

## From the Music Department

Dear Parents, Caregivers, Students and Friends,

What is a jazz choir? The last time someone asked me this question, I prattled off a textbook answer with a smile on my face and a can-do ring in my voice: A vocal ensemble that performs jazz arrangements and improvises.

As I listened to myself talk, I realized there is more. There is a reason why students fight for spots in jazz choirs. There is a reason why directors swear by their vocal jazz programs. A reason why a jazz choir at once excites and intimidates. A reason why we value this kind of ensemble in music education.

On a base level, jazz choirs help music programs meet the national standards for teaching American music and multicultural experiences. Pushed further, singing jazz requires students to learn a new language and use it to communicate effectively—through harmony. They must examine a problem and contribute to its resolution—through improvisation. They must also connect with an American cultural legacy and embrace it—diversity. Simply put, the jazz choir experience is an integral part of a young person's musical and personal development.

One last fact: jazz choirs are almost non-existent in this country's urban centers. Churches and outreach programs help to fill the void, but children, many of them vocalists, still have few options beyond imitating stars in an effort to feed their musical intelligence.

In the age of school budget cuts, jazz training drops to the bottom of a long list of important priorities. We also have a jazz community that continues to struggle against the billion-dollar musical mainstream. These realities help clarify why so few jazz vocal ensembles exist in city schools.

While we are blessed with a jazz program and choir at Boston Arts Academy, we still face issues about that means for students. When they ask, "What does jazz have to do with me?" underneath is the statement, "Jazz is for people who are not like me."

Since students who live in urban centers and attend public schools have limited opportunities to engage in formal music training, these questions are really about issues of access.

*"We are not just teaching music; ultimately we are teaching cultural literacy."*

To bridge the gap, we have to remember that hip-hop and jazz grew from the same community. The message is, "This is not different from you. You are an extension of it." It is not enough for the teacher to stand in front of the room, play music, and hop up and down saying, "Hey! Isn't this great?" Students need to develop their own process of discovery for true appreciation—and learning—to take place. That learning is not so much about repeating something old as it is about using richer language to re-interpret the familiar and to create something new.

Thus the big picture is that we are not just teaching music; ultimately we are teaching cultural literacy. Every student needs to know that jazz is a bearing wall in the framework of this country's cultural reality. When they participate in the jazz program or see their peers in the jazz choir, they take a giant step toward recognizing and appreciating that reality. They get a better education.

Sincerely,



Allyssa Jones  
Co-Chair, Music Department



*Jazz Choir vocal students Rashene McIntyre and David Alexis rehearsing.*

## Lisa Bielawa: Composer-in-residence

Through a partnership with the Boston Modern Orchestra Project (BMOP), New York-based composer Lisa Bielawa will spend one week each month of her three-year residency, with BMOP at Boston Arts Academy. While here at BAA, Lisa will work with a select group of students interested in creating their own musical compositions. Ms. Bielawa has taught composition through the *New York Youth Symphony Making Score* program.

## BAA grads gather

On Wednesday, December 20th, BAA Alumni are invited to reconnect with friends and faculty before the Winterfest performances. This annual event was a huge success last year and we ask all BAA alums to shout out to their classmates about the party. Refreshments will be served and all attendees will be given a free Winterfest ticket. The festivities start at 5:30 pm in the Assembly Hall at BAA and will end in time for the 7 pm show at the Berklee Performance Center (see page 4 for more Winterfest details). Contact Dani Coleman for details: [dcoleman@bostonartsacademy.org](mailto:dcoleman@bostonartsacademy.org) or 617-594-7948.



*Congratulations to Jose Quispe (pictured above at left) for making the final round of the Citywide Vocabulary Championship. In addition, Addie Rutkowski, Nora Lutz, Rheeyan Johnson, and Meagan Nypaver made it to the semi-finals. Congratulations also to the rest of the BAA team: Judy Terranova, Luis John Bonilla, and Sirae Richardson. They did a great job representing BAA.*

## A new face at BAA: Matt Clauhs

BAA welcomes a new addition to the music department. Matt Clauhs grew up studying saxophone and flute and he majored in music education at Penn State University. He moved to the area to work as a music teacher in Sudbury before coming to BAA this year. Matt teaches technique, jazz band, combo, wind ensemble, theory, and music technology. He is also pursuing a masters in music education from the University of Massachusetts and performs locally with his group The Sunyata Jazz Quartet. Welcome, Matt!



*Matt Clauhs teaching at BAA*

## BAA's report card: School Quality Review

Every three years BAA is reviewed by a group of experienced educators—from both inside and outside of BPS. This team spends three intensive days at the school meeting with parents, students, teachers, trustees and other staff to review the school's practices in the areas of Vision, Governance, Teaching and Learning, Professional Development and Family and Community Engagement. Once written, the SQR serves as our report to the BPS and the BTU. This month, December 5-7, the School Quality Review team will be meeting here. The final report will be available to all families and trustees.

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*Boston Arts Academy* newsletter

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## How to Give Away A Million Dollars...

A recent article in *Slate*, an online magazine published by the Washington Post, asked several well-known individuals how they would distribute a million dollars. Robert Pinsky, our 2007 Apollo Awardee and longtime friend of BAA, gave his opinion on the subject. Read his comments online at [www.slate.com/id/2153314/](http://www.slate.com/id/2153314/).



violin students from the McCormack school.

## String Music Outreach

In its fourth year, students at the McCormack, Dever and Murphy schools have begun year-long violin and viola instruction through BAA's String Outreach Program. The program is under the direction of George Simpson, beloved BAA music instructor, who is the new director of the Roland Hayes School of Music. The String Outreach Program provides free music instruction into Boston's public schools and prepares students for BAA admission. It serves over 100 students in grades 3-8. String outreach program is funded thanks to EdVestors Collaborative Fund, Sovereign Bank, First Act and the Linde Family Foundation.

## Annual Appeal

Families and friends, look for our Annual Appeal letter, arriving in a few days. Please be generous and let us know if your employer matches gifts. This can double your contribution. Thank you!

## Handbook reminder

In September, all students are given the *2006-2007 Boston Arts Academy Handbook* to take home to parents/caregivers. The handbook is a way for BAA to communicate policies, procedures, school calendar, and faculty/staff information to parents/caregivers and students. The handbook was discussed during Parent/Student Orientation as well as with students within their majors at the beginning of the school year.

We are asking parent/caregivers to re-visit the handbook with your children to make sure they fully understand the policies of BAA. Pay close attention to their major, as well as to community standards. *Please pay particular attention to the following: respect of cultural diversity, inappropriate physical contact, open campus, hats, do-rags and other head coverings, cell phones, food outside of the cafeteria, theft and vandalism policies.* Thank you for your continued support. If you haven't received a handbook, please contact Lana Niles-Malcolm at 617-635-6470, ext. 102.

## Important Dates\*

### Saturday, December 2

SATs at designated locations  
Test begins at 8 am

### Monday, December 4

Parent/Caregiver and Board of Trustees Meeting & Holiday Party  
5-8 pm

### Tuesday, December 5

SQR Quality Review (SQR) Site Visit (see pg 2)

### Wednesday, December 6

SQR Site Visit  
Humanities 3 paper due  
† Parent/Caregiver Council Board Meeting 6-7:30 pm

### Thursday, December 7

SQR Site Visit  
School Visit Day/HSR Visit  
Audition Workshop 6-8 pm

### Saturday, December 9

Audition Workshop 10 am-12

### Monday, December 10

Humanities 2  
Classroom Exhibitions

### Tuesday, December 11

Exhibition @ The Gordon Gallery  
Carlomagno Pedro Martinez  
Sculpture and Prints  
Opening, 4-6 pm

### Wednesday, December 13

Lunchtime Throw Down

### Friday, December 15

Winterfest Chamber Recital  
(See pg 4 for details)

### Saturday, December 16

† Financial Aid Workshop  
@ BAA, 10 am-12 pm

### Tuesday, December 19

Winterfest Outreach Concerts  
(See pg 4 for details)

### Wednesday, December 20

Alumni Event @ BAA  
5:30-7 pm (See page 2)  
Winterfest Concert 7 pm  
(See pg 4 for details)

### Thursday, December 21

Talent Show

### Friday, December 22

*Winter Break Begins*  
*No School*

### Friday, January 5

*Students Return to School*

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

† Important parent/caregiver date!

## Did you know?

A new law allows for tax free distributions from IRA accounts of up to \$100,000 when designated to charity. For more information, please contact Rick Tagliaferri at 617-635-6543 or look on the web at [www.afpnet.org](http://www.afpnet.org).



*Jeff Colby conducts the Boston Arts Academy Chorus at the 2005 Winterfest Concert.*

## Winterfest 2006

Come celebrate the season with our Annual BAA Winterfest music performances. Students perform both vocal and instrumental selections. Performance schedules are as follows:

***December 15th, 7 pm***

*Winterfest Chamber Music Recital  
Boston Arts Academy, Room 315, 3rd floor  
Admission: FREE*

***December 19th 9 am, 11 am, and 2 pm***

*Winterfest Music Outreach Concert  
Berklee Performance Center  
136 Massachusetts Avenue  
Admission: FREE*

***December 20th, 7 pm***

*Winterfest Music Outreach Concert  
Berklee Performance Center  
136 Massachusetts Avenue  
Admission: \$10 adults, \$5 students/seniors  
Tickets at the door*

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