

# In Awe: LaSalle High School Band Absorbs New York's Music, Culture

By Paul Gingras

After 16 hours of driving, the jagged, gray skyline of New York City appeared in the distance, a sight many LaSalle High School band students had never seen before. Almost instantly, cameras came out and questions poured, said Music Director Jason Byma, who took the 42-member group of eighth through 12th grade students on a journey into cultural diversity and professional music from Saturday, March 25, through Thursday, March 30.

After a quick shot through the Lincoln Tunnel, the band and 11 chaperones emerged in the midst of skyscrapers. Their talking ceased, replaced by awe, and a short time later they stood among the dizzying lights of Broadway.

At Carol Recording Studio, the band had the opportunity to play a musical score written for professional musicians with vocal accompaniment, which is different, Mr. Byma said, than the sheet music they read at school. Under the direction of a Broadway music director and with the accompaniment of Renée Klappmeyer, a singer in the Broadway play, "The Producers," band members had their first real taste of the professional life of a musician.

Working musicians, Mr. Byma said, like all professionals, are expected to use their polished skills to grasp new concepts quickly, or lose their jobs to someone who can.

The group's trip began with music, and music remained the central theme, but the students also



The LaSalle High School band poses on New York's famous Ellis Island during this year's band trip. While in the city, the students briefly experienced the work of professional musicians, saw a Broadway play, and toured the town. Students included (front row, kneeling, from left) Dana Perry, Elissa Crystal, Shelby Peters, Audrey Wyers, Lauren Ogle, Angela Cena, Wade McKenzie, Erin Patti, Shannon Horn, and Peereeya Asawainwed; (second row) Page Paul, Nickole Lanczak, Amy Chan, Britini LaJoie, Megan LaRocque, Michael Wilk, Eunjin Kim, Krystal Wilkins; (standing, third row) Dane Christiansen, Brad Smith, Ashly Peterson, Kellie Green, Colleen St. Onge, Justin Emery, Erika Swirsky, Thomas Krause, Tabitha Wright, Megan Gustafson, Tiffanie Arnold; (fourth and fifth rows) Ben Lane, Jonathan Ruegg, Stephen Massaway, Colin Chan, Stuart Zimmerman, Matt Arthur, Nathan Zimmerman, Joe Hough, Less Kelso, Cole Christiansen, Nick George, and Sam Wyers. Not pictured are Band Director Jason Byma and chaperones Barb Cena, Mary Christiansen, Steve Christiansen, Shirley Lanczak, Caroline LaRocque, Mike LaRocque, Mary Ribble, Jill Smith, Ed Smith, and Mark Wilk.

experienced the diverse cultures of New York City.

"It was awesome to see their reactions to the city," Mr. Byma said. "It exposed them to a different way of life, opened their eyes to a place where people are always

in a rush."

The students were particularly struck by Ground Zero, where the World Trade Center collapsed September 11, 2001. As they passed, the bus went silent, Mr. Byma said. Shrapnel was still

embedded in sculptures, and nearby buildings remained scorched.

"We take a lot for granted in St. Ignace," he said. "It's safe. It's a place where you can say 'hi' to someone in the street and know people's first names."

Escorted by guide Lil Sutton, students shopped, toured the Statue of Liberty, visited the aircraft carrier museum *Intrepid* and looked inside the United Nations building.

"I am extremely proud," Mr.

Byma said. "We didn't have a single problem with the students," even when dealing with long lines at Battery Park. There, in line to see the Statue of Liberty, a group of students from somewhere else were unruly and some even kicked the tame pigeons.

St. Ignace students returned more accepting of differences between people, Mr. Byma said, partly as a result of the variety they saw on the street, and partly owing to a Broadway musical they saw. "Rent" was written as a warning for people with an "anti-outsider" mentality, Mr. Byma said. The show deals a group of friends from many walks of life who come together to show love and support after one of them dies from AIDS.

The band returned home one day before the Saints of Steel drum band traveled to Alma to open a performance of the Alma Percussion Ensemble.

"They played well, and the crowd loved them," Mr. Byma said of the smaller group of steel drum and percussion players.

New York had given the students a sense of the professional music world, and the trip to Alma was what Mr. Byma called "true gigging." Once music becomes a job, he said, musicians practice hard, travel to a show, perform, and often go straight home, and that's exactly what the Saints of Steel did.

It was a memorable spring break.

## CPR, Computer Skills Classes Available in Rudyard in April

The Eastern Upper Peninsula Consolidated Community Schools Services (CCSS) is offering training courses in rescue breathing and first aid and in Microsoft software in Rudyard.

For \$20 a person, participants can learn Microsoft Word Level II techniques at a course to be held from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. at the Rudyard Middle School Wednesday, April 19. How to manipulate text and use program tools, along with learning how to merge mail, will be discussed.

For those wanting to learn more about Microsoft Excel, a course will be held from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. at the Rudyard Middle School

Wednesday, April 26. This course is also for \$20 per person. The course will show participants how to use the program to effectively manage business and home applications.

The CCSS is also offering a American Red Cross first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) courses to aid infants, children, and adults. The course will be held from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. in the Rudyard High School's home economics and food laboratory room Wednesday, April 26. Cost for the class is \$45. It is only \$30, however, for re-certification.

To register, call the CCSS office at (906) 478-7605.

## Red Cross Volunteer Training Offered April 21-22

The American Red Cross is seeking volunteers and will be holding classes in Sault Ste. Marie Friday, April 21 and Saturday, April 22. A Red Cross certification program will be offered Wednesday, April 26, in Rudyard.

There are four classes altogether. Friday's class will be Introduction to Disaster, which will run from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. Saturday's classes include Mass Care and Introduction to Red Cross operations. Classes will begin at 9 a.m. Saturday. Those who participate will qualify to be a Red Cross volunteer and a member of the Mackinac County Disaster Action Team, which is seeking volunteers.

The classes will be held in the

basement of the Huntington Bank on 511 Ashmun Street in Sault Ste. Marie. To register or get more information, call (906) 632-8111.

Consolidated Community Schools Services has also scheduled a Red Cross First Aid and Infant, Child, and Adult CPR course for Wednesday, April 26, from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. The course will be taught in the Rudyard High School home economics and food laboratory, and costs \$45 for certification or \$30 for re-certification. To register, call the Rudyard CCSS office at (906) 478-7605.

Additional courses will be offered on Mackinac Island, and dates will be provided soon.

The Mackinac County Disaster Action Team is a coalition of volunteers who respond to house fires and distribute vouchers to people needing food, shelter, and clothing. They also provide a canteen

for responders during extended fire control efforts and other disasters. The group will create a shelter during this spring's Mock Disaster Drill. The team meets the first Monday of each month, at 7 p.m., at the Quality Inn in St. Ignace.

## Fish Fry Fundraiser To Benefit Memorial Parade

The final fish fry fundraiser of the year for the Mackinaw City Memorial Day Parade will be held from 4:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at Pancake Chef restaurant Friday, April 21.

Admission for adults is \$8 and for children ages 12 and younger, it is \$5.

Mackinaw City's Memorial Day Parade will be held Saturday, May 27. The parade begins at 1 p.m. at the state dock.

The Scottville Clown Band will perform at the city marina and the Notre Dame High School Jazz Band from Pontiac will perform at Mackinaw Crossings on the morning of the parade.

Nearly 100 groups will participate in the Memorial Day weekend event, including the Bandettes from Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, the Marine Corps League, the Saladin Tyke Patrol of the Shriners, Mackinaw

Women's Club, American Legion Post 159, and the Mackinaw City Chamber of Commerce.

"Things at the restaurant were very successful this year and the committee can never thank enough all the volunteers who did so much work, both out in the food service room and behind the scenes, to make it all possible," said Pancake Chef owner Bob Fisher, who has been the parade chairman for 37 years.

## Retired Educators Meeting April 27

The Chippewa-Mackinac Chapter of the Michigan Association of Retired School Personnel will meet Thursday, April 27, at noon at the First Union Church of Cedarville.

Officers will be elected and a program about senior citizen health issues will be presented by staff of the Chippewa County Health Department.

All retired school employees may attend.

Reservations may be made by calling Rod Kauppila at (906) 478-6841.

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