

A Special Time for Music, Poetry, and Celebration at Canton High School

Through the special language of rhythm and melody we become connected -- to our other senses, to the other people around us, and to the pulses of times and cultures other than our own. For the next two weeks, teachers and students at Canton High School will experience a wealth of those connections as they celebrate the contributions of Harlem Renaissance and culminate their study of its historical figures, lifestyle, music, art, and poetry with the school's annual *Prisms* concert, on Saturday, February 7th at 7:30 p.m.

This two-week flurry of cultural events was the dream of English teacher Tena Ruby, art teacher Renee Hughes, and music director Tom Scavone. It was sponsored in part by a grant from the Canton Education Foundation.

On Wednesday, January 28, Joe McCarthy, a Latin Grammy winning percussionist will be working with Canton's students. McCarthy is on a Northeast tour and had heard of Canton's award-winning music program while planning his trip. He contacted Scavone last week, hoping to visit the school.

On Thursday and Friday, January 29 and 30, Ed Johnetta Fowler-Miller of Hartford will visit the English and art classrooms. She is one of the distinguished Master Quilters whose work is included in a special celebratory exhibit at the Historical Society of Washington, D.C., titled "Quilts for Obama: An Exhibit Celebrating the Inauguration of our 44th President."

["Quilts for Obama,"](#) which offers visual, silent testimonies of joy, will join the chorus of "Yes We Can!" The exhibit opened at the Washington Historical Society on January 11th and runs through July 26, 2009.



[Joe McCarthy](#) is the leader and founder of Afro Bop Alliance, an Afro Cuban Jazz Septet, based in the Washington DC area. ABA has just released a second CD "Camino Nuevo." Joe has also performed or recorded with musicians such as Poncho Sanchez, Dave Samuels, and Ray Vega. Joe is the Drummer for the United States Naval Academy Band's Jazz Ensemble.

Also, on Thursday and Friday, January 29th and 30th, Dr. Myron Moss, Professor of Music at Drexel University will be in residence at the Canton High School. He will be working with band students on the music of early 20th Century African-American composers – music that the public will be able to enjoy at our Prisms Concert on February 7th. Well known for his advocacy of music written by African-American composers, he conducts on the Keystone Winds' CD "Out of the Depths" devoted to works by black composers. His dissertation, *Concert Band Music by African-American Composers, 1927–1998*, won the Fritz Thelen Award for the best doctoral dissertation on a band music subject written between 1999 and 2005. Dr. Moss has almost single-handedly uncovered these early 20th Century artists and is considered one of the foremost experts of this genre. His band orchestration of Gabriel Fauré's Chant Funéraire was recorded by the University of North Texas on a 2006 GIA release and has been played by elite groups across the country.

Dr. Moss will also be visiting English classes and the Advanced Placement Music Theory class. He created a

special arrangement of a James Reese piece for the Canton concert band as part of the CEF Foundation grant.

In a lucky coincidence to this arts and music project, on Friday, January 30th, Canton will host 125 students participating in the Northern Regional Honors Band and Flute Choir. They will be rehearsing all day and performing that evening at 7 pm. Fifteen of Canton's students will be involved in the performance which takes place January 31. This concert is open to the public at the Canton High School auditorium; admission is \$8.00. On the same day, Canton's elite Jazz Ensemble will once again be performing at the Berklee Jazz Festival in Boston.

During the first week of February, the students will transform what they have learned about the Harlem Renaissance artists into poetry, art, and music which they will present at *Prisms*, a student-designed multi-media performance in its 8th year. At least 140 students are involved in this year's production which features guest announcer Mark Channon, jazz host on 91.3 WWUH radio. Student-created murals of Harlem street scenes and "paper quilts" made of

snippets of the Harlem Renaissance artists' lives, poetry, music, photography, and art will also be featured that evening.

Prisms will take place in the Canton High School Auditorium on Saturday, February 7th, 7:30 p.m. All are welcome. Tickets are \$8.00 for general admission, \$5.00 for senior citizens.

A few Harlem Renaissance notables, among the list of more than 100 artists, writers, activists, and musicians Canton students researched.

Billy Holiday:
jazz singer and
song writer



Zora Neale Hurston:
novelist, folklorist



Eugene O'Neil:
Playwright;
Nobel laureate

W.E.B. Dubois: scholar,
activist, writer



James Van Der Zee:
renowned photographer



Duke Ellington:
influential jazz
musician



Horace Pippin:
self-taught painter

