

From the Music Department

Dear Parents, Caregivers, Students, and Friends,

In high school I performed at a festival with a well-known composer/conductor named Quincy Hilliard. We played "Ghost Dance," a modern composition that required sections of the wind ensemble to improvise exotic sounds.

I wasn't sure what to make of this piece; I had never seen improvisation markings in a classical context. When it came time to play, our ensemble was nervous. We rehearsed for only one day and most of us had never played together before. Dr. Hilliard raised his baton, we started to play, and I gradually noticed a strange feeling. Ethereal harmonies projected out of the low brass section and sent chills throughout my body. My hands grew increasingly aware of my saxophone and my eyes got lost in the music. I felt myself disappear, enveloped by the sounds around me, completely absorbed into the music.

I later entered music education determined to replicate this experience with my own students. While you can't teach the aesthetic experience, the educator can create an environment that is comfortable, trusting, and safe. I developed activities, such as improvisation and composition, which allow students to create their own work. Students must also connect with their own environment so that the work has meaning and relevance to their lives.

A student who successfully engages in art will be motivated to develop the technical skills to relive the aesthetic experience again. This will contribute to a life-long passion for creating art. The journey towards the experience also allows students to explore their own humanity and discover their place in the universe. These intrinsic motivations for music learning are much more important than recent hype about the extrinsic effects of music on a student's IQ and SAT scores.

Sometimes the aesthetic experience will happen far outside of the classroom. The BAA Big Band took a trip to the University of New Hampshire last spring to perform in a jazz festival. On the bus ride I witnessed my confident artist-scholars turn into a nervous group of teenagers. Students half-jokingly asked where I was taking them with concern about how an urban high school ensemble would be received in a rural community. I assured them that everything would be fine, but secretly worried that their discomfort would affect their performance.

We registered and loaded our equipment into our designated warm-up room. I told the students to play part of each song before our adjudication. As I counted off to "Birdland," the students breathed together and played the first note with a passion and intensity that I had never heard before. Excited, and quite surprised by their enthusiasm, I waved them on without stopping. They were not performing for any audience, or judges, only for themselves. They were playing out of joy and fascination with the music that transcended a group of individuals to a larger whole. The band held firm to the last note. Then there was just silence. The musicians carefully put their instruments into their laps and someone said "wow." Everyone in that room knew the moment was special. And that was just a warm up.

Sincerely,



Matt Clauhs
Music Faculty



Music teacher Matt Clauhs with the Boston Arts Academy Jazz Band.

Senior Grant Project awardees

Congratulations to the following seniors who have been chosen as the 2007-08 Senior Project awardees. For descriptions of their service projects, please visit the BAA website: www.bostonartsacademy.org.

Karina Arias & Jackie Boyer: *Boston's Music for the Soul*
Pamela Arroyo: *Soul Connections*
Kadahj Bennett: *Lyrics on Concrete*
Melanie Cain & Yenasi Morales: *Dreamz*
Ivan Cutts: *Options*
Gerami Groover & Jennifer Manzanillo: *Save the Music*
Lauren McMahon & Brittany Lewis: *Creating Recyclable Art*
Stephanie Raymond: *Salsa the Night Away for Cancer*
Adeline Rutkowski-Ansell: *Watch Your Language! A Video Poetry Workshop*
Cassandra Scarlet: *The Jazz, Musical Theater, Opera Project*
Nathan Stockwell-Velazquez: *A Call for Help: Stop the Guns*
Zakiyah Sutton: *Flip the Script*

BAA's online photo gallery

Photos from many BAA events are now available for viewing and purchasing online. They may be found by visiting the BAA website homepage (www.bostonartsacademy.org) and clicking on the link "Photos". Our photos are hosted by the company SmugMug and may be purchased as prints and also transformed into gifts, such as mugs, mouse pads and T-shirts. To access the gallery of photos directly, go to <http://bostonartsacademy.smugmug.com>.

Congratulations music students

Each year, the Massachusetts Music Educators' Association (MMEA) sponsors festival performances showcasing the best and brightest music students throughout the state. First, each of the five districts, Eastern, Northeast, Southeast, Central and Western, hold auditions for district festival chorus, band, orchestra and jazz band. Students who score in the top 10% receive an invitation to audition for the All-State ensembles. Those who are accepted perform at Symphony Hall during the MMEA's annual All-State conference.

For the first time in MMEA history, Boston is at the center of the association's activities. As such, BAA is proud to send seven students to the senior festival this year, with two students receiving All-State recommendations.

Congratulations to vocalists Jacqueline Boyer, Cherelle Brown, Alana Daly, Danny Duffy, Derrick Hannah, Jennifer Manzanillo, Ashwa Marshall, Christiana McMullen, Danielle Olivero, Casandra Scarlett, and Erica Telisnor and instrumentalists Mariano Neris and Leslie Pina. For more information about the festival performances, visit www.mmeaonline.org.

BAA Math Fair at Boston University

After expressing the desire for more challenge and a change of venue, Math 4 students took their annual math fair on the road this year, to Boston University. The new *BU/BAA Math Expo* was facilitated by Mrs. Rowe, who took students to professor Dr. Carol Findell's math class.

BAA students and BU students were paired into mixed groups, and together engaged in deep mathematical discussions. After the math presentations, BAA students quizzed the older students about their college experiences and BU students showed great interest in the experiences of our students, asking questions about their busy schedules and the influence of arts on academics (and vice versa).

This new challenging environment for the traditional math fair was a great success. Many thanks Mrs. Rowe, the math team, Boston University and Dr. Findell for providing our students with this extraordinary experience.

Co-Headmaster Linda Nathan
Co-Headmaster Carmen Torres
Artistic Dean Fernadina Chan
Ex. Dir. BAA Foundation Rick Tagliaferri
Communications Director Helen Russell
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BOSTON ARTS ACADEMY is a collaborative project between the Boston Public Schools and the ProArts Consortium, an association of six internationally known institutions of higher learning. Each specializes in the visual arts, performing arts and architecture:

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174 IPSWICH STREET • BOSTON, MA 02215
T 617-635-6470 F 617-635-8854
www.bostonartsacademy.org



Important Dates*

Monday, December 31

Winter Vacation

No School for Students

Tuesday, January 1

Winter Vacation

No School for Students

Wednesday, January 2

Winter Vacation

No School for Students

Professional Day for Faculty

Thursday, January 3

No School for Students†

BAA Staff/Faculty Retreat

Friday, January 4

No School for Students†

BAA Staff/Faculty Retreat

Monday, January 7

Students Return to School

Tuesday, January 8

Parent/Caregiver Council Mtg.†

Assembly Hall, 6-7:30 pm

Friday, January 11

10th & 12th Grade

Science Symposium

Saturday, January 12

Financial Aid Workshop @ BAA†

Fill FASA form with Ms. Hairston.

BAA Assembly Hall @ 10 am

Thursday, January 17

Term II ends

Inferno Exhibition 4 pm

Sandra & Philip Gordon

Studio Gallery, 4th Floor @ BAA

January 18 & 19

Audition Days at BAA, 9 am-5 pm

Monday, January 21

Martin Luther King Jr. Day

No School for Students

Tuesday, January 22

Term III begins

Monday, January 28†

All 9th Grade students

report to BAA 8:00-10:00 am.

Wellness Seminars in Self Identity, Mind-Body Balance and Personal Growth.

All 10th Grade students

will complete a Seminar activity independently off site.

All 11th Grade students

report to BAA 10:30 am-12:30.

Wellness Seminars in Social Justice/Service to Community in preparation for Senior Grant Proposal.

All 12th Grade students

complete a Humanities 4 assignment independently off site.

* Calendar events are subject to change.
Please call to confirm times and dates.

† Important parent/caregiver date!

A busy winter at BAA



Thanks to a generous grant from The Clowes Fund, the Theatre and Visual Arts departments welcomed playwright Melinda Lopez and artist Carlos Estévez. Above left: Playwright Ms. Lopez (left) talks with students Nelson Martinez and Katie Fornaro. Above right: VA senior Makeba Bostic works with VA Chair Kathleen Marsh and Carlos Estévez.



BAA Spanish students joined Judge Maria Lopez for a special assembly at the school. Thank you to Josefina Bonilla-Ruiz for helping make this visit possible.



Thanks to our many friends and community members who participated as judges for Senior Project Night. Student Derrick Hannah (left) explains his proposal.



BAA thanks Emerson College for giving theatre students the opportunity to hear actor, director, and activist, Edward James Olmos speak. Above: BAA students pose with Mr. Olmos.

Inferno Exhibition: Vice/Virtue II



VA student Antonio Barbosa works on his painting for the upcoming Vice/Virtue II exhibition.

This year's junior Visual Arts class has been exploring themes of vilification in Robert Pinsky's translation of Dante's *Inferno*.

After investigating contemporary examples of this theme (including actions at Abu Ghraib Prison and the post-war experiences of veterans) students have created paintings that express their personal reactions. In addition, the project will culminate with an Islamic calligraphy component in which students will explore the theme of Virtue.

The *Inferno* exhibition is an annual interdisciplinary curriculum that allows students a critical reading of a major text while also applying new themes as source material for their own work. The accessibility and poetry of Pinsky's translation has provided a rich and engaging relationship with the text.

We invite you to join our students, families, friends, and faculty at the *Inferno Vice/Virtue II* Exhibition opening in the Sandra & Philip Gordon Studio Gallery (4th floor) on Thursday, January 17th from 4-6 pm.

A PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL
FOR THE VISUAL AND
PERFORMING ARTS

*Boston Arts
Academy*

174 Ipswich Street
Boston, MA 02215