

KICKIN' IT

Opus 118 students perform at MusicFest 2008 and open for New York Philharmonic Orchestra

By Audrey J. Bernard
Lifestyles/Society Editor

On a beautiful sun-filled day the magnificent sounds resonating aboard The Duchess Yacht on the Hudson River were those of the gifted students from **Opus 118 Harlem School of Music** celebrating their annual MusicFest 2008 hosted by **Alexander Smalls**, president & CEO, Opus 118 Harlem School of Music **Roberta Guaspari**, co-

7:00 pm.

During dinner Opus 118 honored Academy Award winning composer and pianist **Dave Grusin** and **Paul Guenther**, board chairman, New York Philharmonic Orchestra. Reverend **Joseph M. McShane**, president, Fordham University, presented Guenther with the inaugural Carl Mosbacher Fund Award for Excellence in Music Education.

For entertainment, guests languished on Soft and breezy mu-

their own honorees — **Kyle Massey** and **Rondell Sheridan** from the Disney Channel Original Series "Cory in the House." Honorary Kids Committee chairs were **Christopher Massey** from Nickelodeon's "Zoey 101," and **Chris Rock** and **Malaak Compton-Rock's** children, **Lola Simone** and **Zahra Savannah Rock**.

The Peete family consisting of actress and philanthropist **Holly Robinson** and her hus-

band **Rodney**, former National Football League quarterback and now co-host of the Fox Network's "Best Damn Sports Show Period," and their children **Ryan, Rodney Jr., Robinson** and **Roman** — served as the honorary family. **Arlene & Alan Alda** and **Pamela & Michael Miles** served as event co-chairs. The Bank of New York Mellon Corporation was the corporate sponsor.

The New York Philharmonic invited a string ensemble from the highly regarded school to perform prior to the Orchestra's concert on the Great Lawn in Central Park on Tuesday, June 24. Twenty children, ages 6 to 14, performed from 7:00 to 7:15 p.m., led by founder and conductor Guaspari.

"Their success story is one that all New Yorkers should celebrate, and a testament to the power and importance of music education for young people — a commitment wholeheartedly shared by the New York Philharmonic."

Founded in 1991 when Guaspari took students into her East Harlem home on 118th street when her fledgling music program fell victim to school system budget cuts, today, Opus 118 has in-school programs in four public

Opus 118 performing on the MusicFest 2008 cruise up Hudson



Student performing on cruise



Opus 118 President & CEO Alexander Smalls



Lucas Fifer and Adrian Hopper



Kyle Massey, Lucy Dunn Ellis, Emma Montero

founder & director, artistic performance, Opus 118 Harlem School of Music.

The dinner cruise on the Hudson fundraiser included sunset cocktails on the yacht's upper deck beginning at 6:30 p.m. at the World Yacht Marina moored at Pier 81 where guests enjoyed breathtaking panoramic views of Manhattan at sunset. As the sun went down so did the guests to a grand dining deck below where they enjoyed a lavish dinner while cruising down the Hudson at

music performed by Grusin, the **Guarneri Quartet**, first violinist **Arnold Steinhardt**, and the gifted students and faculty of Opus 118 being conducted by Guaspari.

Now while the grownups were doing their thing on one level, the kids were doing their own thing on another level. The young and gifted enjoyed their own dinner party on the midlevel deck where they were entertained with performances by fellow students and honorees.

The young people even had

dream."

The Philharmonic's concert followed conducted by **Bramwell Tovey** in works by Shostakovich, Mendelssohn, Tchaikovsky, and Sousa. It is the first in the season's New York Philharmonic Concerts in the Parks, presented by **Didi** and **Oscar Schafer**.

"The New York Philharmonic is delighted to welcome students from the Opus 118 Harlem School of Music to our Central Park stage," said Philharmonic chairman **Paul B. Guenther**.

schools in Harlem and runs the Excellence Charter School in Brooklyn. Over 250 students attend private lessons at Opus 118, which also offers programs for families with small children and those who aspire to teach music.

Guaspari and her students was the subject of an Oscar-nominated movie, "Music of the Heart" starring **Meryl Streep**, **Angela Bassett**, **Aiden Quinn**, and **Gloria Estefan**. The school was also featured in the Oscar-nominated documentary, "Small Wonders," by **Alan Miller**.

Jonathan Rivera, Roberta Guaspari

Opus 118 performing with New York Philharmonic in the Park concert



Jonathan Rivera, Roberta Guaspari



Montel Washington



Nshirya Korankyi



Roberta Guaspari conducting students

(Photos: Peter Brownscombe, Katherine Kennedy and Chris Lee/courtesy NY Philharmonic)