

SPECIAL MUSIC SCHOOL HIGH SCHOOL TO OPEN IN 2013

Groundbreaking K-8 Public School for Musically Gifted Children to Expand into High School Grades

Kaufman Center's Special Music School High School Updates Traditional Model of Classical Music Education to Prepare Students for 21st Century Music Careers

Only K-12 School in City to Teach Music as Core Subject

"I am thrilled that Special Music School is moving music education into the 21st century with its high school expansion. How amazing for our society that at this high school students will develop their artistic voices through composition, improvisation and performance and be encouraged and challenged during such a pivotal time in their lives. The young musicians fortunate enough to attend Special Music School High School will become uniquely prepared to be our musicians of the future. This is truly news worth celebrating."

-- *David Harrington, the Kronos Quartet*

Beginning in the fall of 2013, Kaufman Center's [Special Music School](#) (P.S. 859) will expand into the high school grades at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Educational Complex on New York City's Upper West Side, with a music curriculum that emphasizes the development of the student as a musician for the 21st century. With the establishment of the high school extension, Special Music School (SMS) will be the city's only K-12 school that teaches music as a core subject.

The school will be unique even among New York's highly regarded arts high schools in providing talented young musicians the opportunity to pursue serious, pre-professional music studies along with a rigorous Regents-based academic curriculum. Open to SMS eighth grade graduates as well as students from all five boroughs of New York City, the high school will admit 50 students per grade beginning with ninth grade in the fall of 2013.

"Kaufman Center's Special Music School High School will build on the success of the K-8 program and enhance the Center's ability to provide an unparalleled music education for the next generation of musical leaders," says **Lydia Kontos**, Kaufman Center's Executive Director. "The high school also fills a need for a program that educates musicians for a new paradigm for careers in music."

A New Model for Music Education

"The new high school will update the traditional model of classical music education in order to prepare students for the multifaceted and diverse opportunities available to today's musicians," says **Dr. Jenny Undercofler**, Special Music School Music Director and founder of Kaufman Center's teen new music ensemble, [Face the Music](#). "At a time of rapid change in the professional music world, we are committed to putting our students on a professional music path that will answer the demands of 21st century music."

Special Music School High School will embrace an innovative and forward-looking view of educating classical musicians, building on the rigorous classical training that has, traditionally, prepared students for positions as orchestra or band members. In addition to helping students build extremely strong core skills as music makers, SMS High School will prepare them to improvise and compose as well as perform, to understand and use music technology, and to collaborate with other musicians both in small and large groups while providing meaningful experience working with living composers.

Composer **Nico Muhly** says, "Special Music School contains, at its core, a radical and wonderful insistence that all music students, regardless of what they major in, have to perform, improvise and compose. Composing something will make you a better oboist, and improvising will make you a better composer. It will encourage the young musicians of tomorrow to specialize in being multi-purpose, which is the best kind of musician!"

SMS High School will be unique among NYC public arts high schools in offering a composition major. “We are offering students a unique chance to develop their creative voice at an age that is earlier than is usually common,” says **Dr. Undercofler**. “In a day and age when the ‘creative workforce’ is becoming increasingly central, this unique education in high school will offer students an advantage no matter what career they ultimately pursue.”

SMS High School’s Composer-in-Residence Program will give students the opportunity to work with professional composers in hands-on workshops, mentoring sessions and public performances premiering new works. The school’s first Composer-in-Residence, the pioneering electro-acoustic violist **Martha Mooke**, says, “When I present workshops on improvisation, electric strings or the conceptual creative process, I’m often asked where I learned what I’m demonstrating, playing or teaching. The answer is that I didn’t learn most of it in school – it took years of exploring, experimenting and developing. That is about to change with the debut of Special Music School High School. It could not be more exciting or fulfilling than to be the first Composer-in-Residence of this cutting-edge institution!” Ms. Mooke’s residency at Special Music School High School will be supported by [Composers and Schools in Concert](#), a nonprofit organization that connects professional composers and high school music programs.

Collaboration with New York’s Major Preparatory Programs

Kaufman Center is actively collaborating with New York’s three major preparatory programs: [The Juilliard School’s Pre-College Division](#), [Mannes College The New School for Music’s Preparatory Division](#) and [Manhattan School of Music’s Precollege Division](#). Special Music School will work with the administrators of these three important programs to provide their students with a holistic educational experience that attends to all of their needs, both musical and academic. All students at the SMS High School will maintain a Portfolio, and some of the activities conducted in the Pre-Colleges will help to fulfill their requirements.

“The SMS High School expansion is an exciting and important project that will positively impact the students of The Juilliard School’s Pre-College Division,” says **Rob Ross**, Administrative Director of Performance Activities, Juilliard Pre-College. “In addition to providing a strong academic program rooted in the successful tradition of Kaufman Center’s Special Music School, the high school’s proximity to Juilliard and Lincoln Center will allow the students easy access to the resources of both facilities.”

Kate Sheeran, Assistant Dean for Preparatory and Extension Divisions at Mannes College The New School for Music, says, “The opening of SMS High School will help to bring the NYC music education community together. I’m excited about all of the potential for collaborations with our programs at Mannes and beyond, and for the unique education that the students will receive!”

About Special Music School

Kaufman Center’s [Special Music School](#) is currently the only public school in the U.S. that offers musical training, including private instrumental lessons, during the regular school day starting in kindergarten. “Special Music School is unique in that it offers high-quality, pre-conservatory music program along with a rigorous academic curriculum in a holistic learning environment that encourages children to make connections between all forms of knowledge, from music to mathematics,” says SMS Principal **Katie Banucci-Smith**. SMS students typically score at or near the top of all New York City public schools on statewide and citywide reading and math tests. Founded in 1996, the school represents a public/private partnership between Kaufman Center, a nonprofit multi-arts organization, and the New York City Department of Education, which funds the academic portion of the students’ education. The music program is fully funded by Kaufman Center through private contributions. For more information visit kaufman-center.org/sms.

Application Process

Special Music School High School will open in September 2013; applications will be taken beginning in October 2012. Eighth graders from all five boroughs of New York City will be eligible to apply for admission. The application process will include an interview and audition on an instrument. For application information, please call 212 501 3395 or visit kaufman-center.org/sms.

About Kaufman Center

A national leader in the field of music education and one of New York City’s most vibrant cultural organizations, [Kaufman Center](#) combines the finest in music education for all ages with world class performance in the acoustically superior Merkin Concert Hall. Founded in 1952 as a community school for pre-conservatory music training, today’s Kaufman Center is home to [Merkin Concert Hall](#); [Lucy Moses School](#), New York’s largest community arts school; and [Special Music School](#), New York’s only K-12 public school for musically gifted children.

Press information

Joan Jastrebski

212 501 3386

joan@kaufman-center.org

**Special Music School
at Kaufman Center**

129 West 67th Street (between Broadway and Amsterdam)

New York, NY 10023

212 501 3390

kaufman-center.org/sms