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Moving Forward, Looking Back

By Ms. Gwendolyn Dreyer
Performing Arts Assistant

As May starts up, most members of the department find themselves giving a giant sigh of relief. *Sweeney Todd* played to sold-out audiences. The Spring Dance Concert, *Velocity*, was a rousing success, and we all just came back from two weeks of spring break, easing in with a mostly stress-free *Tiyulim* week.

So it seems natural that in this issue, we will be looking back on our recent successes. Inside, you will find an article and pictures in summary of *Sweeney Todd*. You'll also find an article

and pictures from the Dance Concert as well.

But our year isn't over quite yet. Our middle school Broadway Bound class will present the fruits of their year long labor: a fully realized production of *Once on This Island Jr.* This particular edition of the eight time Tony Award nominee is slightly altered for a younger cast. But don't worry. This script has all of the emotional power of the original.

You can find sketches, pictures, and more from *Once on This Island Jr.* inside

our pages. Two performances only! May 17 at 3 PM, and May 18 at 4 PM.

And of course, to culminate the rest of our departments spring work, we will be presenting the Spring Performing Arts Workshop and Spring Ensembles Concert, on May 19 and 27 respectively.

This is our last issue for the school year. Have a great summer everyone. We can't wait to see what you will accomplish next year!

***Velocity*, a Spring Dance Concert**

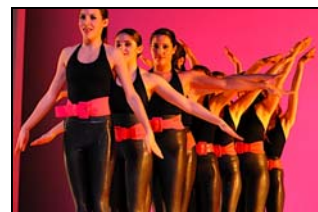
By Ms. Denise Plane
Dance

The J.V. and Varsity Dance Team recently held their annual dance concert. The concert, entitled "Velocity", showcased a variety of dance pieces ranging from contemporary to hip hop. Within the show, the team performed their award-winning competition routines. In addition, the show included pieces choreographed by members of the dance team.

The team brilliantly performed each piece with precision and high energy, and the show was received incredibly well by faculty and students alike.

The concert marked the end of the dance team season. Now, we're turning our energy towards plans for next year. Auditions will be held at the beginning of the 2009-2010 academic year.

GO MILKEN DANCE TEAM!



The Varsity Dance Team performs "Pussycat Dolls Mix"



Natalie M., Lexie S., Michelle N., and Natalie T. perform "Werewolf"



Tara B., Tina P., Natalie M., and Jessica K. perform "In the Ayer"



The Varsity Dance Team performs "One Moment More"

Once on This Island, Jr.

By Ms. Naomi Shepard and Ms. Gwendolyn Dreyer
Broadway Bound Performing Arts Assistant

Our middle school Broadway Bound class will present the fruits of their year long labor: a fully-realized production of *Once on This Island, Jr.* This particular edition of the eight-time Tony Award nominee is slightly altered for a younger cast. But don't worry. This script has all of the emotional power of the original.

Once on This Island is a retelling of the Hans Christian Anderson story, "The Little Mermaid." Based on the novel *My Love, My Love*, by Rosa Guy, this story takes place on a Caribbean island heavily split by social prejudices. A poor peasant girl, Ti Moune, falls in love with an upper class boy named Daniel, whom she saves after a car crash. The gods of

Water, Earth, Death, and Love are woven throughout the story, manipulating the islanders' lives.

All the design elements of *Once on This Island, Jr.* are spectacular, but the god's costumes are a particular standout. Michelle Neumann, a former Milken student and now professional costume designer, has provided the students with some of the most visually stunning costumes our stage has ever seen, including a dress once worn by Marilyn Monroe! This is a show not to be missed.

Once on This Island, Jr. plays at the Robert Margolis Performing Arts Center on May 17 at 3 pm and May 18 at 4 pm.

Once on This Island Facts

Once on This Island originated at Playwrights Horizons in New York City during the 1989-1990 workshop season. After enjoying rave reviews and sold out audiences Off-Broadway, *Once on This Island* opened at the Booth Theater on Broadway on October 18, 1990 and played for 469 performances and 19 pre-views. The show received eight Tony Award nominations, including Best Musical, Best Score and Best Book. On May 12, 2002, the original Broadway cast reunited for a special two night concert performance benefiting Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS and the Cantor Fitzgerald Relief Fund.



The Broadway Bound class rehearses one of many ensemble scenes in *Once on This Island, Jr.*



Benny P. (Tonton Julian), Daniella F. (Ti Moune), and Julia J-G. (Mama Euralie)



Emma M. (Andrea), Joey P. (Daniel's Father), and Gabe K. (Daniel) with the cast



Costume Design Drawings for the gods in *Once on This Island, Jr.* From left to right, Agwe (Goddess of Water) Asaka (Mother of the Earth), Erzulie (Goddess of Love), and Papa Ge (Demon of Death). All drawings by Michelle Neumann.

Sweeney Todd Takes Milken By the Throat!

By The Performing Arts Faculty and Staff

Absolute lunacy! This year, the Performing Arts Department took on its most ambitious musical to date: *Sweeney Todd*. This crazy tale, following love down the slippery chute to insanity, wowed audiences with compelling acting, ruby-throated singing and evocative sets and costumes from London two-hundred years ago. While some thought that attempting one of the most difficult musicals ever written might be lunacy, the overwhelming response of audiences proved that our students were completely up for the challenge.

Fifty students, from tech crew to actors to artistic staff, lent their talents and heart to the show. They learned more about theatre, gained in skills and confidence, got excited about the quality of their work and delivered an

excellent show. By working on such a high level, they reaped the rewards: a sense of mastery, the joy of connecting directly with an audience -- making them laugh one moment, scaring them the next and touching their hearts -- and well-earned praise.

If only the audience could have joined us for the whole process, when

serious moments became funny. There were a multitude of playful moments, often including blood, fog, shaving cream, meat, tall platforms, Cockney accents, sets and props spinning in the dark, costumes flying, voices blending with power and - pardon the pun - guts. Students bonded strongly with each other, onstage and off. Strangers become friends and friendships grew deeper. What a crazy, wonderful, brave, bold, wild, lovable ensemble!

So congratulations to everyone involved - this is one show we'll remember for a long, long time.



The cast performing the second act opening song, "God, That's Good!"



Benjamin L. (Anthony), Stephanie B. (Mrs. Lovett) and Sammy S. (Sweeney Todd) plot to free Johanna



Sammy S. (Sweeney Todd), and Nicole A. (Pirelli) shave Steven H. and Eli T. while Jacob S. (Beadle) looks on



Stephanie B. (Mrs. Lovett) comforts Benny P. (Tobias) during "Not While I'm Around"



Alyce T. (Johanna) sings while Deborah H. observes



Jacob S. (Beadle) teaches Zach R. (Judge Turpin) in the desires of women



Rachel G. (Beggar) has her throat slit by Sammy S. (Sweeney Todd)

Upcoming Events

MAY

- 17: 3pm *Once on this Island, Jr.*
Robert Margolis Perf. Arts Center
- 18: 4pm *Once on this Island, Jr.*
Robert Margolis Perf. Arts Center
- 19: 4pm Performing Arts Workshop
Robert Margolis Perf. Arts Center
- 27: 7pm Spring Ensembles Concert
Robert Margolis Perf. Arts Center

Student Spotlight

SAMMY S.

Grade Level: 12

Classes: Jazz Ensemble, Choir, Kol Echad

Extracurriculars:

Percussionist in *Seussical*, *When We Were Heroes*, and *Once on This Island*; Played the Tin Man in *The Wizard of Oz*, Felix Robertson in *Blind Date*, and Mr. Mushnik in *Little Shop of Horrors*; Milken Cows Improvisation Club

Latest Project: Playing Sweeney Todd in *Sweeney Todd, the Demon Barber of Fleet Street*



involvements were natural when I started Milken. But singing was another story. I was never a confident singer and never even considered myself a singer until Mr. Shepard threatened to break off my legs if I didn't join the choir. It was the healthiest threat I have ever sustained. Since then, one thing led to the next and soon I was acting and singing on stage.

What was your greatest accomplishment?

Honestly every good performance is a great accomplishment. Whether it is a winter/spring concert in which I am jamming with the well-rehearsed Jazz Band, the AIPAC dinner at which Kol Echad led the anthems or closing night of the year's musical, each performance gives me such rush and sense of accomplishment that is unparalleled. All said, the opportunity to perform as Sweeney Todd in the *Sweeney Todd* was probably my single greatest accomplishment of my Milken "career" because it was an opportunity that from

the orchestra of *Seussical* in ninth grade, I could never have envisioned.

What advice can you give upcoming Milken performing arts students that want to do more than one discipline?

My advice would be "just do it!" Take every opportunity you can to grow and stretch yourself. Milken is the perfect place for such risks because here every student can truly be a star. Every experience I had in Milken's performing arts department, with Mr. Shepard, Mr. Lasaine, Mr. Menna, Mr. Byrne, Mr. Mason, Mrs. Heller and Ms. Piane, has been a learning experience. I never felt like I was competing in a cut-throat environment and yet our performances never suffered. We succeeded because we put our everything into our work. That's what it takes to be involved in the various disciplines at Milken. But you may never have this opportunity to truly succeed onstage and offstage as much as you will at Milken.

What drew you to your various performing arts activities?

Music has always been an integral part of my family life. I have been playing percussion since I was five years old and I have played gigs with my professional musician father since I was probably ten. Thus, my percussive

Mission Statement

The Performing Arts Department at Milken awakens, nurtures, develops, and celebrates the musical, physical, and dramatic artistic expression in each student. Within an atmosphere of the ethical and spiritual values of Judaism, students are encouraged to create honest and meaningful work, while pushing the limits of their own physical, mental and emotional capabilities through music, dance, acting and technical theatre. We are also dedicated to sharing the expressions of art for various community, social and charitable events.

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David Dassa - Dance
Ken Lasaine - Instrumental Music
Robert Menna - Drama
Denise Piane - Dance
Orly Setareh - Dance
Naomi Shepard - Vocal Music

Performing Arts Assistant

Gwendolyn Dreyer

MILKEN
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HIGH SCHOOL

STEPHEN S. WISE TEMPLE