

# Highbridge

# Voices

PROGRAM  
HIGHLIGHTS  
2012-2013



## Using Music to Inspire Excellence in the Lives of Children

Highbridge Voices now enters its sixteenth year as the premier Bronx youth choir and continues to make a sizable difference in the lives of the children of the South Bronx. In fact, Highbridge Voices is more committed than ever to its mission of inspiring excellence in the lives of children. While the organization's past accomplishments have been well-documented, 2012-2013 represented a most ambitious year, as both the music and academic components underwent dramatic philosophical and programmatic expansions. The academic program increased the number of instructional hours and guided its graduating seniors to college admission. The music program established a new women's choir and received honors in both New York and Florida. The summer program offered a more robust curriculum in order to prepare students for success in high school, college, and beyond. It was a year filled with milestones as the organization explored new possibilities and continued to inspire the children of Highbridge Voices.





## Making the Commitment

Highbridge Voices is committed to offering high-quality musical and academic programming to children ages 9-17. By partnering with families and schools, we support students through an eight-year journey towards high school graduation and college enrollment.

## Watch, Listen, Engage

As we expand our scope of services, we are expanding our audience as well. Our online presence has seen significant gains this year, with a 200% increase in traffic on both Facebook and YouTube.



## Building a world-class children's choir in the Bronx

It was a banner year for the music program. The accomplishments of both the Chamber Choir and Concert Choir underscore the need to expand our reach across the community, while providing the highest level of choral instruction for the children of the South Bronx. As educational institutions continue to cut services in order to provide for an ever-expanding population of students, Highbridge Voices remains a rare opportunity for underprivileged children to experience musical opportunities unavailable to nearly all of their peers.

Among the many highlights of the 2012-2013 season:

- This was the second year in which the Concert Choir and Chamber Choir were successfully separated in two distinct ensembles. What was a mere experiment two years ago has become a vital part of accomplishing Highbridge Voices' mission. Now, students receive customized choral instruction three times a week and sing age and skill-appropriate repertoires.
- Efforts to continually challenge our students artistically led to the introduction of a 26-voice women's ensemble for advanced three and four-part treble music. This newly-formed choir performed admirably at both the annual Benefit Concert as well as Festival Disney.
- In fact, Festival Disney was a rousing success for the entire organization, as both the Women's Choir and the Chamber Choir achieved ratings of "Superior" in their respective categories (with final tallies of 92.3 out of 100 for the Chamber Choir, and 91.7 out of 100 for the Women's Choir).
- Individuals in the program also achieved unprecedented success. Sadia P. and River J. became the first Highbridge Voices students to sing in the NY-American Choral Directors Association Middle School Honors Choir in Albany, joining ninety-eight other middle school students from across the state. Sadia was also accepted into the prestigious LaGuardia High School of Music & Art and Performing Arts.
- Fourteen students participated in renowned composer Eric Whitacre's Virtual Choir. Students recorded themselves and submitted to an online database where their performances were fused together with thousands of other singers from across the world. This is the first time Highbridge Voices participated in any sort of interactive/online virtual performance, and student response indicates it will become a staple of our curriculum in the future.
- The Chamber Choir served as the guest choir for recording artist and philanthropist will.i.am, when he visited the Bronx as part of his environmental work with EKOCYCLE. The event was held at Highbridge Voices in collaboration with Coca-Cola and local non-profit Sustainable South Bronx.

## In Pursuit of Academic Excellence

Highbridge Voices is proud of the academic support it provides to its students and considers the academic program an essential part of its mission. Students' scholastic accomplishments are particularly noteworthy considering that only recently was the academic program expanded, coinciding with the 2012 hiring of a full-time academic director.

- This year, New York State Assessments in math and English language arts (ELA) for fourth through eighth grades are aligned with the National Common Core Standards and are designed to prepare students for sustained professional and personal success in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. These higher standards resulted in a sharp decrease in students' test scores across the state. Yet Highbridge Voices students of every grade outperformed their District 9 peers in both math and ELA, in many cases by a wide margin (see figures below).



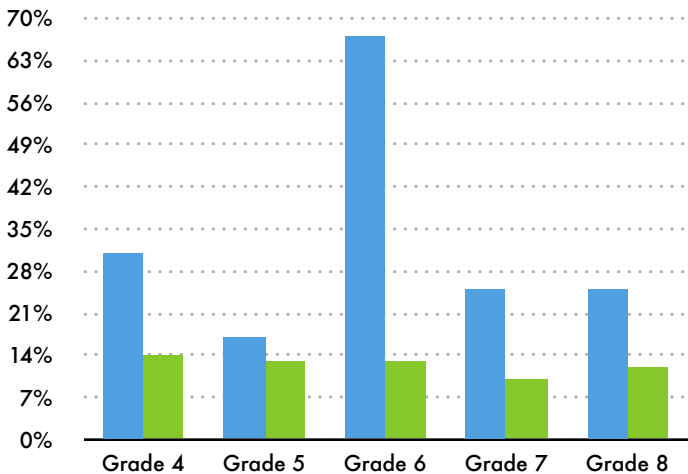
- In addition to their success on standardized tests, Highbridge Voices students demonstrated strong academic skills in their regular academic coursework, with 94% of Chamber Choir students passing their math classes and 97% passing their ELA classes.
- Not surprisingly, these academic achievements transferred to the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) as well. In 2013, Highbridge Voices juniors and seniors outperformed their District 9 peers on the SAT by 9%. Most significantly, the two graduating seniors scored 31.5% higher than their peers including Alize T., who received a full scholarship to Fordham University.
- Seniors received support during their college admissions process, including guidance with personal statements and scholarship interview training.
- In all, thirty-four students have graduated from Highbridge Voices since 2006, 80% of whom went on to a two or four year college, a primary goal of our academic program. Another 6% have enlisted for military service.

## Rising to Meet and Exceed the Standards

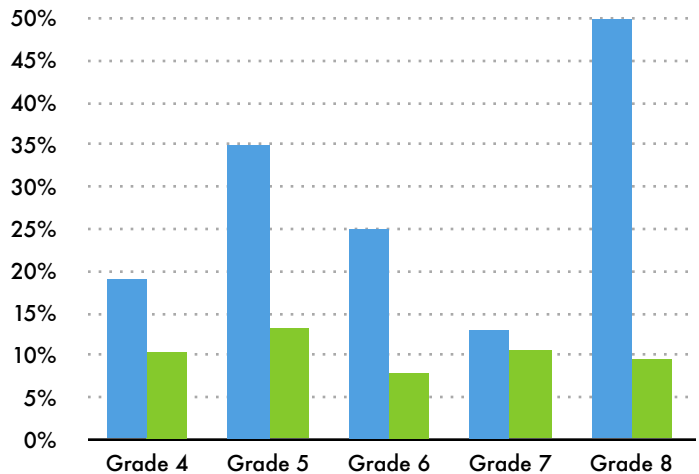
To accommodate the growing needs of our students, as well as the more rigorous standards now being enforced by the Federal Government, Highbridge Voices' academic program took a number of steps during the 2012-2013 year to ensure the continued success of our students. Those include:

- Math instruction provided by a New York State certified teacher.
- An additional hour of weekly ELA for all students, facilitated through Music Styles and Literature, a writing-intensive, music appreciation seminar.
- Homework support classes led by instructors holding advanced education degrees.
- Math and English curriculums, aligned with the new National Common Core Standards, complement instruction students receive in school.

### Math State Assessment



### English Language Arts State Assessment



■ Highbridge Voices Students  
■ District 9 Students



## By the numbers

Highbridge Voices served 137 students in the 2012-2013 year. Here is how they spent their time each week:

5 hours of choir rehearsal  
5 hours of homework assistance  
2 hours of math enrichment  
2 hours of English language arts enrichment

2 hours of recreation  
1 hour of music theory  
1 hour of music history  
1 voice lesson

## Preparing young leaders for a bright future

### SATs and College Readiness

For six weeks during the summer, rising juniors and seniors spent twelve hours weekly learning vital skills for life after high school and Highbridge Voices. The program focused on collegiate preparation, with emphasis on the SAT exam. In addition to on-site instruction, students took a sequence of KAPLAN SAT prep classes in Manhattan throughout the summer. Juniors and seniors also received personalized guidance in navigating the college application process. Skills covered included selecting and applying to appropriate colleges, navigating scholarship resources, and applying for financial aid.

seniors who completed the summer leadership program and SAT prep classes were then hired as paid interns at Highbridge Voices. In order to maintain employment, students must stay in good academic standing and continue to participate in all other program activities.

### Learning to Lead



Juniors and seniors also spent the summer developing their leadership skills in preparation for internships at Highbridge Voices the following fall. Besides engaging in a variety of leadership building activities such as flying on the trapeze and planning scavenger hunt for younger students, the juniors and seniors also earned their

Red Cross first-aid and CPR certifications, all of which helped to instill a sense of social, civic, and personal responsibility. All juniors and

### Summer Smarts

Rising freshmen and sophomores participated in our expanded High School Summer Program by taking math and ELA classes for three days per week (an increase from two in previous years) over six weeks to better prepare themselves for the upcoming school year. Students learned pre-algebra and algebra content through a financial literacy project that asked them to assume "Life Profiles" and manage personal budgets. Students also read a diverse array of literature to increase their understanding of other cultures and literary genres. This year's curriculum focused on short stories and included everything from the graphic novel *Batman: Year One*, to James Baldwin's seminal jazz tale, "Sonny's Blues," to Sandra Cisneros's account of feminine empowerment, "Woman Hollering Creek." Finally, students demonstrated what they learned by writing their own short stories.

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