

June 24th Recital: "...with the confidence of young Beethovens and Mozarts."
by Jason Feirman.

Lincoln Center is one of the most renowned cultural institutions in New York City, playing host to the world's most talented musicians every year. No wonder the performers at The Piano School of NYC's summer recital were just a bit nervous as they made their way into the Irene Diamond Education Center at Jazz at Lincoln Center on June 24th. Over the course of 10 hours, nearly 200 performers from 28 schools exhibited their talent as part of five recitals put on by the program's Executive Director Vera Barskaya Anselmo and the Piano School administration: Christina Kulick, Brooklyn Branch Manager & Peggy Castillo Valenzuela, Queens Branch Manager.



The center was packed with performers and their guests, who awoke early to prepare for the 11 am show. As girls ran around the room in their colorful summer dresses, their male companions, dressed in suits and khaki pants, awaited their turn to perform for the crowd. Once everyone was seated, Ms. Anselmo opened up the day by thanking the performers, their families, teachers, school administrators, and those at Jazz at Lincoln Center who were able to make the recitals possible. "I'd like to give thanks to everyone who has supported us in this venture," she told the room of 75 attendees. "These recitals highlight what we've done throughout the

year, and I hope you're looking forward to today's performances." Without further ado, Karissa Shenk-Bellamy from PS 142 walked up to the piano and kicked off the recital with "Long, Long Ago." Wearing a white shirt and brown pants, she nailed every note, alongside her instructor, Christine Yang. Following six other performers from her school, students from PS 20 began their performances, as latecomers piled into the back of the room. Magdalen Flores played "Star To Star" and "Once A Man Was So Mad," as her parents watched from the front row. "This is excellent for the kids," said her father, Edsel Flores, following the recital.

"Our daughter really understands the significance of performing here at Lincoln Center." To close out the 11 am recital, 26 students from PS 146 Brooklyn New School performed an array of songs including the always popular "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star" and "On The Swing." "It's been a pleasure working with your kids," said Brooklyn Branch Manager and instructor Christina Kulick, who started a program at the school this winter. One of the highlights of the set was a duet by Adelaide Gaughran-Bedell and Storm Alexander. Adelaide, dressed in a beautiful green dress, and Storm, in a matching green vest, played a perfect rendition of "Sailing Skating." Following Storm's solo performance of The Beatles' "Eight Days A Week," instructor Gabriel Hays closed the show with his own performance of The Beatles' "Blackbird." As the audience from the first recital made their way out of the Irene Diamond Education Center, guests piled in for show number two, hoping to land the best seats in the house.



Just after 1 pm, Olivia Kramer kicked off the show in her bright orange dress, as her white sandals dangled from the piano bench. Olivia, who attends the Montessori School of Brooklyn, played three songs with her teacher, Christina Kulick. Agnes Griggs followed her performance with “Mary Had A Little Lamb.” Students from St. Patrick School, Sacred Heart Highbridge, Harlem Village Academy Charter School, PS 109, and New Heights Academy Charter School performed during the recital, playing tunes such as “Old



McDonald Had A Farm” and “Lean On Me.” Eliana DeJimenez and her sister, Emily DeJimenez, wore matching dresses as they gave solo performances of “Twinkle Twinkle Little Star” and “Frere Jacque.” Yuliya Basis’ students from PS 109 played all of their pieces by heart, with the confidence of young Beethovens and Mozarts. After the show, students gathered around their instructors for photos, as parents snapped shots from their digital cameras and cellphones. “You’re a wonderful teacher,” one parent told Yuliya. “Thank you so much for all of your help,” said another. As the performers and their families exited the hall with smiles on their faces, it was evident that all their hard work and preparation had paid off.

The 3 pm recital was the shortest of the day, featuring 25 students from five schools: St. Brigid School, Pre-School of America, Little Day Dreamers Nursery School, PS 78, and PS 110. Prior to performing “Middle C,” three year old Yui Hatakayama played a game with Ethan Roditi and Tanaz Wagner. Their goal was to name a number of composers based on photographs that were shown to them by their instructor Mirta Gomez. Later on in the show, David Alaverdian had his students incorporate clapping and singing into their renditions of “Twinkle Twinkle Little Star.” While Keisha Ndema played piano, for example, Veronique Wright, Wittney Welcome, and Lorna Kpukumu sang along as colorful beads dangled from their hair braids and their flowery summer dresses lit up the room. Mirta, who made sure that each of her students took a bow before and after their songs, played along with some students from PS 110; others performed alone. Mirta sang with Nicole Landeta, while her brother, Patricio Landeta, performed “Chimes of Westminster.” But Nicole and Patricio were not the only siblings who performed during the recital. Members of the Tubens family – Israel, Brandon, Ashley, and Melanie – played numbers towards the end of the set including “Pinches & Inches” and “Choo Choo From Chicago.” As the recital came to a close, parents flocked around their children like paparazzi chasing down rock stars. As light bulbs flashed and poses were stricken, the room began to clear for the next performance.

The 5 pm show, which featured 49 students from 7 schools, was the most crowded of the day. Not an empty seat could be found, as parents stood along the back wall of the room. Harlem Link Charter School’s Nyah Mangrum, wearing a beautiful white dress, kicked off the show with “I Love To Hoe Potatoes.” Following eight of her classmates, performers played from Community United Methodist Church After School Program, Salem United Methodist Church After School Program, Corpus Christi, Sacred Heart Of Jesus, De LaSalle Academy, and Mott Hall II.



After overcoming her nerves, Bryanna Encarnacion from Corpus Christi, performed "Clouds," as her family members cheered her on from the front row. When she received her medal and certificate following her performance, one of the biggest smiles of the day was plastered across her face. It goes to show what a little encouragement from mom can do! Many of the performers from Sacred Heart of Jesus played multiple songs without the assistance of a book or help from an instructor. Kelly Morel, for example, played "Sleepy Head" all by herself, as her beautiful red dress lit up the room.

One of the most riveting performances of the day came from 10-year-old Veronica Kuteyeva, who performed perfect renditions of three songs: "Rigaudon," "Moonlight Sonata," and "The Entertainer." Dressed in a blue velvet dress, she received a lengthy applause from the audience. "It's amazing," said her grandmother, who appeared to be in awe after the recital. "She's only been playing piano for six months. Her instructor and brothers have really been helping her along the way."

As the sun began to set over Central Park, guests made their way into the Irene Diamond Education Center for the 7 pm recital, the final show of the day. Forty-five students from 6 schools played a variety of tunes, often with the help of their instructors. Konstantza Chernov sat beside many of her students from St. Joan of Arc, including Aiden Lee, who played "Two Black Birds" and David Jimenez who played "My Hobby Horse." After each performance, the audience gave a loud applause as the performers took their bows. Adam Platt played with his students from PS 261 and PS 157. Sereia Ross played "Mary Had A Little Lamb" alongside Adam, who looked as if he was enjoying himself as much as his students. He definitely enjoyed Chase Ware's solo performance of "The Snake Dance." She sat confidently at the piano stool and hit each note with precision, as pink beads dangled from her braided hair. Later on in the set, Jonathan Castelan, dressed in a bright orange shirt, and Delia Bueno, wearing a pretty pink dress, performed a number together. Tomoko Nakayama performed with each of her students from Our Lady of the Angelus, while Sebastian Forster's students from PS 111 closed an extraordinary day of musical performances at Jazz At Lincoln Center.



Not only did students amaze their guests with their skills behind the piano, but by incorporating singing, dancing, drumming, and other forms of entertainment into their performances, they truly exhibited their artistic talents. Many of these students will return to school in the fall, eagerly anticipating the continuation of their music educations. Perhaps, the next Beethoven will one day look back on the significance of his first performance on a warm and sunny Sunday during the summer of 2007 at Jazz At Lincoln Center.



Jason Feirman graduated summa cum laude from New York University in May 2006, where he studied journalism and psychology. His writing has appeared in a number of major magazines including Psychology Today and SmartMoney. He currently works in the marketing department at the Jewish National Fund and freelances in his spare time. Although his piano playing is limited to the first four notes of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, he's played the guitar since the seventh grade.

