

The HSPVA Music Department

The High School for the Performing and Visual Arts is the premier magnet school of the Houston Independent School District. It evolved in 1971 from a realization of the specific need of gifted young artists for highly specialized and intensified training in the arts while earning high school certification. The creation of HSPVA represented the first attempt by any public high school in the nation to correlate an academic program with concentrated training in the arts.

The HSPVA Music Department consists of 330 majors who are given the opportunity to perform classical, jazz, mariachi and popular music in both large and small ensembles. The students also are instructed in music theory, composition and improvisation, music history, form and analysis, vocal production, sight singing and ear training, instrumental technique classes, chamber music, handbells and class piano. Many of the students also sing in the Imani Gospel Choir, an ensemble which rehearses after school.

Various ensembles from the department have been featured at Carnegie Hall, Opryland, Disney World, the National Association of Jazz Educators, Texas Choral Directors Association, Texas Music Educators Association, the Meyerson Center in Dallas, the Cancun Jazz Festival, the Lincoln Memorial and the World War II Monument in Washington D.C. and the Essentially Ellington Festival at Lincoln Center in New York City. The HSPVA Symphony, Chorale and Wind Ensemble and several pianists have performed with the Houston Symphony on several occasions. Ensembles have toured to Washington, D.C., Atlanta, Hawaii, New York, New Orleans, Dallas, San Antonio, Lubbock, Phoenix, Los Angeles, Kansas City, Corpus Christi, Austin and West Texas, as well as Scotland, Taiwan, England, Japan, Norway and China. In the summer of 1994 the Chorale participated in some of the 50th anniversary celebrations of D-Day in Normandy, France.

Many of our students have represented the music department in various competitions and have become members of the region and all-state honor ensembles. They are winners in the National Association of Teachers of Singing (NATS) competition, the Music Teachers National Association (MTNA) contest, the Houston Symphony Concerto Contest, UIL State Solo and Ensemble Contest, the Downbeat Magazine Awards, the GRAMMY high school jazz ensemble, and the highly competitive Arts Recognition and Talent Search (ARTS) competition, a national competition that leads to a few select students being named Presidential Scholars in the Arts. For the third time since 2000 the HSPVA Music Department has been recognized as a GRAMMY Signature Gold School. In 2006 the department also received through the GRAMMY foundation the Gibson Guitar Grant. The Signature Gold School Award and the Gibson Grant came with \$5000 stipends. The GRAMMYS are displayed on the HSPVA music hall.

Guest artists in the department have included Arthur Fiedler, Shirley Ceasar, Ed Lojeski, Suzanne Mentzer, Dizzy Gillespie, David Ogden Stiers, Moses Hogan, Lloyd Pfautsch, Charles Nelson, Stella Zambalis, Laura Claycomb, Yolanda Adams, Richard Paul Fink, Nancy Weems, Marvin Stamm, Regina Belle and HSPVA music department graduates Jason Moran, Robert Glasper, Sara Hickman, Camille Zamora, Sharyn Pirtle, Chris Walker, Tamar (Ashley Davis), and Everett Harp. Graduates of the department have studied at major universities, conservatories and school of music in all parts of the United States, and have appeared in Broadway and television shows, films and with various opera, symphonic, choral and jazz organizations and cruise ships in the United States and abroad. Many of our graduates are teaching music and other subjects in elementary and secondary school and in universities. Some have become major recording artists, television and movie stars and solo performers in Houston, Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, Austin, New York, Singapore, Australia, and Great Britain.