

# PAYSON ROUNDUP

## Payson takes stage at Carnegie Hall

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**By CAROL LA VALLEY**

Thirteen members of Payson High School's Modern Choir filled New York's Carnegie Hall with their voices on June 11, on a stage that many musicians spend a lifetime trying to reach.

"Walking into Carnegie Hall, just for the dress rehearsal, was overwhelming," said Larry Potvin, PHS music teacher.

The students performed Franz Schubert's "Mass in G Major" on the stage of Carnegie's Stern Auditorium.

"Walking around Carnegie Hall was amazing," said student Desi Burris. "It had four rows of balcony seating, the walls were white with gold (gilt work) and it was really cool. Looking at the outside you would not expect it to look so big on the inside."

"Dr. Thye (the conductor) told us to take in the moment," Potvin said. "You are performing where some great musicians have performed."

Industrialist Andrew Carnegie opened the concert hall on May 5, 1891. Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky made his American debut at that opening concert.

Students had several rehearsals before their debut, backed by the New England Symphonic Ensemble.

"(The conductor) actually taught us to open our mouths more when we sing. It's hard to explain, but we learned a lot," Burris said.

The Payson choir was joined by several other student groups from different high schools. Thye split the singers into quartets.

"You could actually hear yourself sing, so you knew whether you were singing the right note and how loud you were being," Burris said.

The unique educational experience was also refreshing to Potvin.

His students will come back to a recharged instructor with a room full of motivational posters on the wall.

Potvin said there is a subtle difference between asking students to "sing it right" rather than "do it again."

He was inspired by Thye's sayings such as, "Sing to the heart of every pitch," "There is no room for arrogance in excellence" and "Why would you ever want to sing anything less than professional?"

"My choirs will be better because of you," Potvin told Thye.

"Those rehearsals were important, for on stage, you could not really hear yourself sing, but you could hear the echo of the choir in the auditorium after the conductor, Thye, signaled the last note," Shauna Curtis said.

Curtis estimated the audience filled about 80 percent of the auditorium.

The singers received a standing ovation after their 20-minute performance.

Carnegie Hall was not the only item on the four-day trip to the Big Apple.

The group stayed at a hotel that was walking distance from Times Square, so the students, chaperoned by Potvin and six parents, were able to compare New York- and Chicago-style pizzas and check out a bit of the city.

They saw “Les Miserables” on Broadway.

They took a cruise on the Hudson River right after the performance, so they were able to see the Statue of Liberty lit up, in addition to seeing the statue from Battery Park during the day.

“The joke is that to get to Carnegie Hall, you need to practice, practice, practice,” Potvin said. “But we could not have gone on this trip without the kind generosity of the people in Payson.”



**photo by Larry Potvin**

Payson High School Modern Choir members hang out in front of the CBS Television Network building with Early Show co-anchor Hannah Storm, on their trip to sing at Carnegie Hall in New York. Choir members who went on the trip were Shauna Curtis, Jamie Flake, Aaron Meidinger, Troy Wayland, Briann Davis, Mary Hagen, Desi Burris, Alexis Hilliard, Julia Legassie, Kylea Donaldson, Chelsea Smith, Danielle Westron and Misaki Kadowaki.