Montessori - A Moving Experience!

Our year-end events really are moving experiences for students and families alike. Students have become so independent and learned so much during their three years in primary, that they really impressed their parents and grandparents with their performance skills at their recital and graduation. Seeing our kindergartners singing, demonstrating “beat” and “rhythm,” and doing solfeggio hand signs to their songs, and then watching them graduate... it was truly a moving experience! The Willow students were also impressive at their performance at The Nottingham. They were poised, (continued on p. 10)
Soon after obtaining her medical degree, Dr. Maria Montessori began developing her educational philosophy for young children. Her first students were a class of sixty young children living in low-income housing in Italy. She took an approach of scientific inquiry and observation with them, researching the environment, materials, furniture and activities that were most engaging to her students. Her Montessori method is now known for introducing children to advanced topics in the sciences in their early years, preparing them for a lifetime of discovery. Subjects range from the creation of the planet to the basic principles of astronomy, botany, chemistry, physics and zoology. Her materials and lessons encourage a sense of wonder, and promote exploration and research. Support your child’s learning over the summer, and take her outdoors on journeys of discovery of the natural world! You can start in your own backyard, take walks in your neighborhood or at our beautiful local parks.

From above right: Ananya Deshmane (Evergreen) researches bones of the human body; Willow teacher Josh Jessen works with Quinn Wimer and Jordan Cain determining volume and mass, and Melissa Martins works with Pine student Aruuke Rayeva discovering the parts of plants.
SNOW QUEEN
The Redhouse’s great production of The Snow Queen this spring included Jared Dunn (2012) in the role of the Troll, and the featured ensemble included Jared Dunn, Ryan Dunn (2014) and MSS mom Amy Zubieta. Amy is currently working on her master’s in Music Education at Syracuse University and teaches piano, yoga, and Music Together and directs a choir with the Syracuse Community Choir. Amy is the mother of Evangelin Zubieta (Evergreen).

CBA AWARDS
At Christian Brothers Academy’s (CBA) recent Honor Awards Night, many MSS alumni were featured. The Honors designation was received by Quin Kenny (2013) and former MSS student Isabelle Enslin. High Honors were received by Grace Getman (2012), Ben Stevens (2012), Sara Vertino (2013), Olivia Davis (2015), Ellie Pedone (2015), Lesia Wojtowycz (2015), Anna Pedone (2017) and Lukas Ward (2017). The National Honor Society included Grace Getman, Elissa Kempisty (2012), Ben Stevens, Quin Kenny, Natalie Stopyra (2013) and Sara Vertino. Sara also received the Rochester Institute of Technology Innovation and Creativity Award. And last but not least, Grace Getman, CBA class of 2018, received the top academic award and Ellie Pedone, CBA class of 2021, received the Next in Merit award. Grace Getman was also a National Merit Finalist. Congratulations to all!

A CHORUS LINE
A Chorus Line was recently staged by the CBA Drama department, and former MSS student Olivia Moffa was featured in a lead role as Cassie. The ensemble cast included Elena Chiodi (2017), Olivia Davis (2015), Fayrouz Enany (2016), Anna Pedone (2017), Ellie Pedone (2015), Lesia Wojtowycz (2015) and Christina Wojtowycz (2017). Many fellow MSS alumni friends enjoyed seeing this inspiring production.
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EAST SYRACUSE MINOA DRAMA

ESM’s Spartan Stage presented a wonderful Les Miserables with Annabella Owens (2012) as Fantine. Her fellow MSS graduate Taylor Abrams (2014) worked on the costumes and makeup for the show. The Spartan also put on A Festival of One Act Plays in which Taylor Abrams played Clara in “Pop Culture Is an Anarchist.”

JD’S MARY POPPINS

Jamesville DeWitt Middle School put on the fun musical Mary Poppins, Jr. with former MSS student and daughter of our Great Books teacher (Lisa Lucas) Olivia Lucas. Olivia was an engaging Mary Poppins in the starring role! Caleb Randazzo (2017) was in the cast ensemble in roles as a park stroller, vagrant and chimney sweep.

JARED DUNN

An astounding You’re a Good Man, Charlie Brown was directed by Jared Dunn (2012, photo above left) this spring! This At Rise and Appleseed production, which starred Jared’s brothers Ryan Dunn (2014) as Charlie Brown and Justin Dunn (2018) as Woodstock, included a former MSS student, Blake Lucas as Linus. Jared founded At Rise this fall, to bring his community theater experience to high school students. The other cast members were all fellow students and friends — great acting everyone! Jared graduated from FM High School this spring and is taking a gap year before beginning at Brown University. He’ll be returning to Spain, where his family lived last year, for his gap year at the Extremadura Montessori School.

JOHN LENNON & ME

John Lennon & Me: A Play in Three Acts was produced by the Jamesville-DeWitt High School Community Drama Club. Olivia Murphy (2012), was an excellent Ina Tortunesky The Torturer in this striking version, which takes place in a hospital for seriously or terminally ill young people. (continued on p. 5)
JOHNS HOPKINS CANDIDATES
This year ten MSS students have qualified to participate in the Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth Search based on their recent scores on a rigorous standardized test given to the Willow upper elementary students: Safina Ahmed, Betty Anderson, Nehemiah Chao, Coralee Donnelly-Heg, Justin Dunn, Marielle Emmanuel, Aubrey Jones-Pike, Jasper Kyle, Leo Plourde and Sophia Randazzo. To qualify for the Talented Youth Search, students must have scored 95% or higher on a verbal and/or quantitative reasoning section of the nationally normed test. The purpose of the search is to identify, assess and recognize the academic abilities of highly able students.

NEW ARRIVAL
Raymie and Damien Valletonga have welcomed their first child, the long-awaited Spiro Edward Hudson Valletonga! Spiro arrived on May 7, 2018, weighing 6 pounds and six ounces and was twenty and a half inches in length. He was born at the Birth Place in St. Joseph’s Hospital. Raymie is a long-time member of the MSS community for nine years, as a 6 - 9 team teacher and in our care programs. Welcome, Spiro the fifth and final “staff child” to be born this school year of 2017 - 2018!

SAY NO
Elissa Kempisty (2012, photo above right) graduated from CBA this spring, and part of her studies there included the founding of Say No 2 Plastic H2O. Elissa started her project to motivate people to use re-usable water bottles rather than disposable plastic ones. Her efforts have found great support in her CBA school community and in the wider Syracuse community. She also has a wide following on Instagram and for her website, and has interacted with other national campaigns. *(continued on p. 6)*

*Photos at bottom of pages 4-5, from left to right: Mrs. Getz with Annabella Owens and Taylor Abrams at Les Miserables; Blake Lucas, Olivia Lukas and Lisa Lucas at Mary Poppins, Jr.; Mrs. Getz with Caleb Randazzo at Mary Poppins; Sharon Vazquez (Sixth Level Program Coordinator), Jared Dunn, Ryan Dunn, Marielle Emmanuel (MSS Willow student and appreciative audience member) and Mrs. Getz; newborn Spiro Valletonga.*
PEACE ACTIVIST AND VALADICTORIAN
Grace Getman (2012, photo at left) graduated from CBA this spring with honors and was the valedictorian of her class. She was also received the annual the 2018 Syracuse Peace Council (SPC) Youth Award with another high school student, Hussein Hassan. As a mentor with the Girl Ambassadors for Human Rights of the Matilda Joslyn Gage Foundation, her activism includes supporting the women’s movement, preserving the environment, encouraging cultural exchanges with native peoples and assisting impoverished individuals in connecting with legal services. With this award, the SPC recognizes young activists who have shown a devotion to peace, justice and protecting the environment and who have engaged in activities that demonstrate their passion to work on the underlying causes of war, violence and injustice. Grace will be attending Fordham University to study environmental science this fall. Three incredible honors. Congratulations Grace!

NEHEMIAH CHAO (Willow Classroom, photo below right) participated in the 39th annual Central New York Science & Engineering Fair (CNYSEF) at Onondaga Community College this spring. All Willow students prepare a science project to share with their peers and their parents every year, but Nehemiah decided to take it to a competitive level, entering the CNYSEF with his research project entitled “Electromagnetic Radiation from Cell Phones and Other Devices.” Nehemiah was pleased to win two awards, the Office of Naval Research Naval Science Award and the Terra Science and Education Award. Congratulations Nehemiah!

ORANGE FOUR H
Orange Four Leaf Clovers is a local 4-H Club that the MSS Niederhoff family participates in. Katie Niederhoff (2017) is the treasurer of the organization and chair of recreation, and her brother Jorge Niederhoff (Willow) is the chair of the Rockets and Robots Project, and refreshments.
Jonathan Koss began at MSS at our first location in Temple Beth El and then moved on to Manlius Pebble Hill for middle and high school. At MPH he was captain of the tennis team and a National AP Scholar there. He also received a “5,” the highest score possible, on eight AP exams, including calculus, physics, economics, and chemistry.

From 2012 to 2016 Jonathan attended Case Western Reserve University where he received concurrent B.S. degrees in electrical engineering and management - finance. He worked as a research assistant at the Case Biomanufacturing and Microfabrication Laboratory on an Android application to measure blood clotting of sickle-cell patients. The app is to be used with a phone attachment that has microscopic imaging capabilities.

Jon was also an investment banking intern focusing on derivatives at KeyBanc Capital Markets in Cleveland, in the summer of 2015, and a finalist in the Tibetan Innovation Challenge in 2015, where Jonathan met the Dalai Lama of Tibet. This past summer Jon was a cognitive automation intern at KPMG in Manhattan. Jon continued his education as a Tesla Scholar at Columbia University where he was a research assistant in the Laboratory for Intelligent Imaging and Neural Computing. One of his projects was programming an autonomous robot to perform complex tasks with guidance from a human controller via EEG. He graduated in 2018 with an M.S. in electrical engineering. Jonathan will begin at the Yale School of Engineering & Applied Science this coming fall, doing research at Yale Medical School in pursuit of a Ph.D. in engineering.

Jonathan has co-authored many articles including: “Relating Deep Neural Network Representations to EEG-fMRI Spatiotemporal Dynamics in a Perceptual Decision-making Task” presented at the Computer Vision and Pattern Recognition Workshops 2018; “Task Level Hierarchical System for BCI-Enabled Shared Autonomy” at the 2017 IEEE-RAS International Conference on Humanoid Robotics; and “Point-of-Care System for Monitoring Cellular Adhesion in Sickle Cell Disease” at the 2017 Biomedical Engineering Society Conference. As this goes to press, he is preparing to present results of a study at a conference in Singapore.

Jonathan has stayed in close touch with his MSS friends John Alex French-Lawyer (2006) and Max Eyle (2005) and enjoys coming back to visit MSS whenever he can! He and Alex watched the eclipse in Portland, Oregon, last summer, and in December, Jon and Max traveled together on their Birthright Israel trips.
At the end of every three-year cycle at MSS, we have special Rites of Passage when the students celebrate their leadership years. The kindergarteners, third graders and sixth graders marked their third year with graduation ceremonies, leadership trips, recitals and picnics! The graduates of upper elementary, at the culmination of the sixth-level Program, travel to Montreal to practice many of the skills they have learned during their nine years in Montessori, including their French. It is also the culmination of their Montessori study of the world, ending with an international travel experience. The lower elementary graduates travel to the Adirondack mountains where they hike up mountains and rock-climb. Primary graduation marks the kindergarten students’ first trip to the Land Lab in Pompey after three years of nature education, science lessons, nature walks and garden work.

Clockwise, right, left to right: In the first row of the sixth grade graduates are Leo Plourde, Quinn Wimer, Noelle Davis, and Ava Halbritter. In the back row are Justin Dunn, Jordan Cain, and Neve Gordon. Those same graduates in Montreal’s Science Museum, Justin Dunn, Jordan Cain, Leo Plourde, Quinn Wimer, Noelle Davis, and Neve Gordon. Left: The third graders on Hurricane Mountain, left to right, first row: Spencer Scheu, Anna Chiodi, Will Brubaker, Siri Brubaker, Brixton Gauvin, Caitlyn Coryell, Elias Kinsella and Jane Phillips; Megan Donnelly-Heg, Evi Zubiesta, Aaron Kaufman, Ehren Zachery, Stella Urbanski, Emily Vilburn, Ananya Deshmane and Lily Beale-Gleason, of Cedar and Evergreen Classrooms.
Why Three-Year Cycles?

The third year in a Montessori classroom is the leadership year. It can be helpful to think of first year children as the “explorers,” second year students as the “experimenters” and third year students as the “experts.” Having learned to take care of herself in the classroom and to work independently during the first two years, the child in her third year is developmentally ready to put her experience to use as a classroom leader—a academic and social role model—while she continues building her own skills. This increases her self-confidence, which, together with her good work habits, puts her in a position of readiness for the next cycle.

Montessori designed these three-year cycles to correspond with the child’s “sensitive periods”—characteristic of each developmental plane. These are the natural inclinations that children have toward certain activities as they grow. The Montessori materials correspond to a child’s sensitive periods. During the primary years, for example, the child is sensitive to order, concentration, coordination and independence; everything in the primary environment addresses these sensitivities. Because the older child is sensitive to reason and abstract thinking, the materials in the lower elementary classroom become less concrete.
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(continued from p. 1) self-confident and very entertaining, as they sang and danced for their audience. There were beautiful solos, numbers from the musical *Hamilton* and Michael Jackson dances, moves and music. His biography was shared over the course of the event, and the dancers were authentic and enthusiastic in top-hats and white gloves. The Upper Elementary Recital featured these same performances as well, to the delight of parents and extended families! The Lower Elementary Recital was also a moving experience, where the children played the percussion Orff instruments and some lovely European folk songs on recorders. They also shared their improvisational work on recorders, for a very professional presentation. Their performance skills were front and center, dressed in our traditional black and white. All were very impressive!

The Spring Gala was another great success, and our community enjoyed the indoor and outdoor raffles, Silent and Live Auctions and Photo Booth. The gala volunteers put so many hours of time and effort into making this one of the best parties we’ve ever had! We are excited to announce that we achieved our goal of raising $26,000 for the Fund-A-Wish and the new elementary playground was installed in June and is looking very inviting to our students for this fall!

Our MSS community is stronger every year, with so many great traditions that bring us together!
Photos, clockwise from left: Ms. Denise Weinberger leads the kindergarten students in hand signs and a song at the Kindergarten Graduation and Recital. Lower elementary, led by their music teacher, Ms. Alina Plourde, played lovely folk tunes from Europe. The upper elementary students share their learning with some Michael Jackson moves at their recital. Graduates from Oak Cottage, pleased to receive their diplomas, and Gala attendees and MSS parents, ham it up for the Photo Booth, left to right: Toni Carrington, Pearl Tong-Ngork, Jai Sandu Sumati, Sarah Hager, and Katelin Thurber. Bea Gauvin (MSS parent) performs with Joshua Jessen (MSS Willow teacher) for the Spring Gala crowd. Evergreen and Cedar students play Orff instruments at the Lower Elementary Recital. Ms. Patricia Getz’s white-gloved upper el music students groove to Michael Jackson tunes.
Pulling Together for MSS!

Like the Willow upper elementary students at the end of-the-year Fitness Field Days, our whole community pulled together to raise money for our school at the Spring Gala. To all our current families, teachers, grandparents, alumni families, students and alumni, extended family members and friends: THANK YOU for all that you did to contribute to this special event, in so many different ways, and in ALL your volunteerism this past year. You chaperoned, drove, cooked, organized, repaired, painted, put up and took down chairs and tables, cleaned up after events and so much more. Thank you, and have a wonderful rest of your summer!