



Matthew Whitaker, 10, playing Hammond B3 Keyboard



Apollo Hall of Fame Inductee Stevie Wonder and Matthew



The Apollo Theater Spring Gala Finale

HSA Student Matthew Whitaker Performs for Idol Stevie Wonder

New York, NY, June 21, 2011--On Monday, June 13, HSA's piano prodigy Matthew Whitaker performed at the Apollo Theater's Spring Gala. The Gala honored Mr. Stevie Wonder who was inducted into the Apollo Legends' Hall of Fame.

Ten-year old Matthew, who is legally blind, had the privilege of opening the show to the sold-out Apollo crowd of supporters and celebrities. Audience members were treated to Matthew's rendition of Mr. Wonder's Too High and Superstition performed on Matthew's favorite Hammond B3 keyboard, which he taught himself to play. The audience erupted with thunderous applause and a standing ovation.

Earlier backstage Matthew met his idol, Mr. Wonder. The duo talked jazz, instruments and performing. Matthew was all smiles when Mr. Wonder gifted him with another instrument to conquer, a harmonica. Throughout the evening Matthew spoke with an abundance of celebrities including the evening's host Sinbad, Spike Lee, Gabrielle Sidibe, Paul Shaffer, Yolanda Adams and the Apollo's own Ray Chew and the Crew.

Judith Insell, HSA's Director of Music says, "Matthew experienced what is often referred to 'musical heaven,' a feeling of euphoria among his idols. Not too long from now Matthew will be the headliner at the Apollo." In addition to the piano and keyboard, Matthew also takes lessons in the drums and percussion and has expressed interest in the clarinet and bass guitar. Matthew his also a member of the HSA Jazz Band led by Steven Oquendo. The HSA Jazz Band performs at venues and events throughout the city.

"The talented Matthew, HSA's music prodigy, is a testament to why the Harlem School of the Arts is vital to the students and families we serve. We celebrate this great achievement and look forward to the many milestones he will reach in his musical career" says Yvette L. Campbell, HSA President & CEO.

Congratulations to Matthew for achieving a moment many performers have only dreamed.

Photos provided by HSA Parent, Moses Whitaker, Jr.

About The Harlem School of the Arts

For nearly a half-century, the Harlem School of the Arts (HSA) has transformed the lives of tens of thousands of young people ages 4-18 through world-class training in the arts. HSA stands unique among community arts institutions in New York City, as the sole provider of arts education in 4 disciplines (music, dance, theater and visual arts) under one roof-our award-winning 37,000 square foot facility.

HSA's mission empowers young people mainly from under-served communities in Harlem to find and develop the artist and citizen within themselves. Our environment teaches discipline, stimulates creativity, builds self-confidence and adds a dimension of beauty to our students' lives. HSA boasts an impressive alumni base of Tony-award winning actors, celebrated operatic voices and jazz musicians, visual artists and dancers, and individuals who cite HSA as the platform from which they launched careers in law, business and other professional fields. The School's reputation for artistic rigor and excellence attracts constituents from all five New York City boroughs, Westchester County and New Jersey. We are especially proud to be among the pioneering cultural institutions that have been instrumental in the re-birth of Harlem.

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