

RHYTHMS

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FELD ENTERTAINMENT SPOTLIGHTS TECHNICAL THEATER

New Partnership Opens Doors!

When Kenneth Feld, president and CEO of Feld Entertainment, opened the newspaper over his coffee one morning and read about the Duke Ellington School of the Arts' sagging facilities, something reached out to him. After talking about it with his wife, Bonnie, and daughters Nicole, Alana, and Juliette, he and his family decided to get involved with Ellington and help.

Vienna, Virginia-based Feld Entertainment may not be a household name. But you know it better than you think you do; since 1967, the company has proudly parented amazing productions like Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus, Disney on Ice, Siegfried and Roy, and several Tony Award-winning Broadway shows. Feld is the largest producer of live family entertainment in the world, also running a large costume warehouse and set-manufacturing facility in Florida.

The company creates so many shows from scratch, a partnership between the Feld Family Foundation and Ellington's Technical Theater department seemed like a natural fit.

"Technical theater is what we know best," says Kenneth Feld. "I grew up in Washington, DC and wanted to give back to the School of the Arts." The Feld Family Foundation decided to contribute \$100,000 to build upon the department.

A wide variety of programs are being implemented. Theater Tech has hired a new full-time costume design teacher, Beverly Johnson, and is excited to introduce a summer ap-

prenticeship at Feld's set-manufacturing facility in Florida, which would offer students hands-on experience alongside professionals and provide an opportunity to build sets and professional relationships. In addition, Feld is donating extensive equipment to replace the Ellington Theatre's sorely outdated technology.

Kenneth Feld chose the Ellington School because he knew the results of his contribution would be tangible. "This is a great opportunity to help young people who wouldn't get the chance otherwise. It's enormously rewarding to know the family's foundation is making a difference," he reflects.

"For our students to work alongside master technicians in sound, lighting, stage engineering, and costuming is a tremendously exciting opportunity," says Ellen Copley, executive director of the Ellington Fund. "The resources that Feld is so generously donating will really help our students excel in their chosen fields. What a gift."



JOURNEYS! ELLINGTON'S NEW SUMMER CAMP A SUCCESS!

Journeys! 2007, Ellington's summer arts camp, ended its inaugural season a triumphant success. Campers aged 10-14 enjoyed intense arts training while singing, dancing, acting, painting, reading and making great friends along the way- including a group of students from Evariste Galois High School in Sartrouville, France, who spent an entire day participating in the *Journeys!* workshops.

Directed by Carol Foster, a 37-year veteran teacher of the arts and founder of the DC Youth Ensemble, the camp channeled campers' energy and dedication to transform their raw talent into artistic skills showcased in the summer's sensational final production. This was no camp for the faint of spirit; every day of the three-week session was a lesson in commitment and discipline as teachers pushed the campers to learn their lines, sing their hearts out, and follow stage directions.

The final result was a production to be proud of. *Just Like Us* delighted family, friends, and campers alike. "I'm thrilled that we were able to launch a new arts camp at Ellington," says Rory Pullens, Ellington's head of school. "This is the start of something great!"

Journeys' success was an excellent beginning to what will become an annual Ellington program. The 2008 session will be extended by a week and is slated for June 30-July 26. We are again inviting talented and creative youth and providing them a fun and exciting opportunity to explore the arts.

For additional information about *Journeys! 2008*, please contact Sefanit Tekle at 202.333.2555 x101 or e-mail info@ellingtonarts.org



Journeys! final production

STUDENT CELEBRATIONS

Ellington students give us countless reasons to feel proud on a daily basis. The following students and recent alumni are just a few whose accomplishments have been truly outstanding:

Taylor Miese and **Ranneisha Champion** worked as photographers for National Geographic this summer. Recent graduate **Amanda Fernandez '07** made Ellington tremendously proud when the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities announced her as National winner of Poetry Out Loud: National Recitation Contest. Amanda competed against students from all 50 states to win first place and a scholarship of \$20,000. Congratulations to **Raiken Bailey**, a senior who won first prize in watercolor in the Latino Art Beat and Academic Partners National High School Art competition! The prize is a \$20,000 scholarship at one of three art institutes. The award was presented at a luncheon hosted by Mayor Adrian Fenty and the Office on Latino Affairs. Raiken follows the footsteps of recent alumnus **Damarise Johnson '07**. **Brigitte Bogle**, a junior in guitar studies, is currently serving as a High School Fellow with the Evelyn Holmes Norton Congressional Fellows program sponsored by the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation. Brigitte is working on Capitol Hill with Congressman Alcee Hastings from Florida. **Hillary Tidman**, a sophomore in the instrumental department, was chosen to participate in the National Symphony Orchestra Youth Fellowship at the Kennedy Center for 2007-08. She was selected last March to perform at the Lincoln Theater as part of the Capital Talents Showcase. Hillary was accepted with scholarship to the Sewanee Summer Music Festival this summer. **Yaba Toffour**, first year instrumentalist, was selected to participate at Camp Rising Sun, an eight-week international leadership summer program for gifted and talented students. This summer, **Michelle Peterson** attended the two-week pre-college jazz session at University of the Arts in Philadelphia, attending college-level classes. Michelle was the featured singer in the specialty ensemble at the UArts closing performance, where she received a standing ovation for her lead in *Take the A Train*. Four Duke Ellington students - **Michael Barnes**, **Teresa Ferrara**, **Pauletta Jernagin**, and **Elizabeth Payne** recently performed with Washington National Opera's Institute for Young Singers. They were selected for Washington National Opera's pre-professional training program that ran June 25 - July 14. Michael and Teresa finished the Institute with a performance on the Kennedy Center Millennium Stage. **Charlisa Lewis** placed as a finalist in the Miss America Pageant - Miss Outstanding Teen - District of Columbia. **Geneva Tann** participated in the National Gallery of Art's High School Summer Institute, where she created an art piece and worked alongside museum professionals. She also participated in the Corcoran Gallery's photography program, where her photographs were part of a student exhibit. **Brittany Adams**'s essay on Gordan Parks won the Links writing competition for area arts schools.

RECORDING ARTIST MYA'S FOUNDATION PERFORMS AT ELLINGTON

Multi-platinum GRAMMY Award-winner and DC native, Mya sees the importance of giving back, and she does so—actively—through her foundation, The Mya Arts and Tech Foundation (TMATF). Through the Foundation, she and a corps of paid and volunteer teachers teach sound engineering, step and precision, African dance and Taratibu, art and photography, and life skills to inner city and suburban youth from kindergarten through high school.

On September 1, Howard Road Academy, a public charter school, presented TMATF/21st Century Summer Program Performance at Ellington. One hundred twenty nine students performed, and Ellington students designed the production's lighting and sound design and managed the stage.

"Working with Mya is great," says Ronald Lee Newman, acting chair of Ellington's technical theater department, who oversaw the production management. "Our students have great respect for her because she's on top of her game—she had a plan and knew what to do. You don't always see that. She worked really well with our students, and I think she taught them an important lesson about being organized and thorough."

Mya plans to expand the foundation's curriculum to include music, drama, videography, and speech communication—usable skills that will set up DC's youth for future careers. We look forward to a continued relationship with her!

2008-09 RECRUITMENT IN FULL SWING

Ellington is already recruiting for next school-year's admissions. If you know talented eighth- or ninth-graders who are interested in pursuing a top-notch arts education, they should email calvin.roberson@dc.gov or call 202.282.0123. The application deadline is January 20, 2008, so act now!

RAP LEGEND DMC VISITS ELLINGTON

"Success without significance means nothing!" repeats Darryl "DMC" McDaniels, of the legendary rap group Run-D.M.C., to the group of attentive Ellington students gathered at his feet. The legendary rapper took some time to talk with Ellington students about staying positive and believing in themselves during a September visit to the school.

Run-D.M.C. have many accomplishments to celebrate, including being the only rap act to perform at the Live Aid concert in 1985, the first rap act with a gold record and a multi-platinum album, the first rap act to have a video on MTV, and the first rap act to appear on the cover of *Rolling Stone Magazine*. They are considered pioneers of the rap/hip-hop movement in the '80s.



DMC signs autographs for excited students

DMC was quick to point out that "old-school is a concept, not a time. [In the 80's], we were 15 to 23 years old and young... but once we got on the mic, we became visionary and we talked about empowerment." This is what gained the group respect and a huge ongoing following well after other rap groups came to share their platform.

Despite all the success and fame, DMC had many personal troubles that led to depression, alcoholism and several suicide attempts. When he learned, at age 35, that he was adopted, he gained a sense of purpose. Since then he has been on an endless quest, working with children in foster care and promoting adoption. "There isn't one kid on the face of this earth who's not meant to be here," he said.

His message to the kids was loud and clear: "Everyone has a purpose and destiny. You may not know it yet, but you are great. Don't compromise yourself, and work towards your goals. Stay in school, because that piece of paper is your ticket to guaranteed success."

Thomas Carter '07 requested a personal meeting and proceeded to share his own work with DMC. He performed an excerpt of one of his songs and received encouraging feedback from DMC. Well after the rap legend indulged the students' autograph and photograph requests and long after he departed the building, Ellington remained abuzz from the excitement of his visit.



Alumnus Thomas Carter performs some of his own work for DMC

SOUL CON TIMBA: FUSION JAZZ ENSEMBLE ROUSES ELLINGTON

A new school year brings with it an unmatched energy that quickly fades once the demands of schoolwork and normal life resume. A jazz ensemble called Soul Con Timba helped prolong Ellington's kick-off energy when it visited in mid-September while participating in the citywide Duke Ellington Jazz Festival.

"Soul Con Timba" refers to the fusion of American soul and timba, Cuba's variation on salsa. The group's members hail mostly from the northeast (and bassist Corcoran Holt is a recent graduate of Ellington!), but their sound, a fusion of soul, jazz, Cuban/Caribbean and Latin rhythms, is decidedly their own. Led by trumpeter Michael Philip Mossman, Soul Con Timba features a high-energy, fun, funky sound to which Ellington's students responded with gusto.

You know you're at a great performance when the performers clearly enjoy themselves as much as the packed audience. The show at Ellington was positively organic, with band members and students alike clapping to the beat, bobbing their heads, moving to the groove, and smiling, smiling, smiling.

In a surprising twist, a flamenco dancer whirled around the stage with castanets, her unexpected high kicks met by students' shouts of thrill and delight.

But the band did more than entertain. In between pieces,

Michael Philip Mossman took the time to talk about their musical backgrounds and the steps they took to achieve their current success (many of the band members have master's degrees in music) and about their lives as musicians.

"We play in lots of different venue types," he told students, "clubs, performance halls, all kinds of places. But playing right here is truly gratifying, because of your enthusiasm and respect. It helps us feel a connection with our audience, and it keeps us all energized."

Following an extensive performance, the band broke up, with each of its seven members leading various master classes, where they offered bits of advice like "work hard, show up on time" (valuable counsel for any teenager!).

"My kids are still talking about the master classes," says Davey Yarborough, chair of the instrumental music department. "It was great to watch—when one of the musicians said something that reinforced something they learn in their day-to-day classes, they'd look over at me, and I knew it was sinking in."

ELLINGTON STUDENTS FEATURED WITH HIP-HOP ARTIST BIZ MARKIE

Biz Markie, best known for his goofy 80's smash hit *Just a Friend*, has long been regarded as the Crown Prince of Hip-Hop. When local television network CW chose to use the cultural icon and his catchy tune for its upcoming on-air promotions, they shot them at various DC-area hot spots...including the Duke Ellington School of the Arts. Keep your eyes peeled for the promos. They feature Ellington students, in typical happy, energetic form, singing their own rendition of the song.



Ellington students are featured in CW network's Biz Markie on-air promotions.



Soul Con Timba delighted its Ellington audience

THE WIZ EASES ON DOWN ELLINGTON'S ROAD

An electric hum fills the air as Ellington anticipates this year's unprecedented all-school collaborative production, *The Wiz*. Scheduled to take place in February, the ten-show run is a major effort for every arts department. The show's budget is upwards of \$100,000, and sponsorship is still actively sought.

"This is not a high school production," says Calvin Roberson, Ellington's dean of arts. "This will be a professional production, the likes of which have never been seen at Ellington. We want students to think of themselves as young professionals and we treat them as such."

When *The Wiz* first opened in 1975, it was a breakthrough for Broadway, a large-scale big-budget musical featuring an all-black cast. It laid the foundation for later African-American hits like *Bubbling Brown Sugar*, *Dreamgirls*, and *Duke Ellington's Sophisticated Ladies*. The cast featured Stephanie Mills as Dorothy, ran for four years and 1,600 performances, and won seven Tony Awards, including Best Musical. In 1978, it adapted into a movie that starred Diana Ross, Michael Jackson, Lena Horne, and Richard Pryor.

Acclaimed actor Lynda Gravatt, whose television credits include, most notably, *Law & Order* and *Who Killed Atlanta's Children?* and whose stage credits include Neil Simon's *45 Seconds From Broadway* and Regina Taylor's *Crowns*, is familiar with Ellington's caliber and has agreed to direct Ellington's rendition of the show. Possible cameo appearances might be made by other Hollywood figures, as well.

"I like to think of this as a laboratory," says Ken Johnson, chair of Ellington's theater department. "When we bring in so many well established artists, the kids can really get a sense of what it's like to participate in a professional production."

Auditions took place on September 24th, and rehearsals are slated to begin in November. During the week of the performance, class schedules will be altered to ease students' workloads.

"We're expecting huge audiences," says Rory Pullens, head of school. "It's really, really exciting. The month of February is Wiz Month at Ellington!"

FACULTY FEATURE

TIA POWELL HARRIS: ELLINGTON RUNS THROUGH HER VEINS

As a young college student double majoring in secondary education and speech & drama education, Tia Powell was unstoppable. When it came time for her to student-teach, she insisted that the Duke Ellington School of the Arts was the place for her, and wouldn't take no for an answer. "I wanted to get my foot in the door, knowing I'd want them to hire me," she remembers. Upon graduating, Ellington offered her some part-time gigs teaching Theater for Singers and other theater classes. She got an additional certification in English hoping it might land her the full-time job she awaited, but finally, the need to pay the bills won over her idealism, and she accepted a full-time job teaching at a public school in Southeast. She taught there for two years, but "when a kid came in one day with a sawed-off shotgun to kill another kid," she says, "I said, I gotta go." It was a sign to try again with the school her heart never really left.

Over the next ten years, Ms. Powell became Ms. Harris, instructor, co-chair, and chair, loving her job with kids and theater. But after her first decade of teaching, she started to feel like her world wasn't big enough, and she could have greater impact at an arts organization.

She added positions at the Kennedy Center and the Smithsonian's prestigious Portrait Gallery to her resume. She earned a reputation in the field and quickly rose through the ranks. "But it was the farthest from the arts I'd ever been," she reflects. "The closest I'd get was sneaking a peek in the rehearsal halls." She was ready to get back to her passion, and Ellington re-entered her vision.

When she returned last fall, she brought with her a wealth of knowledge and connections from the field that will elevate Ellington programs to a new level, as is evident with the Smithsonian artist-in-residency program she facilitated. The school is in her blood—there's no escaping it. "My husband teaches here, my kid went here—it's just where I belong." We're very glad to welcome Ms. Harris home.



ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT Paul Hurley '04

Paul Hurley's days at Ellington were as happy and carefree as most of his fellow students. As a guitar major, his music teachers became his mentors, and before graduating, he auditioned for the Navy band, missing it by half a point.

Instead, Paul, who hales from a military family, left his musical aspirations to become a commando whose ultimate goal was to be a Navy Seal. Paul was deployed to the Middle East, where he located a guitar, started a band with fellow sailors and kept everyone's spirits up.

Paul was in Bahrain the night before leaving for a mission, and had plans to go to dinner with his friend Roger. After a leisurely meal and a long talk about life goals, Paul and Roger returned to their car. They weren't driving long when they were hit violently by another car, launched into the air, flipping several times. Paul's world went dark.

When he awoke, there was blood and glass everywhere—in his ears, under his eyelids. He pulled himself out of the car and discovered his femurs sticking out of his jeans. Soaked in blood, he willed himself to relax and breathe, and mustered up the strength—somehow—to break a window and access his unconscious friend to try to revive him.

An ambulance arrived, and again, Paul lost consciousness, being put into a chemically induced coma for nine days. He received 30 units of blood from 130 sailors who donated to save his life. The prognosis wasn't good. Paul's mom is an active duty Navy officer, and his dad a federal employee, so they were able to rush to his bedside. "They had come fully expecting to pull the plug [of my life-support system]," says Paul. Instead, he regained consciousness.

That night, Paul dreamt that Roger came to visit him in the hospital and the two had a long talk. He learned the next day that Roger, newly married with an eight-year-old daughter, hadn't survived the crash. "Roger made it better being over there," says Paul.

The nightmare continued as Paul endured miserable conditions at the local hospital in Bahrain. "It was hell on earth," he recalls. After being transported to Germany and undergoing 14 surgeries, he lost almost 25 pounds and was in constant excruciating pain. His leg got infected and became life-threatening. "As soon as I found out I couldn't run anymore, I just told them to take it." Paul's right leg was amputated above the knee.

Paul is recovering at the Walter Reed Army medical center, where a new amputee clinic has just opened. "Learning to walk again is constant work and constant pain." But physical discomfort aside, Paul struggles with the emotional trauma of his experience. He has trouble sleeping and often awakens with his fists clenched and soaked in sweat. "When I dream, I have two legs," he says wistfully.

Nevertheless, his optimism and an extensive support network keep him motivated. His parents and brother are tremendously steadfast. Paul's girlfriend Keli started visiting right away and they have now been dating for seven months. "She's made a huge difference," says Paul. "She keeps me motivated throughout the week and I look forward to seeing her on weekends. She doesn't make me feel handicapped." And two of Paul's best friends from Ellington, Nicholas Soderstrom and Robert Hanson, were among the first to visit him in the hospital.

Despite what he's suffered, Paul remains forward-thinking. He currently attends George Mason University with a major in geography. He appreciates the world travels the U.S. Navy afforded him. Music still plays a major role in his life—"I went to the Red Hot Chili Peppers concert half-dead in a wheelchair," he laughs—and he is considering auditioning for the Navy Band once more.

Paul's great strength of spirit is an inspiration to us all. We are enormously proud to count him among Ellington's alumni.



NEW DEAN OF ARTS STIRS THINGS UP AT ELLINGTON

You've seen him striding through the lobby or across the stage on the first day of school, the biggest of smiles on his face. He exudes energy, and much energy he'll need as Ellington's new Dean of Arts. Onboard to oversee both admissions and all arts programs, Calvin Roberson has a big job ahead of him.

Mr. Roberson started teaching in 1985 and has since owned his own educational consulting business. "I've always loved teaching," he says. With over 20 years of professional experience in the arts, academics, the corporate world, and the non-profit sector, as well as a broad background as an artist, Mr. Roberson is well suited for the job.



Mr. Roberson is a trained vocal musician who has directed and sung in internationally renowned choral groups. Years ago, he wrote the music for one of Mr. Pullens's stage plays, and the two have kept in touch ever since. "When we decided we needed a dean of arts, Mr. Roberson seemed like the obvious choice," says Mr. Pullens. "I didn't hire him because I know him; I hired him because I know what he is and what he's done. And that's impressive."

Mr. Roberson also is a theatrical writer and producer who is currently co-writing a play to be produced in 2009. Outside of the arts, he has implemented mentoring and educational initiatives for the YMCA in the Metro DC Area; Charlottesville,

VA; and Columbus, OH. He also has an extensive background in teaching public speaking and in mentoring children and youth of all ages. He has served as a Legislative Brain Trust member for a state senator in Nashville, TN, and his corporate experience includes public speaking, consultation, and fund-raising.

"I've never done anything quite like this before. There's a lot to be learned, and a lot to accomplish fast. But if ever I get frustrated or daunted, I just go watch the kids perform," says Mr. Roberson, whose own son, Andrew, has enrolled at Ellington. "They center me and remind me why I'm here."

TEACHING ELLINGTON STUDENTS ENTREPRENEURSHIP

NFTE Offers Students Foundation in Business

Many Ellington students aspire to business careers in entertainment, giving up the glamour of the on-stage world to be the brains behind the curtain. But how, exactly, does one gain the necessary foundations of the trade?

The National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurship helps young people build skills and unlock their creativity. It achieves its mission by:

1. Creating engaging, experiential curricula and tools to improve academic, business, and life skills
2. Training and supporting teachers and youth professionals
3. Partnering with schools, community-based organizations, and post-secondary institutions
4. Offering volunteers meaningful opportunities that connect students to real world experiences
5. Linking the educational and business worlds in the classroom and beyond
6. Providing services to program graduates
7. Demonstrating the outcomes of entrepreneurship education through research
8. Building public awareness to expand entrepreneurship education.

Sounds pretty exciting, doesn't it? NFTE provides wonderful opportunities for students across the country, and this year, we warmly welcome them to Ellington. Our new NFTE class is an elective offered to Ellington upperclassmen. The curriculum will teach students who are interested in careers in the entertainment industry how to build businesses, how to improve their academics, and how to turn their crafts into a lucrative profession. Students will learn to formulate a business plan that they ultimately use to launch their own businesses!

"We know our students have artistic talent," says Rory Pullens, head of school, "but we know they won't all become performers. The NFTE course offers yet another practical career option for burgeoning artists. It's great to present our students with as many options as possible!"

AREA THEATERS REACH OUT TO ELLINGTON

As society places increased value on community outreach and education, theaters around the metropolitan area are seeking to partner with Ellington in even bigger ways than in the past. The Kennedy Center, a leading partner since 2000, is a source of ongoing support, often giving Ellington access to its concert hall, providing tickets to the students, and sponsoring master classes and workshops on a variety of topics.

In an effort to show support for Ellington's 2007 Gala, the Warner Theatre provided its stage to Jasmine Guy and our students and boosted the funds raised by waiving their rental fee. We hope to be doing more productions with the Warner in the future.

Our colleagues at Arena stage have approached Ellington to collaborate in a number of ways. As they undergo a major renovation, they will offer Ellington students tickets to performances and master classes with their professional artists. We expect the relationship to grow over the years.

In an effort to upgrade the Ellington Theatre, Ron Newman, acting chair of the technical theater department and Ellen Copley, executive director of the Ellington Fund, have been talking to a number of venues about obtaining some used equipment. Ford's Theatre is undergoing an extensive renovation and actually had about 200 lights it needed to dispose of. Enter Ellen and Ron on the scene to scoop up the lights, light boards and a whole batch of electrical equipment. Conversations with Sarah Jencks, Ford's Director of Education, led to ideas about collaboration with Ellington's Museum Studies department over the expansion of the Theatre's museum on the assassination of Lincoln.

"Washington has such a wealth of wonderful theater," says Ellen Copley. "It's exciting to know that they have interest in future artists, too, and are willing to step up and help out."

ELLINGTON'S FACILITIES: PROGRESS YOU CAN SEE

DC Public Schools are hardly known for their state-of-the-art facilities, but for the first time in quite a while, tangible steps are being made to improve the facilities at the Duke Ellington School of the Arts.

Of course, most everyone knows about the exciting, high-tech recording studio that's been in the works. The studio will enable Ellington students to create audition cds to accompany college applications and competition entries. Step by step, progress is being made, and we expect it to be up and running later this semester. Please join us for the ribbon-cutting ceremony on Monday, November 19, from 5-7 p.m.

Ellington's roof has been the source of major water damage throughout the school for decades. Its complete replacement is currently our biggest facility improvement project, involving 16 sections. The roof replacement will help solve severe leakage and water damage problems throughout the school. Father John Payne, Dean of Students, oversees the projects, and meets weekly with the contractors. "Have you seen them up there?" he asks, chuckling good-naturedly about his fear of heights. "They think they're going to get me up there to see the finished project. Maybe I'll go up and see—but I won't go anywhere near the edge!" The roof is expected to be completed in December. Once that's complete, we can start to address the water damage in the theater and hallways.

Ellington benefited from a 'buff and scrub' effort implemented by Mayor Fenty's office for DC schools not slated for renovation in the near future. The all-volunteer members of the Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC) gave of their weekend time before school started to improve our students' learning environment. They replaced ballasts and light fixtures to brighten the hallways on the first, second, and third floors, and replaced fixtures in the dance studio, where 75% of the lights had burnt out. They repaired the sump pumps in the gym and stairwells, which should help prevent further water damage. They replaced the stairwell handrails, repaired the crumbling stairs on Reservoir Road, and power-washed the school's main entrance. "It made a huge difference," says Father Payne. "More than 50 people were here that day. It was wonderful—we thank them immensely."

The photo lab, whose ceiling caved in in the spring, has not been fully repaired, but it has undergone a temporary fix so it is once again usable.

"All this is a monumental effort," says Father Payne. "It's the first time in my history here that I've seen such effort and progress. It makes me feel hopeful."

Many thanks to the members of ABC who gave of their time and talent to improve our students' learning environment:

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PIANO TEACHER EXTRAORDINAIRE: LYNNÉ GRAY WINS YALE DISTINGUISHED MUSIC EDUCATOR AWARD

When Lynné Gray was summoned to the main office one afternoon, she thought it was probably to meet with a parent. Instead, she was informed by administrators that she was being nominated for the Yale Distinguished Music Educator Award and invited to attend the International Symposium on Music in Public Schools, *Music: A Child's Birthright* in New Haven, Connecticut.

The award and symposium were sponsored by Yale's class of 1957. "Most of them had never had a music lesson in their lives," says Ms. Gray, "but they recognized how critically important it is for students to have a holistic education that includes the arts." She feels strongly that the arts play an important role in supporting, enhancing, and developing a child's academic skills.

Ms. Gray comes from a long line of teachers, and says that earning the award credits all those who came before her, opened doors, and made sacrifices along the way to ensure her success. And it was terrifically rewarding to be acknowledged by the sponsors. "One gentleman welled up just talking about it—he felt unworthy in the presence of teachers."

"I don't teach to win awards," Ms. Gray reflects. "I teach because I love it, and because kids deserve a quality education from someone who feels her subject passionately. It's critical for a teacher to be patient, loving, kind, to give her students a sense of dignity and respect, and to make learning fun. I want my students to realize the great range of possibilities when pursuing their passions." With Ms. Gray paving the road for them, no doubt they will.



STUDENT SPOTLIGHT CERSTIN JOHNSON '08

As Hurricane Katrina barreled toward New Orleans, residents packed their bags and evacuated the city. Among them was Cerstin Johnson '08, who fled her home and traveled to DC to find refuge with a cousin. Cerstin enrolled in Ellington's Literary Media department. "I was the Katrina girl," she says. "Everyone expected me to be in a million pieces, but I was here, ready to work."

At Ellington, Cerstin enjoyed her vibrant surroundings, new friends, and motivating teachers. An essay she composed about her mother and aunts and the family she left behind won the Pen Faulkner *Dream Me Home Safely* contest. "That was awesome," she grins.

Her home undamaged by the storm, Cerstin finished first semester at Ellington and returned to Louisiana. "It was great to go home and see my friends and family," she says, "but I was bored. I didn't feel stimulated like I did at Ellington. Everything I write is about something that engages me, and I just didn't feel engaged." So she hightailed it back to DC.

Cerstin continued her winning streak as one of the recipients of this year's Children's Defense Fund *Beat the Odds Scholarship*, created to affirm the success of young people who are overcoming tremendous obstacles while working hard, demonstrating academic excellence, and giving back to their communities. *Beat the Odds* recipients continue to be leaders in their schools and mentors to those in need in the community while developing academic skills necessary to pursue a college education.

Says Cerstin wistfully of her Ellington career, "I wish I could do it again, but from the beginning. I feel like I've only been here two seconds—I love this place. My teachers understand writing and people, and they help me see the big picture. And the friendships I've developed are very lasting."

Upon graduating from Ellington, Cerstin plans to continue her education, hopefully at Sarah Lawrence, Bennington, or Brown, and someday, perhaps become an educator herself. "I think I could be good at teaching," she says, "and I'd want to do that someplace like here." Someplace that feels like home.



ELLINGTON FUND NEWS

We extend our heartfelt appreciation to Virginia Mott Sullivan, president of the Ellington Fund Board of Directors. For the past 12 years, Ginny has shepherded the board, the Fund, and the school through numerous financial and personnel challenges, always focusing a determined eye on keeping the school alive and well. She has a deep love for Duke Ellington and will continue to be one of its greatest supporters. Ginny strongly believes that leadership must change in order to keep an organization fresh and growing, and for that reason, she has decided to step down. We will miss her, but we won't let her get too far away!

Robert Horvath was elected to take her place at the Annual Board meeting in September.



FACULTY & STAFF NEWS

Births...

It is with great joy and excitement that our beloved guidance counselor, **Silvette Bullard**, welcomes her own new beloved. On August 29, she and her husband became parents to a baby son, Brendan James, who weighed six lbs., 10 oz. Brendan, Ms. Bullard reports, has a "full head of satiny black hair and a strong set of lungs!" We wish the Bullard family the very best.



Deaths...

Our deepest condolences to **Donna Hollis-Walker**, whose mother passed away in September. Our thoughts are with Ms. Hollis-Walker and her family.

Congratulations...

Davey Yarborough, chair of the instrumental music department, announced the release of his new cd, *in the spirit*, recorded with his wife, vocalist Esther Williams. The cd features several ensembles performing traditional and non-traditional pieces in various styles. Thanks for contributing to our listening pleasure, Mr. Yarborough!

Dr. Michael Clarke's excellent background and reputation earned him an appointment to the College Board Middle States Regional Council. We're very proud of our Dean of School Operations!

In the world of Museum Studies, **Marta Reid Stewart** will be presenting a paper on the female body in art at Spellman College in April 2008; **Rhonda Silver** is collaborating with gallery owner Anne Fischer to create sculptures for a film project, and Jarvis Grant received the Prix de la Photographie, Paris Honorable Mention Professional Landscape Award 2007. Well done, Museum Studies!

A warm welcome to all of Ellington's new faculty and staff...

Tina Arrington, *Guidance Counselor*

Reginald Betts, *Literary Media*

Kim Bey, *Theater*

Derrick Brown, *Literary Media*

Natalie Bruford, *Social Studies*

Yura Cajahuaranga-Schreiber, *Spanish & French*

Melanie Chamberlain, *Social Studies*

Daphne Charles, *SAT Prep*

Nicole Combs, *English*

Isaac Daniel, *Instrumental Music*

Larry Davis, *Math*

Shokitha Flemmings, *Science*

Tanji Gilliam, *English*

Esther Iverem, *Literary Media*

Aretha Johnson, *Office Assistant*

Beverly Johnson, *Technical Theater*

Gina Marrazza, *Guidance Counselor*

Grover Massenburg, *Museum Studies*

Yolanda Pelzer, *Vocal Music*

Joaquin Pena-Medina, *Math*

Messiah Ramkissoon, *Literary Media*

Calvin Roberson, *Dean of Arts*

Regina Robinson, *Information Center Director*

Erika Rose, *Literary Media*

Stanley Squirewell, *Visual Arts*

Cullen Swinson, *English (welcome back!)*

Angela Walker, *Vocal Music*

Tatyana Yudina, *Musical Accompanist*

ELLINGTON PARTNERS AGAIN WITH LOCAL ART GALLERY

Last year, Brian Benavides, the owner of Fine Art & Artists Gallery (FAA) of Georgetown, hosted an exhibit, a portion of whose proceeds he donated to Ellington. The exhibit's opening night party was a resounding success.

"It was a tremendous evening," says Bob Horvath, newly appointed president of the Ellington Fund, whose partner, Patrick Lyden, surprised him with a gorgeous painting of Duke Ellington at last year's event.

In fact, the program was so fulfilling for all involved that FAA and Ellington have decided to partner again. On Saturday, November 17th, 2007, the gallery will host its second annual campaign to benefit the Duke Ellington Fund with the opening of a brand new exhibit by artist Steve Penley.

Penley, who is known worldwide for his renditions of past presidents, political figures and American icons will be in attendance for this spectacular evening event, in which 5% of all gallery proceeds will be donated to the Ellington Fund.

Those interested in attending the VIP opening of this show should contact Brian Benavides, Gallery proprietor at 202-965-0780 or vial email: brian@faagallery.com



The Ellington Fund's new board president Bob Horvath (right) with partner Patrick Lyden.

HEXAGON SEEKS ELLINGTON PARTICIPANTS

Perhaps you're familiar with Hexagon: a hilarious satirical production group that have been in existence for 54 years and have produced their show at Ellington for over 25 years. Their performances have raised several million dollars for various charities.

The lucky beneficiary of the 2008 production, *Stars & Gripes Forever*, is...you guessed it, the Duke Ellington School of the Arts! The show's producer, Thomas Harris, emphasizes, "We really want this year's show to be an active learning experience for everyone involved."

Directed by Malcolm Edwards, the all-volunteer production hopes to recruit a wide variety of Ellington talent to participate. "We need people in front of and behind the footlights—we're seeking talented actors, singers, dancers, choreographers, writers, stage crew, and costume, sound, lighting, and make-up design."

Audition dates are slated for January 5 and 6. Rehearsals begin on January 7 and take place four evenings a week until opening night, February 27—no small commitment! But it's tremendously fun for all involved, and worth every moment.

For more information about Hexagon, visit www.hexagon.org. To audition or be involved with technical aspects of the production, call 202.333.SHOW (7469) or email tharrisii@aol.com.

ELLINGTON PARTNERS WITH WASHINGTON POST RADIO WTWP

Monthly Talk Live with Jerry Phillips

Renowned Washington Post radio host Jerry Phillips has had a long relationship with Ellington. "He's always had an affinity for Ellington students and wanted to do something to help us," says Rory Pullens, head of school. So the host invited Ellington to have a regular monthly feature on his show, titled *Ellington Platform*.

The opportunity will afford Ellington great public visibility and remind the world that we're here, doing great things. Perhaps more importantly, the show's point-counterpoint format will enhance students' critical thinking skills and sharpen their awareness of current events and issues. They will prepare to discuss such topics as gun control, re-gentrification vs. revitalization, the school district reorganization, race issues, and much more.

It also will introduce students to the art of broadcast production. "We're tremendously grateful to Jerry Phillips for involving us," says Calvin Roberson, dean of arts. "This is a fantastic learning opportunity on so many levels."

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STUDENT SPOTLIGHT MICHAEL BARNES '09

(Article was edited from a story by Andrea Noble that originally ran in Gazette Newspaper--Prince George's County)

Michael Barnes and his peers in the vocal music department often arrive at school on Monday mornings hoarse from singing in their church choirs over the weekend. Striving to become an opera singer, the Upper Marlboro resident already knows that he is going to have to limit his outside singing so he doesn't damage his voice.

"The power of the voice in gospel will put pressure on your vocal chords," Barnes said. "I've had to hold back singing a whole lot in church because of the way it strained my vocal chords."

At the Washington National Opera Institute for Young Singers, a three-week camp that prepares singers for careers in opera, Barnes was able to give his all every day without fear of sounding like a frog the next day.

Growing up in a musically inclined family, Barnes was naturally drawn to singing. But his extended family is still sometimes surprised when they hear what Barnes is up to.

"I still tell my family about it and they are like, 'What, opera?' Because they can't understand the language, mostly all you hear in opera is the notes."

Lisa Adams, Barnes' mother, first exposed Barnes to music through the children's choir she directs in church.

"But he didn't even realize he was interested in this type of thing until he started performing publicly," Adams said.

It was through classes at the Duke Ellington School of the Arts...that the baritone singer gained more exposure to classical music. It encouraged him to explore additional styles through performances at the Public Playhouse in Cheverly and even dabble in Shakespeare as a singer in *As You Like It* at the Greenbelt Art Center. However, it was the theatrical aspect of opera that entranced Barnes.

With the opera institute, Barnes was part of a final group performance at the Kennedy Center where only a select number of the 28 students from around the country at the institute performed.

Voice instructor Millicent Scarlett said she could see Barnes becoming more engaged with the audience every time he performed.

The institute proved to be a difficult but engaging experience for Barnes, further solidifying his dream to become a famous opera singer. At Duke Ellington, students are required to learn Italian, which was helpful to Barnes at the institute. However, singing and learning the meaning of Italian and German songs in a week's time proved challenging.

"I'm still trying to grasp the opera thing by practicing every day," said Barnes, adding that proper breathing, posture and music theory were still areas giving him some trouble.

But with the dedication to commute two hours roundtrip to attend Duke Ellington, Adams believes her son has the will to succeed when he puts his mind to it.

In the fall, when Barnes returns to school, he's sure his classmates and teachers will see a difference in him.

"I've learned so much about recital etiquette, like how I should be smiling at the audience," Barnes said. "So I'll be bringing that back with me and they'll probably be looking at me like 'Who is that?'"

Photo credit: Raphael Talisman, The Gazette Newspapers



Yes, I want to make a difference today!

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ELLINGTON PRESENTS:

New Initiative Rolls Out Red Carpet

One of Calvin Roberson's first initiatives in his new role as dean of arts is implementing an impressive new program, *Ellington Presents*. The series brings acclaimed arts professionals as guest lecturers on a monthly basis to share their talents, wisdom, insight, and instruction.

"We want students to have a well rounded view of what it takes to be an artist," says Mr. Roberson, "including some of the less glamorous or just unknown angles. Sure, we'll feature performers, but we will also expose our students to a whole variety of genres and behind-the-scenes careers in the arts." These careers include arts administration, arts funding, television and music production, and other relevant topics.

The first guest to kick off the series was Jam Donaldson, a BET producer whose controversial show *We Got To Do Better* has earned her a place in recent news headlines. Others slated to appear this semester include acclaimed music producer Chucky Thompson (who has produced cds for artists like Mary J. Blige, Nas, and Biggie Smalls, among others), actor Terry Carter, recording



Donaldson kicks off the *Ellington Presents* series

artist Mya, rapper DMC of Run-D.M.C., and a panel of literature, theater, and dance specialists from the National Endowment for the Arts.

"There are going to be acclaimed artists in and out of here all the time," says Mr. Roberson, "and programs like this will help boost Ellington to be a premier arts institution. It's tremendously exciting and gratifying to see our efforts coming to fruition."

UPCOMING ELLINGTON EVENTS

Check www.ellingtonschool.org for performance times and details.

Oct. 18, Chamber Music Concert

Oct. 29, Student Recital

Nov. 1, Museum Studies Exhibit: *Picture This*, Opening Reception

Nov. 3, Duke Ellington Variety Show: *Our Story*

Nov. 15-16, Fall Theater Showcase

Nov. 19, Recording Studio Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony

Nov. 20, Student Recital

Nov. 28, Wind Ensemble Concert

Dec. 5, Literary Media Chai Latte

Dec. 6, Choir Holiday Concert

Dec. 13-15, Seasonal Celebration: *Amahl and the Night Visitors*

Dec. 18, Student Recital