

J-M'S NEW YORK ARTS ADVENTURE

Back from the Big Apple

Trip designed to help students 'experience the best the world has to offer and get new perspectives that can change their lives'

(Editor's note: Last week, eight upperclass artists from Jordan-Matthews High School in Siler City flew to New York City for five days over spring break to explore one of the world's great cities, gain new perspectives that will influence their work, and experience the very best in theater, music and visual arts. They were accompanied by Chip and Rose Pate of Pittsboro. Chip Pate, a marketing and public relations consultant, helped create JMArts with his wife, Rose, the media coordinator at Jordan-Matthews High School and president of the foundation. The couple planned every detail of the adventure each year, working with contacts in New York City and the eight student artists who are participating. Diary entries and photos from the trip were posted daily on the News + Record's Facebook page last week. This week, the entries and photos are shared in print, along with an introduction to the experience by Chip Pate.)

BY CHIP PATE
JMArts Foundation

NEW YORK CITY — JM's New York Arts Adventure is a lot.

It's a lively week for the student artists. There are performances and art tours and discussions with world-class professionals. Some late-night meals end the day after they begin. Supper on Friday at Dizzy's Club overlooking Central Park actually began even later, with burgers, calamari and wings landing on the table just a few minutes after midnight, as trumpeter Bruce Harris and his band cruised through their 75-minute jazz session.

It's a long year of planning. Every show, every activity, every meal, every everything is selected and arranged by the trip leaders after consulting with the eight student artists making the journey. It would be a lot easier contracting with a tour company, but that wouldn't make the trip what it can be.

It's a fine balancing act. Which shows do you choose in a city with endless options? How can you make it work financially for families? How much can you do in five days without it becoming too much?

It's the kindness of world-class artists. Just look at this cast that sat down with JM artists this year and then look up their biographies:

Jessie Austrian, cofounder and co-artistic director for the renowned Fiasco Theater — someone who has appeared as an actor on Broadway and recently worked with Stephen Sondheim to reinterpret one of his musicals. Andy Grotelueschen, a Broadway actor who has been bringing down the house in the new musical "Tootsie" that you'll be hearing a lot about if you follow theater — and maybe even if you don't. JCORP, a successful street artist who has her own company, creating public art projects and commissioned works for big names like NBC Universal. And Peter Marks, chief theater critic for The Washington Post, who was part of a news team that received a Pulitzer Prize and has served four times as chair of the Pulitzer Prize drama jury.

They're not just hired guns. Most of them already knew what our JM artists are accomplishing, either directly or through colleagues, and some have helped with JMArts projects over the years. When we mentioned the New York Arts Adventure, even before we requested any help, they asked if



Submitted photo

Jennifer Henderson photographs one of the flowers placed on the 9/11 memorial every day to commemorate the birthdays of those who lost their lives during the terrorist attacks.



Submitted photo

Group member Jennifer Henderson and the Fearless Girl sculpture, now located on Wall Street across from the New York Stock Exchange.

they could meet with the students while they were visiting the city.

It's the generosity of an entire community back home. On first glance, this seems like a fun spring break trip to the Big Apple — and we hope it is. But it's really designed to help high school artists experience the best the world has to offer and get new perspectives that can change their lives. As people and organizations in our community have learned about that emphasis, they have stepped forward to help.

The Wren Foundation provided a full student scholarship for the second year. The Galloway Ridge Charitable Fund paid for students to see Plácido Domingo perform at the Metropolitan Opera and experience street art and graffiti technique. The Jordan-Matthews PTA made a substantial contribution to reduce the cost for families. And several individuals including Mark and Elizabeth Zeringue, Robert and Jane Wrenn, Robert Heuts and an anonymous contributor also helped make this possible — as did everyone who contributed over the last year by purchasing a raffle ticket, having supper at our barbecue fundraiser, joining us for the character breakfast last fall or attending Sing and Play.

It may sound like a quick, five-day trip, but JM's New York Arts Adventure really is a lot.

Every once in a while, you wonder if it's too much. But then you're captivated by the students' insightful conversations with renowned personalities over lunch in New York. You watch how they're inspired exploring backstage with an actor on Broadway.

You hear them walking down West 27th Street talking among themselves about how something isn't anything like what they thought it would be. Or how some-

thing they experienced is their new favorite thing. Or how what they just learned emboldened them to pursue a passion or changed the way they think about what their futures can be.

That's when you realize it may be a lot. But given the payoff, it's not too much at all.

Tuesday with 'Sleep No More'

BY LINDLEY ANDREW

This morning we departed from RDU, and after an hour in the air, landed at LaGuardia international airport. We then took a van ride to our hotel where we got our first true look at the city.

Next, we took the subway to Ellen's Stardust Diner, where we ate lunch while listening to waiters and waitresses, all of whom have been on Broadway, sing and dance. The food was delicious, and the fun atmosphere was even better!

After eating lunch, we walked through Times Square and headed towards the Empire State Building. Once there, we went all the way up to the observation deck where we were able to get a great 360-degree view of the city. The wind was intense on the observatory, but the amazing views were totally worth the crazy, wind-blown hair! After visiting the Empire State Building, and taking a little bit of rest time at the hotel, we headed to our first theatrical experience of the trip, an interactive show based on Shakespeare's "Macbeth," called "Sleep No More." The interactivity of the show was unlike anything any of us had ever done before, and all of us left more excited and chatty than we came in!

To end the night, we grabbed a late dinner at NY Pizza Suprema. The



Submitted photo

In front of the Washington Square Arch in New York's Greenwich Village.



Submitted photo

A flower placed on the 9-11 Memorial last Friday for Edward Lichtschein is one of many placed each day to commemorate the birthday of those killed in the terrorist attacks.



Submitted photo

Samantha Zarate takes a photo of the 9/11 memorial during a quiet visit to the location where the Twin Towers once stood.

pizza was amazing! It was authentic and delicious! Definitely a must-try in New York!

Wednesday with Jessie Austrian, 'Tootsie' on Broadway, Andy Grotelueschen and 'La Traviata' at the Metropolitan Opera

BY JENNIFER HENDERSON

After our first day in

New York, we were ecstatic to begin our next day's adventures. We woke up to car horns and doughnuts from the Doughnut Project. The doughnuts were amazing and my favorite had to have been the vanilla bean doughnut.

After a bit of exploring, we headed to Joe Allen for lunch with Jessie Austrian, an actress and director who is the cofounder of Fiasco Theater Company. Jessie discussed life in the theater business with us and gave us wonderful advice for our futures in theater. The food was incredible, but Jessie was

even better!

Following our amazing lunch with Jessie, we arrived at the Marquis Theatre on Broadway to watch "Tootsie." The show was hysterical and filled with incredible actors. Following the show, Andy Grotelueschen, who played Michael's roommate Jeff, showed us around backstage and even introduced us to costars Santino Fontana and Lilli Cooper! Seeing how they ran the show backstage was insightful and a great look into what a career in theater is like.

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After much, much more coffee and getting lost in the subway, we took the 1-train to the Metropolitan Opera House to watch “La Traviata.” We got to watch many incredible opera singers perform, including world-famous Plácido Domingo. Their talent was inspiring to all of us and will be undoubtedly be a highlight in our trip.

To end off the day, we ate a very late dinner at Chandni, an Indian-Pakistani food buffet. While the entire meal was delicious, the naan bread with tikka masala sauce stood out. It was life changing. I will probably have dreams about it.

Thursday with a street art tour and workshop with JCORP and ‘The Play That Goes Wrong’

BY NATALIE SANTIAGO

We woke up to bagels and cream cheese from Murray’s Bagels, which was really good. Then we went on a graffiti tour around the city and made a piece of our own in a studio.

We went to Katz’s for lunch and I had tuna salad sandwich which was really good. Katz’s is known for their salami sandwiches. After lunch we went to the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), which was really cool. There were a lot of amazing pieces.

In the evening we went to the “Play That Goes Wrong.” It was really funny and I enjoyed it a lot. We went to the Shake Shack for dinner. The burgers were really good and they are known for their fresh lemonade.

Friday with Peter Marks, ‘Chicago’ and a Late-Night Session at Jazz at Lincoln Center

BY SYDNEY SUITS

This morning, while most of the group explored downtown Manhattan, Corrine, Lindley and I walked Washington Square Park and surrounding areas. The park was gorgeous; all the plants in full bloom. Music was playing and there were plenty of dogs to meet.

The group that traveled downtown went to the 9/11 Memorial, Wall Street and took a ferry ride past the Statue of Liberty. The trip was full of great views and the emotional experience of the memorial reignited strong patriotism throughout the group.

For brunch, we met with the renowned Broadway critic and Pulitzer Prize winner Peter Marks. He was the embodiment of a down-to-earth New Yorker. And to prove his NY authenticity, he enjoyed his fourth cup of coffee for the day as we discussed our thoughts of the new show, “Tootsie.” We also talked about shows JMArts has done

and our experiences in them. I told him about my time playing Sonny in “In The Heights” and how it connected with me personally. Afterwards, he said he couldn’t wait to tell his buddy Lin — Lin Manuel Miranda — all about our experiences with his musical. Needless to say, that made our day. Peter was a pleasure to talk to and showed us how, even with all of his accomplishments, he’s a regular person with a great heart and a common love of musicals.

After a well-needed nap, we headed to “Chicago” — the musical that is. We collectively held this musical to a very high standard, for it is a well known and very long-running show. The musical was entertaining and comedic yet didn’t entirely meet our expectations. The lead for the show was much more of a model than an actress. Nonetheless, we still enjoyed ourselves. Our seats were to die for. Often I made eye contact with the actors and actresses, making my heart skip a beat every time.

To end our day, we walked to Columbus Circle. Mentally preparing to leave, our anxiety was soothed by the good, good vibes, and fabulous music. Not to mention the view that was to die for.

Saturday morning Dim Sum, Chinatown and a look back at five days in New York

BY SAMANTHA ZARATE

On our last day here in the city that never sleeps, fully packed, we made our way to the lobby for our last adventure. We took a taxi down to Chinatown and met up with Kirby Pate (Chip and Rose’s son), a podcast producer and JMArts member, at Nom Wah Tea Parlor for dim sum. We had an incredible time while trying authentic Chinese dishes like turnip cakes, soup dumplings, pork siu mai and steamed spare ribs.

After that, we split up into two groups. One group went to the Law and Order courthouse that’s used in the show, while the other group went to Canal Street, a well-known area for its great bargaining. I was in the group that went to Canal Street and I bought some cute and inexpensive gifts for my parents back in Siler City.

Sadly, this trip filled with



Submitted photo

Friday morning began with a visit to the 9/11 memorial and the Freedom Tower.

music, art and food had to come to an end. We went back to the hotel to get our luggage and made our way to LaGuardia Airport. As soon as I got on the airplane, I felt just a little bit sad having to leave the busy city. But if I’m being honest, all of that sadness drifted away when I looked at my airplane window and saw North Carolina’s beautiful pastures.

I have enjoyed every second of experiencing this crazy city. Being there made me realize that the arts is like a little family full of love and desire to see everyone succeed. All I can say is that I can’t wait to go back.



Submitted photo

A view of Manhattan from the group’s ride on the Staten Island Ferry.



Submitted photo

Andy Grotelueschen, one of the stars of ‘Tootsie,’ jumps in a photo with Jordan-Matthews artists on the Marquis Theatre stage. Andy (Jeff Slater) took the students backstage and on stage to discuss the new Broadway musical and meet his costars Santino Fontana (Michael Dorsey/Dorothy Michaels), Lilli Cooper (Julie Nichols) and Julie Halston (Rita Marshall). The group also met several of the other cast and creatives, including ‘Tootsie’ book writer Robert Horn.



Submitted photo

Jordan-Matthews artists stop for a photo outside the Metropolitan Opera House at Lincoln Center before ‘La Traviata’ with the legendary tenor Plácido Domingo.



Submitted photo

The Jordan-Matthews group poses with Peter Marks, chief theater critic for The Washington Post. Marks was part of a news team that received a Pulitzer Prize.