

FALL
ARTS
PREVIEW

A GREAT DAY IN BALTIMORE

BY JOHN LEWIS

PHOTOGRAPHY
BY DAVID COLWELL

Despite the economy, the local arts scene keeps thriving, generating excellent work, a calendar full of can't-miss events, and even a few genius ideas—like OrchKids.



OrchKids students, instructors, and staff—including Dan Trahey top row, left—in West Baltimore, near Lockerman-Bundy Elementary School. See page 28 for more details about our photo shoot.



It wasn't that long ago—just over three years, actually—that the Baltimore Opera Company folded after the economy tanked and many observers (us included) wondered if it was a harbinger of more to come. At the time, MICA president Fred Lazarus told *Baltimore* that “in terms of the corporate headquarters here, the financial strength of the city, and lots of other things, we don't have lots of the resources that other cities have,” which sounded downright ominous considering the situation.

But Lazarus also noted something more essential, an observation that now seems prophetic. “One of Baltimore's great strengths,” he said, “is that it has always been able to perform better than its resources, in terms of its cultural community.”

On some level, times are always tough for our artists and arts organizations, but they're accustomed to being resourceful. A little money and lots of effort go a long way in the arts community, which has actually thrived over the past few years. In fact, we're in the midst of a golden age—or a renaissance, if you will—that's practically unprecedented for a mid-sized city. Read on and check out what's happening this season in music, theater, visual arts, and literature.

We've also included a lengthy story on OrchKids, the innovative music program spearheaded by the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra's Marin Alsop, as it is particularly emblematic of what's going on at this time. OrchKids reflects the vitality of an ascendant arts scene that, at its best, knows no bounds and can even make an impact across all sorts of barriers.

Welcome to the golden age.

B Online Exclusive: Check out our extensive list of upcoming events.



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Spotlight

OrchKids

THE “HIGHWAY TO NOWHERE” cuts a wide path through West Baltimore, six lanes across and little more than a mile long. The notorious stretch of Route 40 was once part of a grand plan for an east-west expressway across town. Neighborhoods were leveled and thousands were displaced during the 1970s to accommodate it. But city leaders changed gears, scrapped the plan, and construction ground to a halt, leaving behind an oversized monument to wrong-headed urban planning and plenty of animosity.

Lockerman-Bundy Elementary School sits at the end of the “Highway to Nowhere.” It's located at the corner of N. Pulaski and W. Mulberry Streets, an area that, if you're just driving through, seems the embodiment of a “nowhere” destination. Weathered plywood covers the windows and doors of numerous storefronts and houses,



<< Clockwise from left: Lockerman-Bundy parent Lynette Fields with her children (left to right): Asia, Andre, and Aaron; bucket band rehearsal in progress at the school; OrchKids instruments stored on custom racks in a classroom.



a breeze nudges fast-food bags down the sidewalks, and hard-looking characters take up positions along the surrounding streets. On a recent afternoon, a man staggered and then crawled up Mulberry on all fours, as a crossing guard and others watched.

It could be the setting for an episode of *The Wire*, and, in fact, the scene that opened the series was filmed just a few blocks away, at Lexington and Fulton. In it, a corpse lay in the street and a detective gathered shell casings, as youngsters watched from a nearby stoop.

Around here, children don't hesitate when asked to describe their neighborhood, tossing out words like “gangster,” “fighting,” “cursing,” “drugs,” and “shooting” in rapid succession. “It scares me,” says a young girl, between handclaps of a complex variation on Miss Mary Mack.

From outside, Lockerman-Bundy exudes institutional blandness. A squat, two-story building painted tan and brown with narrow windows and reinforced metal doors, it could be mistaken for a correctional facility if not for a thin strip of a mural along two of its walls. The mural depicts flowers and exotic animals against a turquoise background and has a pair of messages painted on it: “We're All in This Together” and “Wake Up!”

Inside, the environment changes radically. Vibrant, music-themed murals and photo collages of smiling children holding musical instruments cover the central hallway, which is mostly empty after 3:30 dismissal. Curiously, the sound of classical music wafts from the far end of the hall.

A smiling girl, wearing a white shirt and navy-blue skirt, appears at my side. “Can I help you?” she asks, before extending a

CHARM CITY
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Indie Music

The local indie-music scene now gets tons of media attention, thanks to the likes of Beach House, Dan Deacon, *below*, and the guys in Animal Collective, who all continue to rep Baltimore around the world. All three acts recently put out acclaimed albums, and Beach House's *Bloom*, Deacon's *America*, and Animal Collective's *Centipede Hz* reflect the restless creative spirit that's become the indie scene's trademark and come highly recommended.

And that's not all. At this point, it's hard to keep track of how many local artists have signed with Thrill Jockey, the much-lauded Chicago-based label that recently celebrated its 20th anniversary with blow-out shows in the hipster enclaves of Brooklyn, Portland, and, you guessed it, Baltimore (featuring Matmos, Arboretum, Pontiak, and Future Islands). Also, check the schedules for the Ottobar, Metro Gallery, and Rams Head Live, and keep your eyes and ears open for Rye Rye, Wye Oak, Lower Dens, J. Roddy Walston & the Business, Dustin Wong (who's been touring with Beach House), Celebration, Height with Friends, Lands & Peoples, and Secret Mountains.

DON'T MISS:
Future Islands at Virgin Mobile Free Fest, Merriweather Post Pavilion, October 6.
Animal Collective, Merriweather Post Pavilion, October 2.
Mountain Goats and **Matthew E. White**, Ottobar, October 10.
Beach House, 9:30 Club, October 17.
Dan Deacon, 9:30 Club, November 17.



BOTTOM RIGHT: COURTESY OF DOMINO RECORDS

Theater

Could the local theater scene get much better? Kwame Kwei-Armah continues to work his magic at Center Stage, assuring that the theater's 50th-anniversary season will be more exciting, diverse, and provocative than ever. Highlights include Kwei-Armah directing *An Enemy of the People* in the fall, and the world premiere of his new play, *Beneath's Place*, which is inspired by *A Raisin in the Sun*. It pairs nicely with another *Raisin*-inspired production, the Tony-winning *Clybourne Park*, which is also on tap. The highlight of Every-

DON'T MISS:
Mother, May I, award-winning play directed by Rain Pryor, The Strand, to October 12.
An Enemy of the People, Kwei-Armah directs Arthur Miller's adaptation of the Ibsen classic, Center Stage, through October 21.
August: Osage County, first production at Everyman's new Fayette Street home, January 16–February 17.
Million Dollar Quartet, musical inspired by a legendary recording session involving Elvis, Johnny Cash, Jerry Lee Lewis, and Carl Perkins, the Hippodrome, November 27–December 2.

man Theatre's upcoming season will be its January move to a new home below, around the corner from the Hippodrome. Despite losing Everyman, Station North is still a burgeoning theater hub thanks to the likes of the Strand Theater Company (with artistic director Rain Pryor), Single Carrot, and Glass Mind. Theatre Project is coming off its 40th anniversary season, and the Hippodrome and Lyric continue bringing in touring musicals, with the latter also booking a few full-scale operas.



hand and introducing herself as “Ashanti.”

After hearing I'm interested in learning about the school's music program, Ashanti identifies herself as an “OrchKid” and leads me down the hall to the gymnasium, where about 30 children—between the ages of 6 and 11—are playing on the basketball court. But they aren't dribbling and shooting; they're sitting in rows, looking intently at sheet music on stands, and playing violins, cellos, clarinets, flutes, trombones, tubas, and trumpets. Some of the cellists are barely bigger than their instruments.

Ashanti pulls a viola from its case and nods toward the group: “These kids are all OrchKids, too,” she says, before grabbing a bow and joining the string section.

Lockerman-Bundy is ground zero for OrchKids, which most folks know as the BSO-sponsored, Marin Alsop-approved, after-school music program. But it's much more than that, with an ambitious mission that goes far beyond substituting Beethoven for Beyoncé. It's equal parts grassroots activism, community organizing, and youth-development initiative, with some wide-eyed idealism and street-wise swagger in the mix.

Spend some time at Lockerman-Bundy, and you'll definitely think twice about calling it an “after-school music program,” which sounds quaint considering all it does and what it's up against.

ORCHKIDS LAUNCHED in September 2008 to great fanfare, when Alsop, in her second year as BSO music director, pledged \$100,000 (of the \$500,000 she won as a 2005 MacArthur “genius” grant recipient) to get it off the ground. It was initially a pilot program for a few dozen first-graders, but Alsop envisioned a multi-year curriculum and expansion to additional sites.

Some observers questioned the wisdom of undertaking such an ambitious project when the economy was tanking, but Alsop's response to the doubters shows that the OrchKids swagger started early, and it started at the top. “Economic hard times are going to come and go,” she told NPR in early 2009. “But our responsibility doesn't come and go. I mean, just because we hit a major speed bump, I think that's the moment to step up even further and be bold and do something important. . . . This was

the best \$100,000 I've ever spent.”

Alsop's confidence was rooted in two things: the success of a Venezuelan music program called El Sistema, which OrchKids was modeled after, and her belief that a tuba player from the Midwest could implement it in West Baltimore.

Dan Trahey is that tuba player.

A native of Traverse City, Michigan, the 34-year-old Trahey was classically trained at Peabody (class of 2000), where he distinguished himself as a player *and* community builder. After graduating, he began teaching a class at the Conservatory called Community Engagement and Creativity and co-founded Tuned-In, a Peabody program that, like OrchKids, provides greater access to classical music for city children.

Trahey was connecting Peabody—a notoriously insular institution—to the community at large, at a time when Alsop arrived at the BSO with a similar mission. “Dan and I are kindred spirits, with similar leadership styles and artistic temperaments,” says Alsop. “We're both ‘let's get it done’ people who

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can deal with challenging bureaucracies to keep things going forward.”

They also shared an admiration for El Sistema, though Alsop notes that Trahey “knew a lot more about it than I did. I knew it more from the concept of mentoring, but Dan really filled me in on the rest.”

Ask Trahey about El Sistema and here's what he'll tell you: “The primary focus of the program is democratic access to music education. It's not thinking about music as a luxury item, but thinking about it as a human right, a human need, something that everyone should have access to. We believe music



Clockwise from top: OrchKids violinist Marvin Jones-Tobin working on his technique; Flutist Nikya Monroe takes a break during a lesson after school.



can be used as a vehicle for social change. In a nutshell, that's the entire program.”

Then, he'll recount the El Sistema origin story, which has become downright mythic over the years.

As the story goes, José Antonio Abreu, an economist and frustrated classical musician, wanted to provide opportunities for Venezuelan youngsters to play orchestral music. This was in the mid-1970s, when the country's orchestras were comprised almost exclusively of Europeans and Americans, and Abreu extended an open invitation for students to rehearse at a Caracas garage. Just 11 students showed up the first day. But 25 came the following day, and 46 came the day after that. By the end of the month, Abreu was rehearsing 75 musicians and knew he was onto something.

From there, Abreu recruited additional instructors and students and began replicating the model at sites around the city. El Sistema was born, and music-education opportunities for children, many of them

impoverished, increased exponentially. El Sistema eventually garnered state support and spread throughout the country, spawning more than 100 youth orchestras, and engaging over 450,000 students.

It also became something of a global phenomenon, thanks to Abreu's commitment and charisma (check out his TED talk sometime) and high-profile alums like Gustavo Dudamel, now music director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic. As a result, El Sistema-inspired programs began popping up in cities around the U.S.

OrchKids was one of the first.

“WHEN WE STARTED, everybody thought we were cops,” says Trahey, sitting in the cramped office he shares with OrchKids program manager, Nick Skinner, a childhood friend, as well as a fellow Midwesterner and Peabody grad.

“For the first six months or so, people were very standoff-ish,” adds Skinner. “I remember coming in all excited, thinking,

Jazz and Classical

The jazz and classical scenes have been thriving, thanks to ambitious music series, committed musicians, and accommodating venues. The High Zero Festival continues its adventurous run at Theatre Project each September, the Creative Differences series brings improv masters and jazz greats to Station North, the Shriver Hall Concert Series boasts a lineup of top-tier chamber groups and soloists, and An die Musik Live! hosts a staggering number of shows, practically all of them jazz and classical.

Peabody's Gary Thomas books Jazz at the Hopkins Club and has brought the likes of Roy Haynes and John Scofield to town, and notable locals like Michael Formanek and Lafayette Gilchrist, *below*, gig regularly in the city. And let's not forget ensembles such as Baltimore Choral Arts, Soulful Symphony (in-residence at the Hippodrome), and the BSO, which continues its run of diverse and excellent programming under maestro Marin Alsop.

DON'T MISS:
Michael Formanek Quartet, The Wind-up Space, October 6.
Brentano String Quartet, Shriver Hall, October 14.
Baltimore Choral Arts with the Heritage Signature Choral, Soulful Symphony, and guest vocalists in “The Land of the Free,” Kraushaar Auditorium, November 3.
BSO plays Beethoven's Fifth and a piece it co-commissioned by local composer Christopher Rouse, Meyerhoff Symphony Hall, November 8 & 11.
Ethel Ennis, celebrating her 80th birthday, Reginald F. Lewis Museum, November 17.
Terri Lyne Carrington's Mosaic Project with vocalist Lizz Wright, Hopkins Club, November 17.



BOTTOM LEFT: COURTESY OF CHO BENN HOLBACK & ASSOCIATES

BOTTOM RIGHT: RAH RAH/COURTESY OF CREATIVE DIFFERENCES

Exhibitions

The reopening of The BMA's Contemporary Wing, *below*, in November figures to be a major event, as contemporary curator Kristen Hileman has reconfigured the galleries and expanded the scope of the permanent collection, making it more global and diverse.

DON'T MISS:

Anthony Caro, sculpture exhibit, C. Grimaldis Gallery, through November 10.

Revealing the African Presence in Renaissance Europe, The Walters, October 14-January 21, 2013.

For All the World to See, exhibition about visual imagery during the civil-rights movement, UMBC's Center for Art, Design and Visual Culture, November 15-March 10, 2012

The BMA Contemporary Wing reopens November 18.

The Art of Storytelling, AVAM's latest mega-show, to September 1, 2013.

OSAYCANYOUSEE: Prints and Objects Inspired by the War of 1812, curated by Post Typography's Nolen Strals and Bruce Willen, The Windup Space, through October 27.

Also, AVAM's latest mega-exhibition, *The Art of Storytelling*, just opened; the C. Grimaldis Gallery is celebrating its 35th anniversary; and the much-lauded civil rights traveling exhibition, *For All the World to See*, finally comes to UMBC, which put together the show with the Smithsonian. And the school just opened a new

Performing Arts and Humanities Building. It's also worth checking in regularly to see what's being shown at galleries like

Area 405, Current Gallery, Nudashank, City Arts Gallery, Maryland Art Place, School 33, and the Creative Alliance.

at galleries like Area 405, Current Gallery, Nudashank, City Arts Gallery, Maryland Art Place, School 33, and the Creative Alliance.



'I'm gonna change the world.' Then we had our first parent meeting, and not one parent showed up."

"Some of our parents feel like they've been screwed by the system, and that includes the public school system," explains Trahey. "These parents may not want to walk into a school building, just like they wouldn't necessarily want to walk into a police station. They're suspicious, because they feel these big institutions, even when they're trying to affect positive change, don't always have their best interests at heart."

You don't have to look farther than the highway outside the front door to understand that.

And there's another key factor to consider. "We're black, and they aren't," says Shirley Dessesow, Lockerman-Bundy's parent liaison, noting that the student body is nearly 100 percent African-American. Ninety-five percent live below the

poverty line. Dessesow, who was on the committee that okayed bringing OrchKids to the school, recalls such issues being raised, sometimes vehemently, at committee meetings. "It got hot, for awhile," she says, "and people were asking, 'How are these guys going to relate to our children?'"

"We were leery of them," says Lynette Fields, who now has three children in the program, "because they wanted to come in and teach our kids, and we didn't know them."

But Lockerman-Bundy ultimately brought Trahey and Skinner aboard, because, as Dessesow says, "They were offering our kids an opportunity they wouldn't otherwise have, and we were looking for something in the afternoon that would keep them safe and off the streets."

Besides that, "it was free," notes Fields.

But it took about two years, Trahey says, "to turn the corner, where people started to really understand what we were doing and



Right: Colorful, music-themed murals line the hallways at Lockerman-Bundy; Below: OrchKids instructor Edwin Booth works with the brass section in the gymnasium.



BOTTOM LEFT: COURTESY OF BMA

trust us. It was a slow process, which grew out of us being here day in and day out and proving that this is a safe place for them to go."

"As the months went on, we could see they were committed," says Fields. "You could see that they cared about the kids and were sincere about what they were doing."

It's a close-knit neighborhood, and word got around that the two white guys weren't cops, and they actually cared about the kids. Trahey and Skinner knew things had changed when parents—knowing both men were single and living on their own—

"IT'S NO 9 TO 5. ORCHKIDS ISN'T A JOB; IT'S A LIFESTYLE."

started bringing them plates of food at the end of the day.

And those parent meetings? These days, they get an average of 200 people through the door.

But Dessesow notes something even more telling: "Just look at the kids," she says. "You can look at kids and see how they feel about a person, and these kids love Dan and Nick."

You can see it as they walk the halls at Lockerman-Bundy, both of them kid magnets. Students call out, "Mr. Dan, Mr. Nick," and, before you know it, the two men are listening to a story, mediating a dispute, or discussing the subtleties of a Tchaikovsky piece. It doesn't take long to recognize that they've shouldered responsibilities beyond what any title or job description might suggest.

"I don't think anyone actually knows our job titles, because we wear so many hats," says Skinner. "We do everything from the administrative side and all the paperwork to other aspects of the job that involve being a social worker, doctor, community activist, transportation coordinator, teacher, classroom manager, and disciplinarian."

"It's no 9 to 5. We don't think of it that way, because it's become such a big part of our lives. OrchKids isn't a job; it's a lifestyle."

IT'S A LIFESTYLE for the kids, too. The program—which has expanded to three other elementary schools: Mary Ann Winterling, New Song, and Highlandtown—runs from pre-K through fifth grades, and one of the first things an OrchKid learns is how to shake hands. Before the first-graders even pick up instruments, they're taught to extend a hand to whomever they're addressing, look them in the eye, and introduce themselves. So when Ashanti introduces herself to me, it isn't exceptional—it's expected.

First-year OrchKids also play games that improve listening skills, sing in a choir, and do arts and crafts, before picking up their first instrument: a bucket—specifically, a bright orange, five-gallon bucket from Home Depot that retails for seven bucks and doubles as a drum when turned upside down. Their instructor is BSO percussionist Brian Prechtel, who, on any given day, can be found in the bucket band room surrounded by youngsters drumming and shouting things like, "One, two, three, four, five! Bucket band don't take no jive! Six, seven, eight, nine, ten! Back it up and do it again!"

The buckets come first, because as Prechtel notes, "the kids can play immediately and sound great. It might take them six months to sound pretty good on the other instruments, but they sound good on the buckets right away. That immediate gratification and success is important, because it sets the tone for what's to come."

Each OrchKids level is designated by the name of a musical luminary and involves certain privileges. Andre and Asia Palmer, two of Lynette Fields's children, explain:

ASIA: *The first-graders are called the Miss Marins [as in Alsop]. The first year, you don't even play instruments at the beginning.*

ANDRE: *You're in the choir and bucket band.*

ASIA: *But the second year you're a Beethoven and get to choose your instrument.*

ANDRE: *I chose cello, because it has a low sound like a bass.*

ASIA: *I liked the flute, because it has a pretty sound, and it's easy to carry.*

ANDRE: *I carry mine on my back.*

ASIA: *When we became Tchaikovskys, we could take our instruments home on Fri-*

Books & Literature

That old "city that reads" tagline could be changed to "the city that writes," as we boast an impressive roster of local authors, led by a triumvirate of former *Sun* writers: Dan Fesperman, Stephen Hunter, and Laura Lippman, who consistently produce page-turners. We've also seen the recent publication

of *The Collected Poems of Lucille Clifton* (essential work from our patron saint of poetry) and *Splendors & Glooms* by Laura Amy Schlitz (the Newbery Medal-winning Park School librarian).

Michael Kimball, co-host of the 510 Reading Series, writes some of the most moving fiction you'll ever read, while Larry Doyle writes some of the funniest. And masters such as Anne Tyler, Madison Smartt Bell,

and Stephen Dixon walk among us. Mix in the excellent *Smile, Hon, You're in Baltimore!* zine and events like the Baltimore Book Festival, the CityLit Festival, One Maryland One Book, and the recently-launched Lit Show, and you have a robust scene.

DON'T MISS:

Baltimore Book Festival, with this year's **One Maryland One Book** author **Steven Galloway** (*The Cellist of Sarajevo*) and many others, Mt. Vernon Square, September 28-30.

The Lit Show, with guests **James Magruder** and **Leslie Miller** and an all-star band led by **Howard Markman**, **The Creative Alliance** at the **Patterson**, October 11.

510 Reading Series, featuring **Matt Bell**, **Amber Sparks**, and others, **Minäs Gallery**, November 17.



Only in Baltimore

This town generates its share of unique events that reflect the city's exceptional and, in some instances, peculiar qualities. The Transmodern Festival showcases the art scene's more radical and experimental sides each spring, scapescape brings together a staggering number of edgy bands at summer's end, the Maryland Film Festival screens many obscure gems and gives a nod to talented locals like Matt Porterfield, and, of course, Artscape remains the largest free arts festival in the country. The Great Halloween Lantern Parade, below, as directed by local luminary Laure Drogoul,

DON'T MISS: **Halloween Lantern Parade, Patterson Park, October 27.** **Let the Spirit Move You: Ouija, Baltimore's Mystifying Oracle, Baltimore Museum of Industry, through January 27, 2013.** **Hairspray in Concert, John Waters and guests with the BSO, Meyerhoff Symphony Hall, January 25-27.**

lights up Patterson Park with a fantastic array of lanterns, video projections, art installations, and marching bands. There's an exhibition celebrating the Ouija Board's history in Baltimore, and there are shows in the works to commemorate next year's 100th anniversary of Baltimore screen-painting and legendary screen-painter Johnny Eck. John Waters narrates *Hairspray in Concert* with the BSO in January, a show that also features Micky Dolenz of The Monkees. And next time you're in Fells Point, check out visionary artist Loring Cornish's new gallery next to Sound Garden on Thames Street. While you're there, be sure to chat up Cornish and explore the rooms upstairs. You won't be disappointed.



days. That's the third year. And when we became Mahlers, in our fourth year, we could take them home all the time.

ANDRE: So we get to play our instruments every day after school.

ASIA: We still get to do that, and now we're at the highest level—the Jacksons.

ANDRE: Like Michael Jackson.

IT'S NOT UNCOMMON to hear Trahey, Skinner, or one of the 42 part-time OrchKids instructors announce, "I need all Mahlers in the gymnasium," or "Tchaikovskys should report to the cafeteria." And then the Mahlers and Tchaikovskys line up and head to their respective spots.

All OrchKids take these designations and privileges seriously, especially those having to do with instruments. Soon after the program expanded to Mary Winterling last fall, a group of cheering children greeted the truck delivering instruments to the school. On a Monday morning last October, the arrival of violins, trombones, and such—all of them donated by Music & Arts, a Frederick-based retailer—caused quite a stir amongst the Miss Marins. They helped carry the instruments into the school, all of them looking proud and excited by possibility.

Trahey recognized that look and keenly understood how such instruments can change lives. It happened to him.

In the sixth grade, Trahey, who's from a working-class family of non-musicians, told his parents he wanted to play saxophone. Right away, his father balked at the cost and told him, "Hell, no." Not long after, his parents were at a local bar/club, struck up a conversation with the owner, and told him their son wanted to play the horn. The guy said, "Hold on, I'll be back in a second," and returned with a tuba, which he gave them.

Back home, the tuba didn't go over well with Dan, who was devastated it wasn't a sax. But when he played it, the effect was magical, producing "an immediate transformation," he says, a transformation that led to better grades, a spot in the high-school marching band, and even a scholarship to Peabody.

When he left for Peabody, Trahey bought a new tuba and passed along the old one to his brother, who used it to get a full schol-

arship to Northeastern. And his brother passed along the same tuba to a friend, who used it to get into the Coast Guard Academy.

OrchKids can choose whatever instrument they like. They'll learn to play by ear, until written music gets introduced in third grade. They'll play in groups and get lessons from the part-time faculty and volunteers, many of them Peabody grads and instructors. "But we always emphasize passion first, precision second," notes Trahey, "because this approach to music making is social. We don't want our students locked away by themselves in practice rooms. We want them working as a group and growing as a community."

"It's my job to get them to work as one unit with discipline and uniformity," says

"THE REAL MEASURE OF THIS PROGRAM WILL BE WHETHER THESE CHILDREN DO BETTER IN LIFE."

choir director Dion Cunningham. "The singing pulls them together, and the morals and lessons they learn in the process will help them throughout their lives."

They'll eventually rehearse together for three-hour stretches, mentor younger kids, and collaborate with visiting musicians from around the world. Last year, for example, a handful of OrchKids played Argentinian tango music with a Canadian group called the Mashed Potangos, which seems totally out of place for West Baltimore—that is, until bassoonist Mateen Milan tells me his favorite composer is tango master Astor Piazzolla.

They'll also earn the right to perform at events such as the BSO Gala and Artscape. For many, it will be a first foray out of the neighborhood to previously foreign territory like the Meyerhoff and Peabody. "That's when I realized this program really could



From top: Dan Trahey and OrchKids outside Lockerman-Bundy, on Pulaski Street, after dismissal; Instructor Dion Cunningham leads choir rehearsal in the school cafeteria.

take them places," says Fields. "My kids are almost overwhelmed before these shows. They'll be calling up family members and telling them, 'Come to this place. We're going to be performing here today.'"

ON JULY 12, Asia, Andre, and 17 other OrchKids performed with Roger Waters, of Pink Floyd fame, at the Verizon Center. The D.C. date was part of Waters's blockbuster *The Wall* tour, which, according to *Billboard* magazine, "will go down as one of the biggest performance and creative ambition."

At each stop, Waters's people recruit a local group to reprise the children's chorus in the hit song, "Another Brick in the Wall." Trahey got the call a few days before the show and started rehearsing the kids, who went on to perform the song in front of 20,000 people.

The next morning at Lockerman-Bundy, the kids are still buzzing from the experience and talking about meeting people

from England, eating pizza backstage, being awed by the lights and sound, and getting treated "like rock stars."

"It felt like we were famous, because everyone was cheering for us," says Courtney Crutcher.

"Seeing so many people made my eyes pop," says Deshae Banks. "I was scared before we went onstage, but after we got out there, it was a piece of cake."

"He [Waters] told us to just have fun, and we did," says Joseph Wilkerson, still wearing the "Fear Builds Walls" T-shirt he and the other OrchKids wore onstage. "I want to do it again."

Then, Trahey distributes autographed photos Waters sent along for the kids. Andre reads the personalized inscription on his picture, "To Andre," and smiles. All the others are inscribed, too.

"How did he know all our names?" asks Crutcher.

"You're OrchKids, aren't you?" replies Trahey.

THOSE SORTS OF mind-expanding experiences were envisioned from the start, and the BSO, as noted in its early press materials, hoped to boost "each student's academic, social, and musical progress." The social and musical improvements have certainly materialized.

"It's exceeded my expectations, in every way," says Lynette Fields. "I see the music in my kids, and I see them becoming better people."

Rodney Brewington sees something similar with his son, Keyon, a violin-playing Mahler at Lockerman-Bundy. "OrchKids improved his whole attitude about life," says Brewington. "I'm shocked how much he's gotten out of this program."

Overall, grades may have improved, but standardized test scores have yet to spike. Skinner says it's a point of contention with administrative types, "who tell us that if kids can't read and write, it doesn't matter how good they play the cello."

He acknowledges there's some truth to that and notes that OrchKids is flexible enough to accommodate academic enhancement. After all, he and everyone else associated with the program understands they're not in the business of producing symphony musicians. "We will celebrate that when it happens, but it certainly isn't the desired outcome for every child," says Skinner. "It's more about them becoming whole and healthy individuals."

Back in 2008, Alsop maintained that "the real measure of this" | **CONTINUED ON PAGE 199**

UPCOMING ORCHKIDS EVENTS

October 27, 11 a.m.
Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Center Y
900 33rd Street

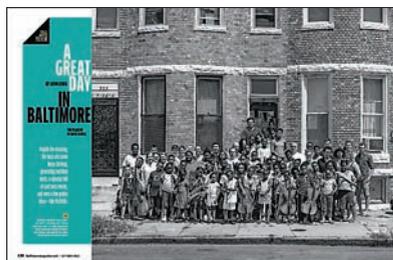
October 28, 10:30 a.m.
Brown Memorial Woodbrook Church
6200 North Charles Street

December 14, 5 p.m.
Lockerman-Bundy Elementary School
301 N. Pulaski Street

B Online Exclusive: See OrchKids onstage with Roger Waters in D.C. and additional photographs.

Fall Arts

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 143



program will be whether these children do better in life,” and she still feels that way. “People like Dan and I have experienced firsthand how music can be a haven, a refuge,” she says. “As kids, it set us apart and provided the tools to learn things that were applicable throughout our lives. We want to pass that on to these kids and give them all a chance to experience what we did.”

If resources allow—most funding comes from foundations, donors, and the government—Alsop hopes the program will someday be available to all city school children.

And at least one OrchKid is already planning how to keep it going. When asked what she wants to be when she grows up, Ashanti says, “Mr. Dan.”

“I want to take over OrchKids,” she explains. “Someday, Mr. Dan’s going to get old and tired, and I don’t want OrchKids to end. I want all little kids to be OrchKids.” **B**

JOHN LEWIS is arts and culture editor at *Baltimore*.

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baltimoremagazine.net/archives

Arts Under Attack, May 2009

The recession impacts local arts organizations.

Hitting the Right Notes, September 2008

The BSO launches OrchKids music program.

Charmed Life

CONTINUED FROM PAGES 78, 80, and 152

WHERE TO BUY: Where to Buy: Antique Exchange, 3545 Chestnut Ave., 410-532-7000. Gore Dean, 5100 Falls Rd., 410-464-1789. Joanna Gray Shoes, 10435 Stevenson Rd., Stevenson, 410-484-3602. Pier 1 Imports, several locations including 1 E. Joppa Rd., Towson, 410-296-4112. Sassanova, 805 Aliceanna St., 410-244-1114. South Moon Under, several locations including 815 Aliceanna St., 410-685-7820. Stebbins Anderson, The Shops at Kenilworth, 802 Kenilworth Dr., Towson, 410-823-6600. Studio C Jewelry & Gifts, 822 W. 36th St., 410-444-7979. Sweet Elizabeth Jane, 8125 Main St., Ellicott City, 410-465-6400. Su Casa, several locations including 901 S. Bond St., 410-522-7010. Teavolve, 1401 Aliceanna St., 410-522-1907. Trohv, 921 W. 36th St., 410-366-3456. Vintage Bliss Boutique, 8086 Main St., Ellicott City, 410-465-5117.

COMING IN NOVEMBER

ON NEWSSTANDS 10/26



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Our annual feature story on the best doctors in the region, as chosen by their peers.

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HOLIDAY ENTERTAINING

Inspirational (and practical) ideas for this year's party season.

BMA CONTEMPORARY

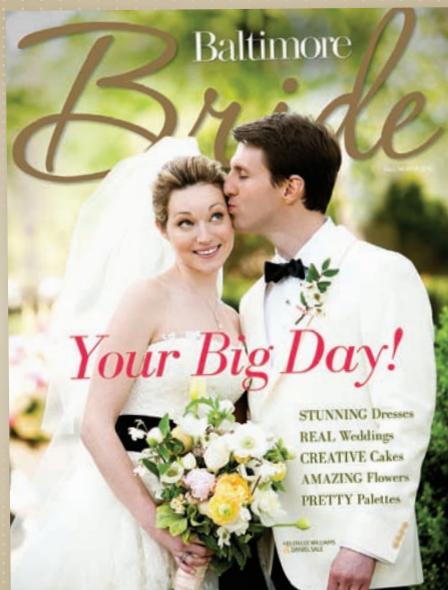
The wing gets a makeover. We take you inside.

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