

THIS YEAR'S STEP GRADUATES

Project STEP graduated two seniors this year, both headed off to conservatories. With many options and after lengthy deliberations and soul-searching, Barbara Vanté, viola, chose to attend Oberlin Conservatory next year. Among the highlights of her year were earning Honorable Mention at the finals of the Sphinx Competition, performing on the Winsor Concert with Marcus Thompson, viola and Peggy Pearson, oboe; and her final recital at Walnut Hill. Barbara was accepted to every conservatory to which she applied, turning down Juilliard, New England Conservatory, Bard, and Mannes to finally reach her decision to attend Oberlin Conservatory in the fall. Barbara graduated from Walnut Hill School in June and has been part of Project STEP for twelve years. She studies with James Buswell.

Marta Rymer was home-schooled and also entered Project STEP at age six. Multi-talented is a word that Marta defines with her life. Not only has she played the violin stunningly with Project STEP for the past twelve years, she is also a dancer and a singer. Marta has juggled her music training with dance, theater, and voice study for many years, and finally chose to attend the Academy of Musical and Dramatic Arts in New York City next year, throwing her exceptional talent into musical theater.

We are terribly happy for Barbara and Marta. They head off to the next level of professional preparation armed with outstanding training from Project STEP. Both of these young girls have blessed Project STEP with their hard work, their talents and smiles for twelve years now. The staff, board, teachers, and families wish them all the best, and expect to hear all about the adventures they will encounter.



I look forward to many more moments of sharing with both of you, Marta and Barbara, here and elsewhere, in the years to come, as you now join the very special group of STEP alumni who continue to "light up my life" and to light up the lives of all of us who know you."

- Barbara Berger, Project STEP Board of Advisors, at the Senior Tribute



Two Barbaras, Vanté and Berger



The graduates with Margaret Williams-DeCelles



D'Anna Fortunato, center, with her student Marta Rymer and Marta's mother, Cheri Robartes



Tony Rymer knows firsthand that performing at the level of a Project STEP student requires countless hours of practice, dedication, passion and, above all else, a deep love for music. Rymer exemplifies all of those qualities, as do many of his friends in the STEP program."

- Bay State Banner



My favorite STEP moment of the year was hearing William (Artistic Director) address students, parents, and friends at the breakfast organized by STEP. While it is always wonderful to hear the students perform, it was especially touching to hear the deep emotion and passion William holds for the program. William's commitment to music, teaching, and STEP was obvious and it is clear he is going to continue to improve the already great STEP learning experience."

- Jonathan Glionna, member of the Board of Directors



Barbara Vanté, Jonathan Glionna, Danielle Lennox-Heichman



Tony Rymer, '06-'07 senior

A MESSAGE FROM OUR LEAD BENEFACTOR



Gregory E. Bulger is a leading benefactor of Project STEP, and in our efforts to ensure the program's permanence. Mr. Bulger supports Boston's rich musical life as an Overseer of

the Boston Symphony Orchestra and with additional board affiliations. Currently he is Vice President of the Board of Directors of Project Step. Mr. Bulger is a graduate of Boston College, Northeastern University Graduate School of Business Administration, and the Harvard Business School Program in Health Systems Management. He founded Health Care Value Management in 1990, sold it in 2002, and remained its CEO until 2004. He is a Trustee of the Gregory E. Bulger Foundation. Mr. Bulger is Past President, Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers, and Past Trustee, Brigham and Women's Hospital.

"I have very much enjoyed underwriting the spring recitals for Project Step students the past two years. These recitals allow the students of all ages to perform and demonstrate the progress they have made during the year. It is especially meaningful for the graduating senior students and to see what a significant contribution Project Step has made in their young lives."

- Gregory Bulger, Vice President, Project STEP Board of Directors



FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

During this past year, my first at Project STEP, I have come to know what is behind this worthy mission. What it does is to provide the best available training on string instruments to students of color. But on closer inspection, it is a carefully designed, highly personal, and deeply moving program. The commitment of the parents, the board, and the students inspires nothing less than awe. The program's wonderful sponsors, the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the New England Conservatory, and the Boston University School of Music, give professional expertise and strong financial support to Project STEP. Our home, in the basement of Symphony Hall, is at the vortex of the greatest music community in the world. We are proud to be part of these institutions, and we know that our students make every one of our supporters proud to sustain our programs.

Things will change when Jennifer Harvey heads off for New York, and we will all miss her sunny, vibrant personality in the office. We will welcome another Jennifer, Jennifer Lee, who comes to STEP after graduating from Berklee and working at the Boston Pops, an arts program in London, and the Seattle Symphony Orchestra.

We wish you all a beautiful summer. Stay tuned - we have a big year ahead.

- Mary S. Jaffee, Executive Director



Project STEP

Providing gifted children of color the finest music education available.



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It has been a great pleasure to witness the dedication and generosity of spirit that permeate the entire organization. The vision that began this enterprise some 25 years ago has brought forth a program of which we can all be proud."

- William Thomas



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Another outstanding local organization for youth, Project STEP, made a proud showing at a benefit organized in its honor by chamber music ensemble Winsor Music. Project STEP is a string training program for young African American and Hispanic musicians who might not otherwise have access to the world of classical music. It is jointly sponsored by the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Boston University, and New England Conservatory."

- Richard Dyer, February 10, 2006, Boston Globe

1. 2005 HONORS STRING QUARTET. Marta Rymer, Barbara Vanté, Tony Rymer and Danielle Lennox-Heichman are ready to perform at Symphony Hall's Opening Doors Day.

2. TUNING UP AND GETTING READY. Artistic Director William Thomas tunes the tiny violin of young STEP third grade student Diane Pepe, just before she performs in this year's 14th annual spring recital.

3. POLISHED PERFORMANCE. Felicia Simmons plays from the heart during the 14th annual Project STEP Spring Recital on Mother's Day. Felicia just finished sixth grade and studies cello with Jennifer Lucht.

Visit our website...
www.projectstep.org

William Thomas
Artistic Director

Mary S. Jaffee
Executive Director

Jennifer Harvey
Program Coordinator

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Through violin lessons, music theory classes, orchestra, chamber groups, concert enrichment and Master Classes with world-class musicians, Project STEP has given our family a lasting gift: A celebration with deep joy and pride, as our children, along with their peers of African American and Latino descent, reap the rewards of determination and perseverance as they gain mastery in the craft of making music!”

- a current parent of two Project STEP students



1. MENTORS AND STUDENT. Barbara Vanté, viola and Project STEP graduating senior, plays with professionals Marcus Thompson, viola and Peggy Pearson, oboe, at the Winsor Benefit in February, 2006. Project STEP students relish the opportunity to play with professional Boston musicians such as these and many others each year thanks to Peggy Pearson's organizing the Winsor / Project STEP Benefit honoring the STEP program and its students.

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What distinguishes Project STEP's mission is concern for the whole child and the child's family. By providing strong personal support for the individual and for his or her music study there is no doubt that the organization has opened the vast opportunities of education through music to a large number of deserving young people who have otherwise been deprived.”

- Mark Churchill, Dean, Preparatory and Continuing Education, New England Conservatory

The unique program helps talented music students and their families deal with [the] barriers that may get in the way of preparing for a career in classical music. Project STEP provides more than 30 students with instruments, private instruction and theory classes every year. Later, when students become more advanced, Project STEP adds chamber music, orchestra, and performances to their routine. Since the program's creation, every STEP graduate has continued his or her education or music career by attending college or conservatory.”

- Bay State Banner, May 18, 2006



LETTER FROM WILLIAM THOMAS, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

As most of you know, this has been my first year as Artistic Director of Project STEP. It has been a great pleasure to witness the dedication and generosity of spirit that permeates the entire organization. The great vision that began this enterprise some 25 years ago has brought forth a program of which we can all be proud.

This year has gone by so quickly. It has been filled with many extraordinary events and performances. Welcoming Mariana Green "home" has been one of the highlights of the year. Her work with our first year students has been exemplary. I look forward to her return next year and having her teaching both the first and second year students!

I am so proud of the work that we did together with the Project STEP Chamber Orchestra. The two performances we did, First Night Boston and the Martin Luther King Ceremony at Faneuil Hall were both well received. It was especially a pleasure to feature Barbara Vanté, viola; Tony Rymer, cello; Kevin Olusola, cello and Alex Olapade, cello. I look forward to this fall when we will prepare The Double Violin Concerto of Chevalier de Saint Georges, (Danielle Lennox-Heichman and Aurélie Théramène, violin soloists), and the Haydn C major Cello Concerto featuring Tony Rymer, cello.

I was very pleased with the many performances that our students shared through our community service effort. There were concerts on television, at a number of high profile venues including: Roxbury Community College, Jordan Hall, John Hancock Hall, Museum of Fine Arts, and in many schools and churches throughout greater Boston. It is wonderful that we have the chance to share our talented students in the community and that they are able to make these contributions.

Plans are moving forward for our 25th anniversary, beginning this September 2006! I look forward to sharing with you soon many of the details of this yearlong celebration. Meanwhile, have a glorious summer!

William Thomas

2. ARTISTIC DIRECTOR WILLIAM THOMAS, a cellist and conductor, is a graduate of Oberlin Conservatory of Music and Pennsylvania State University. He has been on the music faculty at Phillips Academy, Andover since 1974, and is Music Director of the Cambridge Community Chorus.

THE PROJECT STEP BOARD OF DIRECTORS WELCOMES TWO NEW DIRECTORS:

WILLIAM "MO" COWAN, a member of the litigation department at Mintz, Levin, Cohn, Ferris, Glovsky and Popeo; and **MARY LINCOLN,** a retired attorney whose interests include music, botany, and the METCO program.

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William Thomas, Artistic Director
Jennifer Lee, Development and Program Coordinator

The First Year of Project STEP



1. 2. TEACHER. Mariana Green-Hill, a 1997 Project STEP graduate and winner of the Boston Symphony Youth Competition, went on to Juilliard to earn Bachelor and Master degrees in violin performance. She returned to Project STEP this year to teach a first year class of six-year-olds in the Goldberg Room at Symphony Hall.

3. HELP FROM AN OLDER SISTER. Sarah Lamour's older sister Nadeerah, in her fifth year with Project STEP, tunes Sarah's violin for her, a great example of the mentorship provided within the community of STEP. Sarah is in Mariana Green-Hill's first year class.

4. PRACTICE PRACTICE PRACTICE. Rhonandhoh Abraham practicing his pizzicato before his lesson.

5. ONE MORE RUN-THROUGH. Sarah Lamour and Rhonandhoh practice a duet just before their lessons, as their fathers look on. Family involvement in lessons is a vital part of Project STEP's early training.

6. READY. The young girls of the Project STEP first year group class have worked hard for their teacher Mariana Green-Hill. Now they are dressed for success, confident, and ready to perform

7. STUDENTS PLAY WITH PROFESSIONALS. STEP students Danielle Lennox-Heichman, violin, and Monique Smith, viola, and guest student Kevin Olusola, cello, got the rare opportunity to perform with local professional musicians such as Baritone Robert Honeysucker, Oboist Peggy Pearson, and our board members Marcus Thompson, viola, and Randy Hiller, violin.

8. SIXTH GRADERS WARM UP for First Night Concert. Njeri Grevious, Lauren Brown, and Nadeerah Lamour.

FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD

We regret to announce Jennifer Harvey will leave Project STEP this summer after two years of dedication and commitment to our families. We extend our appreciation, Jennifer, and we wish you well as you pursue your dreams in grad school. We were delighted to welcome William Thomas as Artistic Director and Mary Jaffee as Executive Director last summer. They have led Project STEP through its twenty-fourth successful year. We are all united by our mission to provide excellence in string instrument training and education to our students. As we forge ahead to celebrate our 25th Anniversary in the coming year, we invite you to share in the joy of music by supporting our talented students. Please attend an upcoming event and consider making a financial contribution to ensure the future of this special program.

-Margaret Williams-DeCelles, President, Board of Directors

PERFORMANCE OPPORTUNITIES



GOODBYE FROM JENNIFER HARVEY

What a wonderful adventure it has been to work with Project STEP for the past two years. I could never express just how much I will miss the STEP community and all of the wonderful people who have influenced my life during my time here. I want to wish each and every student in STEP the very best and encourage you all to reach for the stars in whatever you attempt to accomplish in life. Don't ever let anyone tell you it can't be done, because it can, and you will. I want to also thank the Staff, Board, and Faculty. I shall never forget the work that you all do so diligently, and I will take that example with me wherever I go. With all of my heart, Jennifer Harvey, Program Coordinator, Project STEP

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My greatest joy and wonderment came when I saw Mariana [Green]'s beginning class play at the Senior Tribute for Barbara Vanté and Marta Rymer... Barbara played her viola beautifully and Marta's voice illuminated her love of music and the arts, but to see those sweet 5 and 6 year old kids being coached by one of STEP's most accomplished graduates made me realize we are providing our students with much more than the highest quality string instrument music education money can buy. We are also instilling a sense of community, a sense of belonging to the wonderful world of music. That Mariana, a much sought-after Juilliard graduate, has chosen to devote her efforts to helping other children achieve the same success she herself has achieved is a remarkable testimony to the value of the STEP program. The program is not simply creating high-caliber African American and Latino professional instrumentalists. I realize now that to successfully work through the STEP program requires a dedication and a discipline that will serve these children well in whatever endeavor they ultimately choose. To see Mariana choose to share her gifts with the youngest members of the STEP family made my heart sing.”

-Randy Hiller, Executive Vice President of the Board of Directors and violinist