

From the Theatre Department

Dear Parents, Caregivers, Students and Friends,

We at BAA experience so many unplanned 'teachable moments'. Our students also teach us in surprising ways that keep us going and offer us the best rewards. My students open my eyes and recharge my batteries. This was the year of theatre travel and cutting-edge theatre. Watching our students experience new cultures and artistic challenges was inspirational.

We took ten young people to perform a new version of our human rights play, *A More Perfect Union*, to global audiences at the Edinburgh International Fringe Festival in Scotland, UK. When the terrorist warning at London's Heathrow airport struck the day we were supposed to fly, not one student, caregiver, or colleague pulled out of the trip. In Edinburgh, students interfaced with professional artists and others from around the world for whom the arts are a way of life, not just a school grade. They became a part of 'the tribe': 'art to art', as we say at BAA.

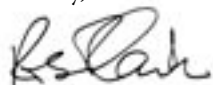
By early October, ten more students traveled to San Francisco with our Soul Element Project, sharing with other young people their process and their artistic lives. By then, I was well into rehearsals for a challenging and rich post-modern version of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. Again, my students taught me to take risks. They knew I loved Shakespeare, and wanted to share both the poetry and the message, relating the tyranny, power and ambition to current global issues and street violence. They worked so hard to make the text resonate with their audiences, and it did. The video headlines, in news-speak, together with the modern costumes, made the audience believe they were hearing present-day dialogue. For some students, this was their first main-stage show. Others took ownership of set building, excited to share that they hammered nails, screwed bolts, welded swords, and hung lights.

If I push the envelope and urge my students to take bigger risks they do so – and succeed. For some who struggle with mathematical analysis or deconstruction, kinesthetic learning comes naturally, viscerally taking everything in through body language and reactions. I watched one young man in *Macbeth*, who bumps into his own shadow, control with exact consistency his choreographed sword fight, and die the same way at every rehearsal performance. We have witnessed remarkable performances as students own challenging texts from Lope de Vega and Shakespeare as easily as Nilo Cruz, Ntozake Shange and Aisha Raman.

I end by sharing a story about a young man who sat next to me at *Macbeth*. He told me he had never seen a play before, and had dropped out of school. I thought he would find it incomprehensible, and expected him to walk out. How wrong could I be? At the final scene, he fell on his knees as the actors hailed Malcolm 'King of Scotland'. He looked at me and said: "I want to be in a play like this."

A love of learning, self-confidence, time management, and strong study skills are some of the greatest gifts we can offer our kids. What a myriad of 'teachable moments' they offer to us! My students taught me to think big, to share my vision, and never to give up on any one person.

Sincerely,



Rosalind Thomas-Clark
Chair, BAA Theatre Department

"To hear praise from people [in Edinburgh] who enjoyed our show and said that we changed their outlook on life made me feel as if we were making a difference."

-Kadahj Bennett, Class of 2008



BAA theatre students participating in street performances in Edinburgh.

Wellness Program

Gil Noam, the Director of the RALLY Program and the Program in Education, Afterschool and Resiliency (PEAR) and an Associate Professor at Harvard Medical School and McLean Hospital recently visited BAA and praised the school's Wellness model. Dr. Noam has a strong interest in supporting resilience in youth, especially in educational settings. Professor Noam praised BAA's early screening methods to identify students with physical and emotional health issues as well as our efforts to increasing faculty awareness.

In December the Dance department participated in a Wellness Day at school which day included workshops in Yoga, Thai Massage, Physical Therapy for Performers and community building activities led by Student Government representatives. All dancers participated in community building and each student participated in 2 of the 3 workshops. Following workshops, everyone enjoyed a healthy community lunch.

BAA Across the City

Our jazz group Entourage played for 150 guests at an inaugural gala reception for Deval Patrick at the Museum of Fine Arts. Students had the opportunity to meet the new governor and many guests interested in Boston Arts Academy.

BAA dance students shared the stage of the Strand Theatre with national dance companies Boston Ballet, Alvin Ailey and Pilobolus at *Stranddance* in a dazzling performance to open *Dance Across the City*, sponsored by Bank of America Celebrity Series and Citi Performing Arts Center. Our Concert Choir also performed for the State of the City Address.



BAA's Entourage L to R: Peter Handy, Mike Vertilus, Nora Lutz and Sean Alexander perform at the Museum of Fine Arts for a Deval Patrick inaugural event.

Save the Date!

Blues for Mister Charlie, written by James Baldwin and directed by Juanita Rodrigues, will be performed by the BAA Theatre Department at the Black Box Theatre from March 12-14, 2007.

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Boston Arts Academy newsletter

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Can you help?

BAA is looking for donations of the following instruments: oboe, bassoon, double b-flay tuba and piccolo flute. Also, while we have many beginner violas and violins, we are seeking better quality instruments for our intermediate students. Please contact Greg Holt at gholt@bostonartsacademy.org or Helen Russell at 617-635-6470, ext 328.

Operation Santa

BAA's first *Operation Santa*, a fundraising project in collaboration with the U. S. Postal Service, was organized to help families in need at Christmas time. Thanks to BAA Student Government, members of the Gay/Straight Alliance, Ms. Hairston, Ms. O'Halloran, Ms. Cortiella, Ms. Weiss, Ms. Simring, Ms. O'Campo and others who contributed. In addition to gifts for families, many coats were donated to the Somerville Homeless Coalition.



L to R: Ms. Jeanneatte Ocampo-Welch, Ms. Deidre O'Halloran, Saywarie Singh, Jack Stotler, Karla Heredia and Jamie Singh.

Fighting for Justice Health Care

Children's Hospital Neighborhood Partnerships (CHNP) and Health Law Advocates (HLA) have begun an exciting new collaboration, Fighting for Health Care Justice. The program is designed to provide legal assistance to ensure that families and children with previously unavailable representation receive the mental health services to which they are entitled. For more information, contact Lana Niles-Malcolm 617-635-6470, ext 102 or Peter McCaffrey at 617-635-6470, ext 109.

More Dance News

This year BAA submitted three pieces to the Regional High School Dance Festival. All three were chosen to be performed at the conference in Norfolk, Virginia. Included were the two pieces by our choreographers-in-residence from last year, Pedro Ruiz and Nathan Trice and for the first time, a student's work was chosen. Adrian Brayton's piece *Strings of Three*, a trio set to music by Stravinsky, will also be performed in March. Congratulations to Adrian and the dance department and thank you to the Surdna Foundation, who funded the residencies of Pedro Ruiz and Nathan Trice.

Important Dates*

Tuesday, January 30
Term 2 ends

Wednesday, January 31
Term 3 begins

Wednesday, February 7
Senior Dance Concert

Thursday, February 8
Senior Dance Concert

Monday, February 12
SAT #2 for Juniors

Wednesday, February 14
† Parent Caregiver Council Mtg.
6-7:30 pm @ BAA Assembly Hall

Thursday, February 15
Service Advocacy/ Wellness Day
Irregular School Schedule

Week of February 19-23
February Break, No School

Monday, February 26
Students Return to School

Wednesday, February 28
Honor Roll / Shared Values
Assembly for 11th & 12th Grades

Thursday, March 1
Honor Roll / Shared Values
Assembly for 9th & 10th Grades
National Dance Festival
Norfolk, Virginia
(see article at left)

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

† Important parent/caregiver date!

Summer School 2007 July 9-August 8

Please note: Summer school will be required for some students. Please check with your child's advisor for more information.

2007 Benefit & Gala to be held at the Virginia Wimberly Theatre in the Calderwood Pavillion



Photo Credit: Don West

One of the most exciting aspects of Boston Arts Academy's Benefit Gala on May 21st is that it is being held at the Virginia Wimberly Theatre, a new 360-seat theatre located in the Calderwood Pavilion of the Boston Center for the Arts.

Every seat in the theatre provides an intimate theatre-going experience and state-of-the-art staging and technology offers the opportunity to perform at a level not seen at previous galas. "We are finally able to do the kind of collaborative work across arts disciplines that we've always dreamed about," says Fernadina Chan, Artistic Dean and Dance Department Head at Boston Arts Academy. "This professional and beautiful facility allows us to present our art forms in an appropriate setting."

Ninth Annual Benefit Gala, May 21, 2007

Honoring Robert Pinsky with the 5th Annual Apollo Award

For more information, call 617-635-6543

The Virginia Wimberly Theatre at the Calderwood Pavillion, Boston Center for the Arts.

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