

WHS Fine Arts Department Recognizes Seniors with Awards

By DON WILLIAMS
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

WESTFIELD — The Westfield High School (WHS) Fine Arts Department held its annual Senior Fine Arts Recognition Night on May 31 in the high school's Cafeteria B, during which teachers in the department gave seniors awards for their participation and accomplishments in the arts.

The evening began with a short performance by the WHS Jazz Ensemble, directed for the evening by Steven Stauffer, director of the school's Jazz Band II.

District Fine Arts Director Dr. Linda King welcomed the gathered students and their families, noting the high quality of work produced by high school students over the past year in the areas of visual art, drama and music. Dr. King also announced that over \$10,000 in awards and scholarships would be presented.

Stephen Markowski won the first scholarship of the evening, the Madeline Bristol Scholarship. Established in 1990 by Tony Bristol in memory of his mother, it is awarded to students who demonstrate high interest and achievement in the arts. Stephen, who will be attending the Mason Gross School of the Arts at Rutgers next year, has been active in the concert band, marching band and drama programs. He recently starred as Judas in the WHS spring production of *Jesus Christ Superstar*.

Shortly after the presentation, Dr. King announced that longtime drama teacher Joe Nierle will be retiring after this year.

"Joe built a stellar drama department at WHS," said Dr. King. "To be in his classroom is to bear witness to the high art of teaching at its very best. He is a generous gentleman and a team player."

Senior Maurice Blackmon came forward to publicly thank Mr. Nierle on behalf of his students. "When I found out Mr. Nierle was retiring, I walked into his office and gave him a hug," he said. "There was nothing to say. He has a way of taking you in, bringing things out of you and giving great artistic direction."

Mr. Nierle came forward and thanked his students and colleagues, expressing his enjoyment in working with the current class of seniors and regret that he will not see his Acting I students develop over the coming years. He then presented the Drama Achievement Scholarships.

Maurice Blackmon and Nick Williams received Drama Achievement



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STAR OF THE EVENING...Danielle Partenope returns to her seat with a plaque commemorating her tenure as drum major. Danielle walked away with five awards and scholarships for her musical involvement.

Book Store Hosts

Laura Carabello

WESTFIELD — The Town Book Store of Westfield will host a Meet and Greet book signing this weekend. On Saturday, June 10, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., New Jersey author Laura Carabello will be in the store to promote her new novel, "Crude! A Story of Passion in Aruba."

If unable to attend this event, call (908) 233-3535 and reserve an autographed copy.

Scholarships for their devotion to the drama program. Mr. Nierle called Maurice "an amazing human being who will impact our lives," while he cited Nick's enthusiasm and dedication ever since his first role as a telegraph operator in his first production.



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STEP RIGHT UP...Kathleen Solan steps forward to receive the Woman's Club of Westfield's Music Award.

Parents of students in the drama program sold concessions at performances to raise money for these \$350

tra went to violinists Jenna and Kayla Vandervort and cellist Andrea Gordon.

Mr. Wojcik presented the Director's Awards for Band to Jonathan Maimon, Neal Nemiroff and Danielle Partenope. Mr. Wojcik described Jonathan's work ethic as "professional" since his freshman year, playing in "virtually every ensemble," where he "gets the job done like a paid professional." Mr. Wojcik recognized Nemiroff's versatility on saxophone in both jazz and concert band music. Danielle spent the year conducting and coaching student ensembles. "She is the first student in my career who has transcended being a student and has begun student teaching in high school," said Mr. Wojcik.

Steven Stauffer presented the Louie Armstrong Award to drummer Brandon Cuba and the Woodie Herman Award to Neal Nemiroff.

Marching Band Director Michael Fackelman presented Drum Major Awards to seniors Jessie Cohn and Danielle Partenope and junior Stephanie Musat. The John Philip Sousa Band Award went to Lauren



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WINNERS...Matthew Leong stands with Kayla, Megan and Jenna Vandervort following the ceremony. Matthew received the National School Orchestra Award and Westfield Coalition for the Arts Scholarship. Megan also received the National School Orchestra Award, while Kayla and Jenna received the Director's Award for Orchestra.

scholarships.

Vocal music teacher Sharon Reynolds presented Kathleen Solan with the Woman's Club of Westfield's Music Award. The award is given in memory of Connie Strachan.

Michael Noblett received the Mid-Day Musicales Award for his strong work as a bass soloist.

Vocal music teacher Bill Mathews presented concert choir awards to distinguished vocalists Kristin Aguero, Jennifer Kujawski, Allison Siko and Nicholas Williams. "These students savor every note they sing and every piece they play," said Mr. Mathews.

Instrumental music teacher Raymond Wojcik bestowed awards to members of the WHS bands and orchestras. The National School Orchestra Award, presented nationwide to the top orchestral musicians in each high school, went to Matthew Leong and Megan Vandervort.

Matthew, the concertmaster for the high school's chamber and symphony orchestras, is "a wonderful violinist, a scholar and a very funny guy," said Mr. Wojcik. Megan is the principal violinist in the chamber and symphony orchestras and also a "student of music in a broader sense," according to Mr. Wojcik, who noted that an original piece of hers would be premiered the week of June 5. The Director's Awards for Orches-

Bentivegna, while Danielle Partenope garnered the Jerome Morrow Memorial Award for achievement in color guard.

WHS Marching Band Parents Association President Nancy Musat presented senior members of the marching band with scholarships, from money raised by the association's fundraising efforts. These scholarships went to Anne Sinisi, Ben Holt, Christina Collucci, Danielle



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WALKING TALL...Andrea Gordon beams as she carries her Director's Award for Orchestra.

Partenope, Danny Schwartz, Diana Spiridigliozzi, Gianna DiFrancesco, Jameson Lipe, Jessie Cohn, Jessica Graham, Josh Fishman, Julia Nelson, Katlin Swadosh, Lauren Bentivegna and Neal Nemiroff.

WHS art teachers Roy Chambers and Leah Jarvis presented the art department awards.

Alan Tso received the Woman's Club of Westfield's Arts Award. The Charles Addams Art Award was presented to Stephanie Lederman, and Danny Schwartz received the Rachel Mather Sullivan Memorial Award.

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Arts & Entertainment

WHS Grad Sklar Garners Tony Nomination for Wedding Singer

By SUSAN M. DOUGHERTY
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

WESTFIELD — We've all heard the "I'm just happy to be nominated" speech at award shows, but 1991 Westfield High School graduate Matthew Sklar really means it.

Recently, his musical score for *The Wedding Singer* was nominated for a Tony in the Best Original Score category.

The Broadway musical, based on the Adam Sandler/Drew Barrymore movie, is also nominated for four more Tonys including Best Book of a Musical, Best Performance by a leading actor in a musical, Best Choreographer and Best Musical.

In the overall category of Best Musical, the show is pitted against "The Color Purple," "The Drowsy Chaperone" and "Jersey Boys."

On Thursday, May 25, Mr. Sklar attended the official Tony Nominees' Luncheon at the Rainbow Room.

"We weren't allowed to bring anyone else; it was just the nominees," he said in a phone interview. "Just being there, sitting at a table with actors Jim Dale and Lynn Redgrave with Harry Connick, Jr. at the next table was the most incredible experience."

He also expressed excitement that because "Singer" was nominated for Best Musical, one of his songs would be aired on the June 11 telecast.

Even though this is Mr. Sklar's Broadway debut as a composer, he's no stranger to the Great White Way.

Since he was 18, he has worked on Broadway as a rehearsal pianist, pit pianist, assistant conductor and associate conductor for productions of *Nine*, *42nd Street*, *Titanic*, *Miss Saigon* and *Les Misérables*.

Most of his formal, classical training took place at Juilliard on weekends, he said, and at Tanglewood during the summer before his high school senior year.

"By the end of my freshman year at New York University, I had played in three professional shows," he said.

Finishing his degree at NYU was not in the cards for Matthew Sklar. "After playing at New Jersey's Paper Mill Playhouse, the professional opportunities kept coming my way." So he took them.

But way before he became a Tony



THE WEDDING SINGER...Westfield's Matthew Sklar, center, wrote the music for the new Broadway musical *The Wedding Singer*, and was just nominated for a Tony award. Several friends who all graduated together with Mr. Sklar from Westfield High School and did chorus and the musicals together, went into New York City a few weeks ago to see the show and meet up with him. Outside the theater are, from left to right Karen Zippler, Class of 1991; Kim Dickey, Class of 1991; Matthew Sklar, Class of 1991; Tracy Rawnicki, Class of 1990 and David Greenberg, Class of 1990

nominee, Westfield recognized and championed him as a talented adoles-

ken with him after the show. "It has been great to connect with them again," he said of their recent reunions.

Specifically, he remembered with fondness some of the encouragement he received from teachers and mentors like Westfield Summer Music Workshop leader Drude Roessler, Joe Nierle, Bill Matthews, Sharon Reynolds and junior high teacher Kris Morasso.

"I remember writing a song for the spring choral concert at Edison Junior High and Ms. Morasso used it," he reminisced. He sent it in to the Disney Channel and they used it as well.

After attending the Tony Nominee Luncheon with the other honorees last week, Mr. Sklar felt like he received all the professional recognition he needed.

"They had an inspiring speaker that day...when I left the luncheon, it felt like that was the real win for me."

The Tony Awards will be broadcast on Sunday, June 11, at 8 p.m. on CBS.

A number of them have seen the preview performances and have spo-

Area Students of Clarissa Nolde Hold Flute Recital

AREA — Music instructor Clarissa Sara Birkenthal performed a flute concerto by Vivaldi and children's dances by Kodaly on piccolo.

Roosevelt Intermediate School eighth graders Rachel Friedman and Yixiao Wang followed with music of Stamitz and Mozart. Yixiao performed the first movement of the Mozart D Major Concerto. He performs with the Philharmonica of the NJYS and participated in the 2006 Region II. Next year, he will also be joining the Westfield High School Wind Ensemble.

Annie Mylak, sixth grader from Springfield and Elizabeth McCabe, a Franklin Elementary School fourth grader, were next with music of Mozart. Nicole Spera and Melissa Riegel, both eighth graders at Edison Intermediate School, rounded out the program with music of Kodaly, Bartok and Enesco.

Hannah Markey and Brie Adamcyck, both seventh graders from Scotch Plains, performed the music of Telemann and Mozart, respectively. Westfield High School ninth grader



SWING FEVER...Joan Wright of Westfield is pictured getting into the swing of things with professional dancer Bo Broadwell.

Youth Sing for Charity At Cranford Church

CRANFORD — On Sunday, June 11, at St. Michael's Church in Cranford, youth from St. Michael's Parish and the Cranford community will put on their third annual spring concert.

A variety of songs will be performed including a selection from *Les Misérables*, *Jekyll & Hyde* and *The Scarlet Pimpernel*. This year the church will introduce several young singers from the area.

The performance begins at 7:30 p.m. There will be a free will donation at the end of the evening to benefit Broadway Cares/Equity Fights Aids, Raphael's Life House and VH1 Save the Music Foundation.

Wright Dances with Millie Cast member

WESTFIELD — Westfield resident Joan Wright participated in a Master Dance Class last week at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center. The class, conducted in conjunction with the eight-performance NJPAC run of Broadway's *Thoroughly Modern Millie*, was taught by cast member Bo Broadwell, who has also appeared in the national tours of *CATS* and *Crazy for You*.

Thoroughly Modern Millie runs at NJPAC June 6 to June 11. Ticket information can be found on the web at www.njpac.org or by calling 1-888-GO-NJPAC.

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