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Our 22nd Musical Theatre Workshop: The Little Mermaid Jr.

The culmination of this year’s five-month-long Willow theatre class is the upper elementary students' performance of Disney's The Little Mermaid Jr. The performance is looked forward to and really enjoyed by younger students, parents and extended family members. Throughout the theatre workshop experience, the students have the opportunity to develop acting, singing, dancing, improvisation and creative movement skills. They also play an integral role in creating props and costumes and designing sets. Being part of this collaborative process helps them to develop character traits necessary for success in life such as teamwork, responsibility, self-discipline, organization and a strong work ethic.

Below: The sixth-level Willow students always have the lead parts in the theatre workshop, and this year’s leads were, below from left to right: Jorge Niederhoff, Brian Durkin, Jasper Kyle, Marielle Emmanuel, Sierra Panipinto, Aubrey Jones-Pike and Mitchell Rovit. A highlight of the show was costuming made by the students in the very creative after-school Prop Workshops, including the octopus and tentacles of Ursula the Sea Witch (below), made of purple and black fabric-covered dryer venting. (story continued on p. 4)
**Geography:** Many of our Willow students chose to join thousands of students across the nation to participate in the National Geographic GeoBee. The question categories included United States geography, statistics, source to the sea and amazing animals. The MSS top scorer, **Ronan Kenny**, received a medallion and a first-place certificate. Second-place went to **Tiernan Kenny**, and the third-place tie-winners were **Jasper Kyle** and **Mitchell Rovit**. Montessori students know their geography! Ronan went on to the next stage of an online test, and could compete for the National Championship! In the photo at right, from left to right: Jasper Kyle, Ronan Kenny, Tiernan Kenny and Mitchell Rovit.

**Drama and Sports:** **Jason Cavanagh** (2014) was in a recent production at Fayetteville-Manlius High School of Disney’s *Newsies: The Broadway Musical* in the lead of Mush (photo at middle right; Jason top middle). Jason also played varsity soccer in the fall, is on the varsity track team this spring and on the high honor roll. He plays alto and tenor saxophone in the jazz ensemble, and sings in the Swing Select Jazz singing group. The jazz ensemble competed at the 51st national Berklee High School Jazz Festival and placed 4th at the Hynes Convention Center in Boston.

**Visual and Performing Arts:** The Abrams twins, **Jessica Irene** (2014) and **Taylor** (2014), were both part of the East Syracuse Minoa Spartan Stage production of *Mamma Mia!* Jessica Irene was in the ensemble and helped with construction, and Taylor was (continued on p. 3)
the assistant producer and helped with costuming. They both participated in the Scholastic Art Competition, the largest annual art competition in America. Jessica Irene received four Gold and three Silver Key Awards (in the photo at the bottom left of p. 3 with her Complementary Portrait of her older sister Kat), and Taylor received two Silver Key Awards (in the photo at the bottom of p. 2 with her work Exit Sign).

**Programming and Robotics: Jasper Kyle** (Willow) belongs to a LEGO League MINDSTORMS team that builds and programs a robot for competitions at the Fayetteville Free Library (FFL). The team also programmed and presented an augmented reality application designed to help astronauts overcome the boredom of routine space chores. The FFL team qualified for the regional competition at SUNY Polytechnic in Utica, where they placed eighth in central New York. Jasper’s team’s robot performed all of its tasks perfectly, and the team won the top prize for programming. (Jasper is pictured below, in the middle.) MSS grads **Kaelem Michel** (2017) and **Justin Dunn** (2018) competed for FFL in the First Tech Challenge robotics competition for high schoolers. Rather than using LEGOS, their team fabricates all robots from scratch and programs them in Java.

**Mathematics, Music and Science:** A sophomore at Jamesville-DeWitt High School, **Xavier Plourde** (2015) is involved in many pursuits! Xavier (pictured below right) is on the math team, and placed second in the county in the individual competition. In the regional Science Olympiad, he and his small-group partners won two first-place medals with their Code Busters and Fermi Questions, and a third-place medal in Circuit Labs. In the state finals of the Science Olympiad, Xavier’s team won a (continued on p. 8)
Our 22nd Musical Theatre Workshop: The Little Mermaid Jr.

(story continued from p. 1) Photos clockwise from above left: Ben Chiodi (French Chef) and Aiden Michel (Chef Louis) sing in the palace kitchen scene, and Aubrey Jones-Pike (Ariel) and Mari Emmanuel (Sebastian) sing "Kiss the Girl." On the royal ship, Brian Durkin (Prince) and Nehemiah Chao (Captain), along with their sailors, navigate the high seas while Aubrey and Sophia Randazzo (Flounder) watch and swim near the ship. Sierra Panipinto (Ursula the Sea Witch) commands the ocean with her electric eels, Ronan Kenny, Betty Anderson and Tiernan Kenny. Ariel's mermaid sisters, left to right: Maggie Dunn, Sarah Phillips, Coralee Donnelly-Heg, Safina Ahmed, Mira Gordon and Anna Chiodi. In the final two photos, Aiden Michel and his assistant chefs sing "Les Poissons", and the Sea Creatures sing "Under the Sea."
Elissa Kempisty graduated after her primary and elementary years at MSS in 2012 and continued her education at Christian Brothers Academy (CBA). She was a member of the track team - long jump and triple jump - and was a sectional champion in both categories from 9th to 12th grades. She was a member of the National Honor Society and received the Brother B. James Quinn Religion Award at graduation. Elissa founded an environmental awareness campaign called SayNo2PlasticH2O to spread awareness about the negative impact of bottled water. She also raised money for The Water Project, which builds wells and provides access to clean water in African communities. Elissa graduated from CBA in May of 2018 and is currently attending Babson College, studying business and sustainability with a concentration in marketing. She is a member of the Sustainability and Environmental Club at Babson and is a co-founder of the Babson Figure Skating Club and Collegiate Figure Skating Team. In her spare time Elissa enjoys hiking, running, skiing and cooking, and she has an interest in painting, photography and other exploration of the arts.

Elissa’s dream growing up was to be a champion figure skater and synchronized skater, and ultimately part of Team USA. She followed that dream her entire school career at MSS and CBA, and continues now at Babson College. During high school she was a member of Mirror Images Synchronized Skating Team, and she also trained in Skaneateles, Baldwinsville, Ithaca and Cortland. During the 2017-2018 season, she trained with her current junior-level team, the Lexettes, and she makes the trip to Boston many times a week to work with them.

In the 2018-2019 season, Elissa and the Lexettes were in the top five at both internationals in Sweden and France. They are part of Team USA, representing the U.S. worldwide, and are the 2018 U.S. National Silver Medalists. She will be training with the senior team National Champions, the Haydenettes, this spring and summer in anticipation of becoming a member of that championship team this fall. All the teams give back to the community through volunteer work and exhibition skating.

Elissa says this about her passion for skating: “‘Go confidently in the direction of your dreams. Live the life you have imagined.’ This quote by Henry David Thoreau has followed me throughout my life, as has my dream to skate for Team USA. To all of the students at Montessori, if you have a dream, chase it! You never know where that dream will take you, and don’t let anyone tell you it’s impossible because those are the dreams that are worth it.”
We celebrated the Americas at the Cultural Festival this year, when students and parents participated in our many interactive activities such as creating sea turtles, making worry dolls, weaving planets, making sand layers like the Grand Canyon, painting like Frida Kahlo and weaving rag rugs. On view were upper elementary science projects, American dioramas and trying on costumes and hats from around the world is always a favorite! Every classroom and cottage designed an interactive activity, and all were so creative and intriguing! On the last day of the Cultural Festival week, families gathered to enjoy student and teacher performances, including folk songs of the Americas, rock and roll dances by elementary fitness students, a folk dance from Trinidad and Tobago by lower elementary students and a salsa performance by Pine (continued on p. 7)
Cultural Festival 2019: The Americas

(continued from p. 6) Cottage teacher Melissa Martins and her friends Jessica Azulay, Eric Valentin and Earle Greaves. Willow teacher Joshua Jessen also shared some fingerstyle guitar jazz, blues and bluegrass, and our Enrichment Program, “Writing Winter,” student poets shared their original work. Parents contributed tasty international cuisine from their own cultural backgrounds, and many students chose to wear clothing to represent an aspect of their own cultural heritage or one of interest to them. We were pleased to see our celebration featured on the local television news, as it was simply amazing!

Clockwise from above far left p.6 : Ms. Wen and some of her Oak Cottage students pose with international clothing and hats: Asher Viola, Tabitha Twomey-Smith, Arav Arasu, Luca Stefano, Rishabh Maroo and Emma Maxwell. Pine student Aaditri Manocha in traditional clothing at the festival. Pine teacher Melissa Martins dances the salsa with friends, while Willow teacher Josh Jessen played us tunes on guitar. Upper elementary Willow fitness students did a rock and roll dance, “Old Time Rock and Roll”; from left to right: Sierra Panipinto, Mari Emmanuel, Aiden Michel, Siri Brubaker, Evi Zubieta and Sarah Phillips. Mia Enders and Noelle Chiodi (Cedar students) did a folk dance from Trinidad and Tobago. Simone Winkleman and Joye Lai (Evergreen) posed for a portrait in international clothing.
(continued from p. 3) tenth-place medal with *Code Busters*. Founded in 1984, Science Olympiad is the premier science competition in the nation, providing rigorous, standards-based challenges to teams in all 50 states. Xavier is also a musician and won forth place in the senior division of the Central New York Association of Music Teachers’ advanced piano competition and performed at the winners’ recital this spring.

**Chorus, Drama and French:** Disney's *Newsies: The Broadway Musical* at Fayetteville-Manlius High School (FM) included **Ireland Fernandez Cosgrove** (2013) in the lead role of Crutchie (photo below left in *Newsies*). This was Ireland’s third appearance in an FM musical. Ireland is also a member of the chorale and swing, the Improv Club and the Area All-State Chorus. And last but not least, Ireland won a bronze medal in the 2018 Le Grand Concours National French Contest, evaluating students’ knowledge of French vocabulary, grammar and culture.

**Theatre:** **Ryan Striker Dunn** (2014) recently appeared in the Redhouse production of *I'm Not Rappaport*. Ryan, the only high school student in the production, played Gilley. Ryan has been onstage at Redhouse, Syracuse Stage, FM High School and At Rise Productions-a total of at least 20 productions! Ryan is in the far-right photo below with MSS teacher Pat Getz (left) and former MSS teacher and parent Lisa Lucas (right).

**Music and Drama:** Jamesville-DeWitt (JD) Middle School’s Choral and Orchestral Concert included MSS alumni in the chorus: **Neve Gordon** (2018) and **Leo Plourde** (2018). The middle photo below shows the Gordon family at the performance: Neve, Julia, Alia (Evergreen), Sam, Mira (Willow) and grandmother Nancy Campagna. Leo was also part of the JD production of *The Addams Family*, playing the role of an Ancestor. Leo appears in his Addams Family costume in the top photo on page 11, with his MSS friends **Brian Durkin** (Willow) on the left and **Justin Dunn** (2018) on the right.

**Double Drama:** Disney's *Aladdin Kids*, put on by the Syracuse Children’s Theatre, included **Aubrey Jones-Pike** (Willow) performing in the Skeleton, Djinn and Agrabahn groups. The theatre group also (continued on p. 9)
(continued from p. 8) staged Disney's *Winnie the Pooh Kids*, where **Zachary Jones-Pike** (Evergreen) was part of the ensemble cast. Aubrey and Zachary are in the second photo, right.

**So Many Awards!** Two MSS graduates received the General Excellence Awards with the top GPA in their classes at Christian Brothers Academy (CBA) Scholastic Honors Night this spring: **Ellie Pedone** (2015) and **Rachel George** (2016). **Quin Kenny** (2013), **Natalie Stopyra** (2013) and **Sara Vertino** (2013) are all members of the National Honor Society (see photo below right in that order, left to right.) A new member of that organization is **Isabelle Enslin** (2014). Receiving High Honors were **Olivia Davis** (2015), **Sara Vertino, Ellie Pedone, Lesia Wojtowycz** (2015), **Fayrouz Enany** (2016) and **Rachel George**.

**Drama: Into the Woods** was presented recently by CBA Drama, with two of the leads performed by MSS alumni **Lesia Wojtowycz** (2015) and **Olivia Davis** (2015). The featured dance ensemble included **Ellie Pedone** (2015), and the ensemble included **Elena Chiodi** (2017), **Fayrouz Enany** (2016), **Anna Pedone** (2017) and **Christina Wojtowycz** (2017). The production included junior high and high school students, and many of the sets were created by the students. In the photo below, left to right: Fayrouz, Christina, Lesia, Ellie, Elena and Anna.
Building Community at Our Socials

Our favorite community-building events are simple and fun with lots of time to chat! The primary level has picnics on the playground twice a year, where the children can play with their school friends, and the adults talk and relax together. At year’s end, the picnic is combined with our kindergarten graduation and recital as a special rite of passage and to build community.

The lower elementary has social potlucks twice yearly in their classrooms and combine these with dancing in the Great Room. The students share fun early American traditional dances, as well as more contemporary numbers, and end with line dances that parents are welcome to join in (see photo top left). These events are enjoyable and memorable, and the children always enjoy teaching their parents the steps.

In upper elementary, community building is combined with important sharing of student learning (see photos middle and bottom left). The families have a potluck and in the fall share a cultural studies project, this year the colonial village of Willowsburg. In the spring they share their science projects. In the photo bottom left, Aaron Kaufman (Willow) presented his science project.

Alumni parents often tell us that the friends they made at MSS become friends for life. Students may go on to different middle and high schools, then colleges, but they typically stay in touch as well. You’ll see in our newsletters that our students continue to connect when their MSS friends are in musicals, plays or concerts or compete in academic or art events. Both students and parents stay in touch, and reconnect at our Alumni Reunions and at the Spring Soirée as well.
This year we are changing up our annual school-wide celebration a little bit and calling it “The MSS” -- The Montessori Spring Soirée! There will be many of your old favorites from past years, like the silent and live auctions, where you can purchase amazing items donated by MSS friends, families and students. This year’s items include an early American-style quilt made by our upper elementary students, an original photo by alumni parent Dr. Marc Safran, and tickets to the musicals Frozen and Hamilton! There will also be a raffle for a $500 Delta Air Lines ticket gift card! This year we’ll have new, tasty food stations to wander through, free wine (donated by our alumni families at Webucator) and a relaxed new setting at the Craftsman Inn. And of course there will be plenty of time to hang out with all your MSS friends — current and alumni families and teachers. Our goal is for you to relax and get together with the rest of our great community for a fun night out, to raise money for our school.
Early Arrival is a program that combines MSS students of all ages who arrive each day at school at 7:30 a.m. On the morning in this photo, from left to right, Juliet DePaulis (Evergreen), Layton Tillie (Birch), James Phillips (Evergreen), Lola Coleman (Pine), Anderson Hager (Maple), Evi Zubieta (Willow), Caiden Milazzo (Pine), Mira Gordon (Willow), Sarah Phillips (Willow) and Clara DePaulis (Oak) played a variety of fun and energetic games with a parachute. Julie Hinman runs the program and always has interesting activities that all ages enjoy.