MEANYC All-County Middle School Festival

On February 7-8, Middle School musicians from all five boroughs will gather at Bishop McLoughlin Memorial HS in Brooklyn for our fifth annual MEANYC All-County Middle School Festival. This year, we set a record of over 350 students nominated by MEANYC members to participate in one of three groups: Mixed Chorus, Concert Band and String Ensemble. This year is also the first time that each of the five boroughs will have representation in the festival. Conductors of the groups are:

Mixed Chorus - Heidi Best (choral director at Frank Sinatra HS of the Arts); Concert Band - Penelope Smetters-Jacono (band director, Celia Cruz HS of Music); String Ensemble - Bonni Glazier (NYSSMA 3rd Vice-President). Students will rehearse with the conductors on Friday evening and Saturday morning, and present a concert on Saturday afternoon at 3pm. MEANYC members have free admission to the concert, so please come out and enjoy the terrific music!

Saturday February 7, 2014, 3PM
Bishop Loughlin Memorial HS
357 Clermont Avenue,
Brooklyn, 11238

For more information, contact Maria Schwab, schwab@meanyc.org

Hats Off To Ira Shankman

While working for the NYC Department of Education, Ira Shankman distinguished himself as a music teacher (JHS 271, Curtis H.S.), assistant principal (Seward Park H.S., Stevenson H.S.), and principal (Talent Unlimited H.S.). He was the founder and director of the New York All-City H.S. Marching Band and conducted award-winning bands, choruses and jazz choirs. He served on the faculties of Wagner, Passaic County Community college and Hostos Community College.

An arts-in-education advocate, he contributed to the development of the DOE multicultural curriculum and the Chancellor's Curriculum Frameworks. In September of 2001, he was the arts consultant to the Frank Sinatra School of the Arts and worked with founder Tony Bennett and the principal to launch the school. He was the NYC Zone Representative to NYSSMA and still plays an active role in the organization by chairing adjudication festivals for more than 2000 students and serving as a choral and vocal jazz adjudicator.

At the recent NYSSMA Conference, he lent his expertise to the coaching and conducting of the All-State Vocal Jazz Ensemble, a group of 24 voices, for a performance at the Rochester Riverside Convention Center on the afternoon of December 7 at 4:00PM. He led them in classics like “Almost Like Being in Love” and “Avenue C” which brought the audience to their feet. Congratulations Ira and thank you for all you have done!

We will be launching the newer MEANYC website any day now! Advance kudos to Sharon Golub for pioneering us into the 21st century!
From the President

What are your most memorable musical moments?

My guess is that what came to mind was some sort of performance involving yourself. It was likely an instance when you felt connected to something larger than yourself. There was probably a sense of elation, history, magic or even reverence. Your imagination was transported and your heart was moved.

If you are like I am, the recall of those events resurrects the euphoria of that earlier time. You are there once again. I remember like it was yesterday my first rehearsal of junior high band. Coming from a small rural elementary program of three woodwind players, it was a shocking thrill when the first notes of a 60+ ensemble sounded. As a university freshman, I will never forget the glorious exaltation of singing Handel’s “Hallelujah Chorus” with an orchestra instead of with just piano accompaniment. I knew that I was in a privileged place.

This past November, I attended the NYSMA Conference in Rochester and sat in on many insightful and practical sessions that will certainly assist my teaching, but particularly memorable for me was the traditional Stairway Sing when more than two hundred of my state colleagues assembled to lift their voices in songs of the holiday season. It may not have been a profound performance, but it was a joyful, spontaneous camaraderie. Likewise, I am confident that every student who was selected to participate in one of the All-State ensembles will long remember that musical collaboration, judging by the enthusiastic performances they presented.

We have all experienced the delight of collective music making, the synchronized connection of a group of performers that rivals the achievement of any sports team. We call our students to share a common goal, to strive for precision and to aspire to beauty that can only be achieved if each one fulfills his or her role.

Colleagues, I therefore submit that our role as music teachers is a lofty one. As we make provisions for our students to make music together in a multitude of ways, within any one of them, it could and does leave an indelible mark of positive, lasting significance. For someone, our perseverance through the daily grit and grind culminates in magic. You and I are the weavers of memories for our students.

Three cheers for all that you do for the students of New York City! Keep the music going!

Sincerely,
Michelle Turner
MEANYC President

INVITATION

If a treasured musical moment came into your mind with the question above, we invite you to share it with us for possible publication in our Spring newsletter. In a paragraph totaling 100 words or less, please forward your accounts to turner@meanyc.org with “Share the Memory” in the subject line.

Annual Awards Dinner Nominees?

The MEANYC Executive Board is looking to honor three or four individuals or corporations who have made a difference to the students throughout New York City at our annual dinner on May 1. Please send all suggestions, along with a brief description of this person’s work, to Michelle Turner by Feb 1.

This is your newsletter. Keep us informed of your concerts, special programs, activities, awards, etc. If you can contribute tips, methods or techniques that work for you, we would like to share them with our members.

Mail items for publication to:
Michelle Turner
508 East 78th Street; #2i
New York, NY 10075
or email crescendo@meanyc.org
HELP WANTED: MUSIC TEACHERS!

A mirage? No! New York City students deserve having a NYSSMA-trained [NYC] adjudicator to evaluate and supply guidance for their future musical studies.

For only the second time in the last 24 years, a NYSSMA Adjudicator Training Seminar will take place in New York City on Friday evening, March 28 and Saturday March 29 at the Celia Cruz High School for Music in the Bronx. Adjudicator training is offered in Strings, Brass, Woodwinds, Percussion, Piano and Voice. Those seeking either a second certification or being designated as an All State Adjudicator need only attend the Friday session. Compensation for solo judges includes mileage (rate determined by the IRS last year at 56¢/mile), tolls, meals on site, a $10/day en route food travel allowance and $18/hour honorarium. A bonus that can be as much as $1,000 is paid in January depending upon the number of judging hours one has served in the previous year.

You must be a NYSSMA/NAfME member to participate. Retirees are welcome! The application appears in each issue of School Music News, which all members receive. For membership information visit the NYSSMA web site or call 516-997-7200 any weekday morning.

Joe Sugar Day In Albany: March 3

I serve on the NYSSMA GRC (Governmental Relations Committee). At this point we have not finalized what our “Ask” will be. At the state level there are a number of possibilities. A bill to step away from the premature implementation of Common Core and its concurrent high stakes testing that affects students and teachers alike is in the Assembly, and a concurrent bill is likely to be introduced in the Senate. Support for an existing bill to reduce the costs associated with unfunded educational mandates would hopefully make more funds available for Arts education. A bill mandating that the State Commissioner do periodic audits to determine local compliance with Arts regulations is still in play. But most important, is the fact that you can attest to the unintended consequences that have befallen your program and students due to mayoral control, high stakes testing, Common Core, APPR in the absence of subject specific assessments, etc.

As important as these state issues are, mayoral control and who will really run our schools must take priority. Mayoral control in NYC ends this June! The rest of us in the state both in and out of NYSSMA have our own local concerns including the 2% tax cap. Your working environment over the next several years will be determined by who governs the New York City schools. If for no other reason than your own self-interest, you must take one of your conference days on March 3rd to advocate creating a school governance structure that is responsive to the needs of parents, students and educators.

If you would like to travel to Albany via a chartered bus, or perhaps car pool, contact Maria Schwab, MEANYC Government Relations Chair, at schwab@meanyc.org.

We will all have to live with whatever school governance is put in place by the legislature for years to come. After our twelve years of experience with the “reform” agenda of Mayor Bloomberg, driven by those who seek the privatization of government services, charter schools, and corporate interests, we must be sure that control of our schools returns to those who understand that access to a free well-rounded education is our children’s right. Will any of us have the right to complain afterwards if we do not personally take part in this when so much is at stake?

Michael Pitt, Zone 12 Representative

NYSSSA, an Extraordinary Experience for Students

Each year, hundreds of talented high school students choose to spend their summer making great music at the New York State Summer School of the Arts (NYSSSA), a program of the New York State Education Department. The seven NYSSSA programs provide artistically skilled high school students, regardless of their financial need, an opportunity to receive advanced instruction from professional artists. Attending one of the schools, each offering a specific arts discipline, gives every student the opportunity to grow in their chosen artist form in a rich, meaningful and supportive environment.

In order to participate, students must successfully audition at one of the sites offered throughout the state. Information about this year’s auditions will be posted on the NYSSSA website soon. At the music schools, the School of Choral Studies and the School of Orchestral Studies, students are immersed each day in large and small ensembles study, learning technique and repertoire, and watching and listening to some of the world’s greatest musicians demonstrate the artistry to which NYSSSA students aspire.

Students at the School of Orchestral Studies, housed at Skidmore College in Saratoga Springs, attend nightly performances of the Philadelphia Orchestra and on many of those nights they hear pieces they rehearsed under the baton of Artistic Director Luis Biava. On a weekly basis, Philadelphia Orchestra members provide expert instruction on that same repertoire, giving the students unique insight into the music. Thanks to this collaboration, over one hundred students arrive as eager individuals and, over the course of the four weeks, become a full symphony orchestra that performs at the Saratoga Performing Arts Center some of the same major works as the Philadelphia Orchestra.

The School of Choral Studies located at SUNY Fredonia provides individual instruction and interaction with an outstanding faculty led by acclaimed conductor Dr. Hugh Floyd. Students rehearse, develop their voice technique, and attend recitals and concerts in order to grow through listening and practice. Their hard work is rewarded with a performance at the famed Chautauqua Institute and a final concert at SUNY Fredonia’s Rosch Recital Hall.

Students emerge from their summers at NYSSSA as different people than when they arrived. They’ve made lasting friendships and made amazing strides in their artistic and academic careers. Many alumni say their time at NYSSSA helped shape their professional careers and who they are personally. Please visit www.oce.nysed.gov/nysssa and check out each school’s page on Facebook or find NYSSSA on Twitter for more information, updates, and pictures. Planning for the next NYSSSA season has already begun; audition information and dates for 2014 will be available soon.

[Ed.—This article, written by Edward Marschilok, was not able to be printed in the Fall issue of Crescendo but was emailed to our members in late September.]
Yes it is true. With the addition of a Majors festival at York College in Queens, we once again offer all of the above in all five boroughs. Although I began working towards having a Majors festival in Queens some 18 months ago, it was not nailed down until Thanksgiving. A listing for this festival may not appear in School Music News for some time, if at all. However it has been included in the Festival Announcement that was sent to the schools, courtesy of Barbara Murray, Director of Music for New York City, and you will find it when you apply on line via the NYSSMA website. Applications for Major ensembles and All State solos must be filled out online. This will require that you supply either your NYSSMA/NAfME membership number or a temporary number which can be obtained by calling the NYSSMA office (516-997-7200; x11) any weekday morning.

As a reminder, you must supply two original scores for each selection that is performed for the judge’s use. Three selections are to be performed, two of which, must come from the current NYSSMA manual. Please be sure to revisit your online application well ahead of time and indicate the selections that will be performed. Statewide, the deadline for Major Ensemble Applications is March 1.

The demand by out-of-zone schools to attend the NYU festival has been historically high. Be sure to apply early, especially if you wish to perform at NYU. I STONGLY SUGGEST that you contact the festival chair for the following: 1) to determine if the festival can handle your sized group; 2) the time slots that can be made available; 3) any equipment that you will need beyond a bass drum, bass drum stand and 2 timpani. This is the only equipment the festival chair must supply. Everything else, including mallets for the above equipment, needs to be supplied by your program. To lessen your load, our festival chairs have been generous in lending additional equipment, but you must discuss your needs directly with them. Do not expect that he or she will hunt down equipment for you at the last minute. Without a prior commitment by the festival chair to have equipment on hand, you may have to do without!

The procedures for solos remain the same. Visit the NYSSMA web site, download and print Form A and mail your completed form and payment to the appropriate festival chair. —Mike Pitt
Cocktail Party at Steinway Hall
Impromptu duet entertainment provided by Board members Ron Thompson (piano) and Barbara Novick (flute)

The New York Pops is dedicated to lifelong learning and collaborates with public schools, community organizations, children's hospitals and senior centers throughout the five boroughs of New York City.

Pops Education allows thousands of New Yorkers of all ages and backgrounds to participate in fully customizable music programs that blend traditional education with pure fun.

We make music open to all, and use tools like composition, lyric writing, performance and mentorship to foster learning and unbridled creativity. In doing so, we excite students and give them skills they can apply to all areas of their lives.

For information on the PopsEd programs, contact:
Kathryn Rudolph, Associate Director of Education
212-785-7677 | kathryn.rudolph@nypops.org
www.newyorkpops.org
On November 16, Dr. Heather Buchanan presented a workshop entitled, “Embodied and Expressive Choral Conducting.” Dr. Buchanan, professor of music and director of choral activities at Montclair State University in New Jersey, presented three sections in her: body mapping, core balance, and warm-ups/conducting. Dr. Buchanan’s entire presentation was founded upon science and emphasized the importance of truth.

The first section of the workshop focused on Body Mapping. Musicians are upper body/small muscle athletes; nothing musicians do can happen without movement. Dr. Buchanan suggests that quality of movement determines quality of sound. As musicians move with ease, freedom, and elegance they engage themselves in the sophisticated motor activity known to human kind. It is our duty as music educators to inform our students about and prepare our students for this kind of high-level performance.

As performers and singers, our body is our instrument. This fact came to the forefront of my awareness during Dr. Buchanan’s second section: Core Balance. Core balance focuses on proper body alignment. “The places of balance are where we begin and where we may return again and again as we perform.” Core balance is not posture, a static stance, but instead focuses on moving healthily and with ease.

Dr. Buchanan took out Mr. Bones—a model skeleton that would be helpful for all voice teachers—to show us the basic elements of our body structure. Then, through stretching and exercises, we worked to find our six “places of balance.”

- A-O joint (atlanto-occipital): the place where the skull attaches to the spine. It is important to find the balance here so gravity doesn’t pull one’s head down and assert unnecessary pressure and weight on the spine.
- Lumbar: the thorax over the lumbar vertebrae. To feel this, try walking backwards quickly. One will immediately notice a change in your thorax position.
- Hip Joints: make sure they are perpendicular to the floor. Feet should be directly under the hips bones (iliac crest) and parallel.
- Knees: not locked, or bent, but (you guessed it) balanced.
- Arch of foot: one should “feel the floor” through the arch of the foot because gravity is pulling you down.
- Arm structure: the arm begins at the clavicle, not the shoulder as our class was mistaken. Press the shoulders up, down, back, and forward, gently releasing after each stretch to feel their natural state of balance.

After, “coming to balance,” the entire room looked and felt different. We were more focused, relaxed, felt lighter, and more at ease. This is a stance that can be maintained for an entire concert. Telling singers to, “stand up straight,” is an unrealistic and unhealthy expectation.

Dr. Buchanan’s third section focused on the importance of warm-ups and gave us some conducting tips. She emphasized that warm-ups are not just for the voice, but also for the mind. This section was chock-full of tips and vocal exercises. We were so enamored with the information that we were all taking pictures of the slides. Here are few tidbits that resonated with me:

- Warm-ups should be divided into sections: individual and ensemble. Warm-up the individual first, then move to the ensemble.
- Warm-ups should move from general to specific i.e. do general vocal warm-ups, then warm-ups that specifically relate to repertoire.
- Link rehearsal goals with the musical development of the choir.
- Blend is the conductor’s job, balance is the individual’s.
- Vowels should always be spacious, high, and forward. Start with [i] and [u], then move to [a].
- Have your students turn and sing to one another.
- Remind students to, “Listen more than you sing.”
- As a conductor, only give essential information. They’ll take advantage if you give more.

And just like that, the workshop was over. Dr. Buchanan’s workshop filled us with new ideas, reaffirmed old ones, and quashed some commonly held misconceptions. Every section of the workshop gave choral educators tools to improve their ensembles, but the most important thing Dr. Buchanan imparted to the attendees was truth. Students will understand, respond to, and accept the truth; they will be better musicians, healthier, and happier.

Since attending the workshop, I have been working with my students and teaching them how to, “come to balance.” Not only do they calm down, sing better, and look better when I say, “find your balance,” but they have also learned things about their bodies they never knew. The first time I asked students to find their hip-bones, they were reaching for their waists. Now they know where the spine attaches to the skull and where the arm begins. By teaching my students about the science of their bodies, they have become more self-aware and therefore more active chorus participants.
MEANYC Members Make Their Mark

New York City was well represented at the recent NYSSMA Conference in Rochester, held December 5-8.

Ira Shankman, one of our charter members and member of the MEANYC Advisory Board, who is now director of the NYU Jazz Choir, coordinator of choral activities and director of undergraduate music education at the university, was enlisted to conduct the All-State Vocal Jazz Ensemble.

Dr. Janice Smith, a Queens College Professor and Supervisor of student teachers in music, presented a session entitled “Composing Together: Creative Music Projects for Upper Elementary Grades,” moderated a panel to discuss “Bridging Theory and Practice to Improve Music Education” and presided over many other sessions as the Research State Chairperson.

Longstanding member, Cara Bernard, the former MEANYC Membership Chair and now an Ed.D. Candidate at Teachers College, Columbia University, presented in three distinct areas. First in a session entitled “Challenging the Norm: Reconsidering Music Teacher Education,” Cara co-facilitated a dialogue to consider the possibility of expanding traditional concert models to include more ethnic, pop and modern band music. For NYSCAME, she led a session to examine the Danielson Framework for Teaching and its implementation in a H.S. Music Dept. and concluded as co-presenter for “Balancing the Choir: Getting the Most Out of Repertoire.”

Gina Constanza from Harlem Village Academies and Brian Wagner, of PS370K@PS/IS237, a District 75 school, co-presented a session entitled “Inclusive Music Teaching: Exceeding the Standards” to share strategies for engaging and showcasing the abilities of a wide range of learners.
Want to attend a future workshop? Follow the hashtag #MEANYCWORKSHOPS

Barbara makes the rounds at a Midwest Conference and proudly wears her MEANYC Pin!
Our most recent workshop on January 18, 2014: “Teaching Music in the Cloud” led by Jim Frankel
ensemble ACJW

The Academy—a program of Carnegie Hall, The Juilliard School, and the Weill Music Institute in partnership with the New York City Department of Education

Apply to be an Ensemble ACJW partner school.
Applications due March 17
Learn more at acjw.org.
Music Educators Association of New York City — Application For Membership

(Please Type or Print All Information)

☐ Check here if information has not changed since last year

Salutation (Mr/Mrs/Ms/Dr) _______ First Name ____________________________ Last Name_____________________________________

Home Address_________________________________________________________________________________________

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Work Phone ___________________________________________ Email (Personal) ______________________________

NYCDOE email__________________@schools.nyc.gov

Membership Category (Check One)  ☐ Educator $25.00  ☐ Retired $15.00  ☐ School/Corporation $75.00  ☐ College Student (free)

School or Organization __________________________________________________________________________________

Level:  ☐ Elem.  ☐ MS/JHS  ☐ High School  ☐ Other

Teaching Area [s]  ☐ Vocal  ☐ Strings  ☐ Winds  ☐ Percussion  ☐ Other

☐ I would like to attend an Executive Board meeting.  ☐ I am interested in the Mentoring Program.

☐ I PREFER TO GO GREEN AND RECEIVE LIMITED SNAIL MAIL

☐ I would like to contribute to the Scholarship Fund.  ☐ $10  ☐ $25  ☐ $50  ☐ $______ Other Amount

Make checks payable to MEANYC. Membership is valid for one year.

Mail to: Steve Underhill, 28 Lawrence Ave., Apt. 4, Lynbrook, NY 11563

Cut along this line and mail this form with your check.

Michelle Turner
508 East 78th Street; #2i
New York, NY 10075