mixed Chorus performed a great medley from Oklahoma! accompanied by a nine piece pick up band from the instrumental program; The first piece performed by the Symphonic Band, Inglesina: Scherzo Marcabile, featured student director Valerie Browning. Congratulations to the students and faculty for maintaining this unique event where the very best of a high school music program is celebrated and enjoyed.
**Guitarfest: Plugged and Unplugged**

These are exciting times for the Murrow Guitar Program! on Friday, March 8, the school’s finest guitarists joined with their bandmates for Electric Guitarfest. Hard rock, folk, and pop sounds were all on display as Murrow musicians took the stage. Two months later, on Friday, May 25 the guitarists unplugged their instruments for Acoustic Guitarfest. Students played a varied repertoire of classic and original material in this intimate annual concert. Seniors Sallie Calixte, Matt Rosenthal, Mark Khaimchayev were prominently featured in solo arrangements, and senior Daniel Chpatchev provided solid grooves on his bass. The evening ended with a stirring rendition of the Mario Brothers Theme that had the audience begging for more. Congratulations to Mr. Watson and the students of Guitar Ensemble.

**Good bye from Fran Rock, Murrow Music Sponsor**

With the school year coming to a close I want to thank all that have helped the Murrow Music Sponsors fundraise this year.

In mid-March we had a great performance of our first scheduled Guitarfest. Then in May we had our second performance of Guitarfest:Unplugged that was well attended. We also, had a very successful two night performance during our Spring Concert.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to the parents/guardians of the Senior Class 2013. Your support over the years has been absolutely amazing. Congratulations to you on your child’s graduation and I wish them all the best. I also, want to thank all the parents/guardians who have supported the Murrow Music Sponsors over the years. We have the best music families in Brooklyn!

Last, but not least, thank you, to the 2012/2013 Executive Board. It has been an absolute pleasure to work with you all. To the faculty of the Music Department, your guidance, expertise and support over the years has been incredible. I wish you all continued success with this fabulous music program. I will miss you all.

**Spring Things related to Strings**

*By James Duncan*

Our relationship with The Orpheus Orchestra is three years running and has been a phenomenal experience for our students. For their final show of the season on April 27, students sat on stage with the orchestra for the rehearsal of a world premier of a song cycle by a dynamic young composer – and Brooklyn’s own - Gabriel Kahane. We were invited by Mr. Kahane back stage after the concert - very cool! As if that was not enough, Mr. Kahane visited Murrow later that same week for a Q and A with our students. This was his third visit to us.

This year, String Orchestra has moved on to new heights, playing music that used to be reserved for the more advanced group – you have raised the bar - BRAVI!

On a little bit of a sad note, I have finished my fourth year at Murrow and wish my first graduating class farewell. They began as 21 freshmen string students and now were 21 seniors making the graduation rate for strings students of 2013 100%.

However, I would measure their success in different terms. Four years ago I met a group of wide eyed, sometimes goofy, kids who were eager but unsure of themselves. This year a group of mature young men and woman left to enjoy summer and go off to college in the fall. Their smiles and thoughtfulness for each other and the world around them has made me happy and proud. I wish them the best of luck.

**Murrow Music Institute Hosts The American String Festival**

Early in the school year, our string teacher, James Duncan, had a vision of a string festival at Murrow where students from junior high schools and elementary schools get together with Murrow string students and have a day of strings and fun. With the date set for Saturday, June 15 he went to work planning for the event. On that date there were 180 students with their parents and teachers from six schools plus Murrow students performing for each other, playing games only string players can play, participating in an improvisation workshop with Dr. Burt Konowitz and Peter Weitzner and eating apple pie. Mark
O’Conner performed pieces from his String Method Book Three and then invited all the students on stage to play Boogie Woogie - a Fiddler’s Free-For-All. Mr. Duncan’s vision was a great vision, and an even better reality.

**Murrow’s Spring Musical: The Mikado**

Our spring musical, "The Mikado," is considered by many to be Gilbert and Sullivan's greatest operetta. This wild, funny story set in the fictional Japanese town of Titipu, in which flirting is punishable by death, is set to some of the most beautiful music. In Japanese costume and Kabuki-style make-up, there were wonderful numbers for soloists, duets, trios, quartets and full chorus. Featured soloists were Maria Coppola as Yum-Yum, Michael Harper as Nanki-Poo, Brian Lundy as the Lord High Executioner, Bianca Kroening as Pitti-Sing, and Patrick Truick as the Mikado.

Under the very capable baton of Don Christensen the Orchestra successfully brought the score to life. It’s worth knowing that this was a show for the strings of the orchestra to shine - and they were glowing! From freshmen to seniors, the talent pool known as Murrow did a great job on stage, backstage and in the pit.

**The Apollo Theater Brings Big Broadway Talent To Work With Murrow Students**

On Thursday, February 21, 2013 the Apollo Theater Academy Program brought top flight award-winning professionals to do a series of seminars for 115 students from dance, technical theatre and theatre. Broadway Sound Designer Jeff Crews, Choreographer/Dancer Dana Rainey, and Casting Director Canara Price, did break out sessions with Ms. Raymond (dance,) Mr. Elstein (Theatre,) and Mr. Eisenberg (technical theatre.) All three groups came together for a culminating presentation in the Anzalone theatre. Students and teachers both agreed it was an enriching amazing experience. Special thanks to our string teacher James Duncan for contacting Ms. Michelle Cox, educational manager for the Apollo Theater Academy Programs and Ms. Cox for organizing the event.

**Top-Of-The-Line Chamber Ensemble Plays For Students in A14**

As part of the Academy Program residency (supported by Carnegie Hall and the Juilliard School) Murrow has been fortunate to have some of the best classical musicians in NYC perform chamber music for our students.

**Marvin Makes Music: Murrow Students Participate In Mr. Hamlisch’s Memorial**

Stefania Bressi, Mallory Croak, Miriam Ehrlich, Jennie Fortune, Gianna Kroening, Emily Ma, Tamsin Vidal, Reem Zanta and Mrs. Prather were featured on the CD of Marvin Hamlish’s children’s book *Marvin Makes Music*. The students recorded the song “The Music In My Mind” in the Spring of 2012. Brian Lundy made the initial demo recording of the song in February of 2012 and was coached and accompanied by Mr. Hamlish at the piano. Little did the students know that this would be the last project by the Oscar-winning composer. Mr. Hamlisch died in August, 2012. Stefania Bressi, Samantha Brown, Sally Chaladze, Johanna Dempsey, Michaela Donahue, Ksenia Dracena, Miriam Ehrlich, Annalissa Joseph, Lidia Kokaya, Bianca Kroening, Gianna Kroening, Briana Rodriguez, Enisa Nikovic, Juliana Reynolds, Merin Thazhathukunnel, Melody Urbino, Tamsin Vidal, Susan Xu, Jessica Yu, Dalila Yeydayeva, Reem Zanta joined an ensemble from Celia Cruz High School in the Bronx to sing “The Anatomy of Peace” at The Juilliard School in September, 2012. The students shared the stage with Barbra Streisand, Aretha Franklin, Liza Minnelli, Itzak Perlman and Lang-Lang, among others, to pay tribute to the late composer.
A cappella College Groups Perform for a Good Cause

Murrow’s new A cappella club The Harmonix presented two benefits concerts during their first year. The group raised over $800 for Breast Cancer Research and Superstorm Sandy relief. The first concert in January featured guest groups The Triplets from Macauley Honors, City University, The Notables from Smith College and The Current, a semi-professional NYC group. The second concert in May featured Male Call from SUNY New Paltz under the direction of Matt Hunter, Murrow alum and son of English teacher Lisa Hunter. This was a great opportunity for our students to meet college students who share the same passion for singing.

Band Students From Twain JHS “Sit In” With Murrow Bands

On the morning of Friday, March 22 about 40 7th grade band students from Mark Twain JHS came to Murrow with their band director Mr. Alan Faiola. They came to visit the Concert Band and the Symphonic Band. Both Ms. and Mr. Christensen welcomed Twain students to their rehearsals and invited them to sit next to Murrow students who played their instrument. Their many smiles as Mr. Faiola came into A14 and was greeted by his some of his former students. Jason Taranow offered his thoughts on the visit: The visit by Mark Twain was a great experience. It reminded me of myself when I was getting ready for high school. It was nice to see Mr. Faiola and show him and his students how Murrow can be a good next step in the training of a young musician. I see Mark Twain as a younger sibling of Murrow because both are schools with tremendous talent in the performing arts.

Music Students Do Great in Boston Competition

On Saturday, May 18th, early in the morning, staff, chaperones and students were loading three buses and preparing for a three day trip to Boston and the surrounding area. First on the agenda was performing at the Music in the Parks Competition at Holyoke High School. Madrigal Choir, Gospel Chorus, Mixed Chorus, Symphonic Band, Chamber Orchestra and Jazz Band came prepared to do their very best. Everyone was very happy to find out how well we did at the Awards Ceremony that evening in Six Flags New England. Every group received the highest rating superior, Madrigal, Mixed, Chamber Orchestra and Jazz Band ranked first place; Symphonic Band and Gospel Chorus ranked second (very tough competition!); and Jazz Band and Chamber Orchestra ranked highest overall score in their respective categories. Students went on to enjoy a night at the amusement park filled with pride. On Sunday it was off to Boston for a day of sightseeing. It’s worth noting the students attended a free performance of a Bach Cantata at the Emmanuel Church that was absolutely breathtaking. On Monday the buses stopped at Old Sturbridge Village (a living museum) for a taste of old Americana living before heading back to Brooklyn with too many trophies to carry easily! Congratulations to the students. Thanks to the teachers and chaperones for making this a fun, safe trip and a special thanks to Don Christensen for doing such a great job of planning this memorable trip.

Music Students Going Places

A group of Vocal Tech I, Women’s Chorus and Musical Theatre students attended a performance of The Elixir of Love by Donizetti at the Di Capo Opera Theatre company in Manhattan in May.

Brian Lundy, Emma Rothstein and Catherine Latham were special guests of the NY Pops in May for the Evening in Celebration of Stephen Schwartz marking the composer’s 65th Birthday and the 10th Anniversary of his hit show WICKED!

This summer three students will be attending this summer improv camp at Lehman College on full scholarship. Congratulations to Zion Piper, Jonathan Jean-Baptist and Rachel Chavet. Thank you to Dr. Konowitz and the Murrow Connection Program for making this happen.

Murrow Performs for Assemblyman Cymbrowitz’s Holocaust Memorial Ceremony

Once again, Assemblyman Steven Cymbrowitz invited Murrow musicians to participate in his annual Holocaust Memorial Essay, Poetry, Performance and Art Ceremony. It was an honor for the Madrigal Choir, Chamber Orchestra and Chamber Winds to contribute to this very worthwhile ceremony. Besides the National Anthem and Hatikva the students also performed Partisan Song (a request of the Assemblyman.) The ceremony closed with a stirring rendition of the song Raoul Wallenberg,
Checkin’ In with Jazz Band

Early in the year Ruby Simon, a freshman vocal student, walked into Mr. Toriello’s office and said her uncle would like to visit the Jazz Band. Fast-forward to May; not one, but two world-class jazz musicians conducted a two hour workshop with the Jazz Band. Something like this only happens in a place like Murrow. On Wednesday, May 15 drummer, Victor Lewis and pianist, George Cables entered the auditorium where the band was ready to play. They played the first chart, then Mr. Lewis looked at the music and said, “Okay, let’s take it from measure 22.” For two hours these two jazz legends rehearsed the band; conducting, lecturing and jumping in. They enjoyed themselves as much as the students. Steven Fatore (Bari sax) said, It was a great experience. We got to learn from people who played with some of the jazz greats. Thanks to Joann Klein for arranging this visit, George Cables and Victor Lewis for working with Murrow’s young musicians and of course thanks to Ruby for bringing Uncle Victor and George to us.

The band has played some fun gigs during the second semester:

• On Friday, April 12 the band performed in the 285 suite for the grand reopening of the student center furnished with table games, exercise equipment and a fresh new look. Thanks to Paula Boyd (Phys. Ed.) for writing the proposal that secured the grant sponsored by Tyson Foods. Local politicians, TV media, Tyson executives and Chancellor, Dennis Walcott enjoyed the charged atmosphere as students enjoyed themselves and the band swung! The Chancellor was so impressed, he said, Edward R. Murrow is one of our best schools in NYC. Edward R. Murrow is a big school that has a small school feeling.

• On Wednesday, May 22, the coordinator of the Murrow Food Fair, Ms. Tamar Sinclair invited the band to return to the outdoor festivities and fundraiser. The rain held off as students provided the Murrow community with food from around the world.

• On Thursday, June 6 - The band was invited by District Attorney Charles J. Hynes to perform for his 23rd Annual “Citation of Honors” Award Ceremony at the Whitman Auditorium, Brooklyn College. Without question, the performance by the Murrow Jazz Band enriched the attendees’ experience...The best endorsement following the event was the multitude of favorable compliments as well as the fact that those in attendance appeared to have wanted nothing more that to start dancing.– Charles J. Hynes

Ashley Velez, (Tenor I) reflected on the performances – These events have shown us that progress is possible when we all work hard. All three events were great moments we shared that displayed our hard work.

Gospel Chorus Performs for the Chancellor

On Wednesday, May 29th, the Gospel Chorus directed by Cheryl Johnson performed in the rotunda of the Tweed Courthouse. Chancellor Dennis Walcott and DOE employees were treated to a lunchtime concert of inspiring songs. Mr. Walcott expressed his appreciation and acknowledged Murrow students for their talent and the wonderful performance.