

A Reflection on Performing Arts at

by Tess Nielsen, Chairman of Performing Arts

The sound of young voices fills the Commons, cascades through the Annex, and soars among the arches in Panther Hall. As I walk through the halls, I celebrate every little note from every little voice because the children and I share a common, inherent bond. Whether five, fifteen or fifty-years-old, we all love to sing – it's just that some of us have had a little longer to practice than others! Reflecting on the 50th anniversary of Ranney School, I can acknowledge that the school has enjoyed a continuum in performing arts education, with general music education at its core, for the entirety of the school's existence. Music has always played a significant role in Ranney life, and the performing arts program has proven itself a major contributor to the educational development and academic achievement of our students. It's no wonder that, in recent years, there has been unprecedented growth in performing arts.

Ranney School is fully committed to developing cultural, creative individuals for the 21st century, and the essential skills of innovation, communication and collaboration are a direct result of active involvement in the arts.

From left: Laura Waters '11, Evelyn Giovine '12 and Sarah Bartosh '12



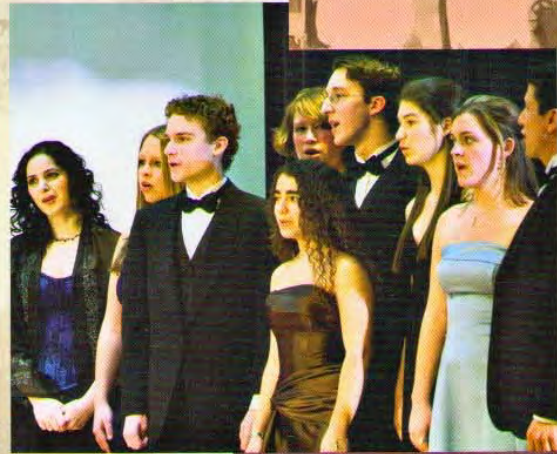
Ranney School

Our 50th anniversary is a time to look back on a performing arts program that, by its very nature, is forward-thinking and progressive. The adage “practice makes perfect” is not necessarily complete; “practice makes better and better” is more accurate. When we work with children in the performing arts, our focus is not on the finished product, but on progress towards better skills for tomorrow. This is a critical distinction and why there has been such an upsurge in attention to arts education in recent years. Arts educators realize that 21st century students entering the conceptual age will require the ability to quickly integrate a wide range of facts, theories and ideas. Because the arts are fundamentally creative, studying the arts is an effective way for students to explore the human condition. As a discipline, the arts have enormous value for their ability to enrich and deepen the understanding of parts to a whole.

In creating a backstory for the upcoming anniversary show, *Ranney Voices, Past and Present*, the performing arts department’s 50th anniversary showcase, I have had the opportunity to research the school’s old yearbooks and journals. Year after year, the faithful Ranney Chorus and aspiring thespians



circa 1975



Upper School Chorus performs with Pacific Encore Opera 2009

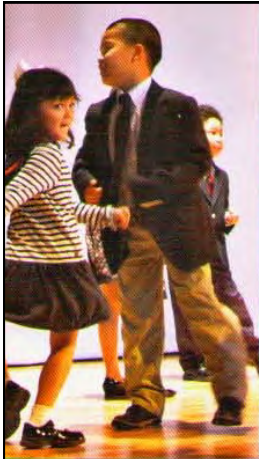
Cactus Flower, 1981



Schoolhouse Rock, 2007



Suddenly at Home, 1975



Parents' Tea 2009

put on shows for the community. Over time, traditions developed: Winter Concert, Coffee House, student-directed one act plays, and singing at graduation were among the annual activities. Now at the fifty year mark, a student's involvement in the performing arts has broadened to encompass much more than performance. Progressive in nature, Ranney's teaching philosophy and mission develops whole-brain, imaginative thinking as an important part of a modern student's educational journey. Involvement in a substantive, high-quality performing arts



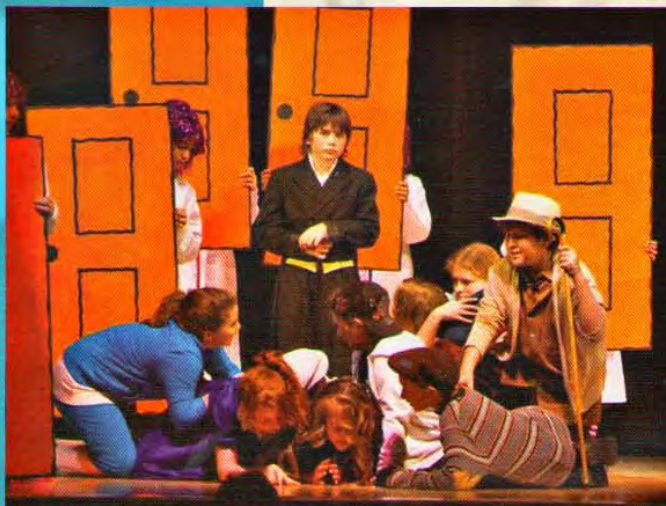
program that is unified with the core curriculum is ultimately a part of that experience. Though our traditions and performing ensembles still exist, what has changed the most, and changed for the better, is the integration of the daily engagement with singing, playing an instrument, acting, listening and composing. All of this unified experience in performing arts leads students to discover their own artistic identities.

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If students are required to use their imagination as well as their intellect, they become self-directed learners with individualistic expression. Ultimately,

by participating in performing arts over time, students develop poise, personal confidence and the ability to express their unique point of view. This is the essence of artistic self-expression. Ranney students desire such skills, and the evolving workplace of the new century demands these abilities which are acquired through practice and study of the arts. Ranney School continues to provide rich and significant artistic experiences that enhance all aspects of student life. Best of all, students live each day on campus musically, and become prepared to enter a world where innovative, creative thought has great value and lasting meaning.

Willie Wonka, Jr. 2009



When I walk through the halls and hear the kindergartners singing a little off-key, or hear the first squeaks from a newbie clarinetist, or listen to a cellist with a scratchy bow, I'm not at all worried, in fact, I am delighted. They are learning, discovering and exploring their own possibilities in the arts. After all, practice makes better and better and better ...