



Show-Stopping Show Choirs

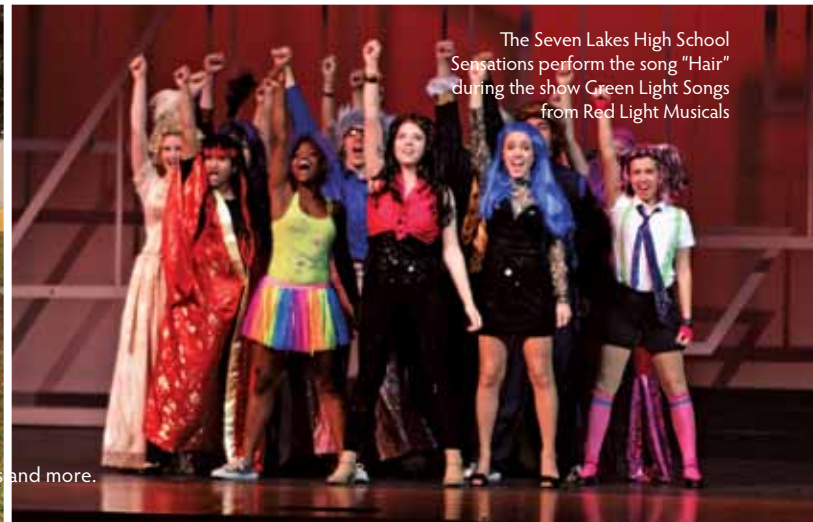
Katy ISD high school musical theater students take the spotlight

Written by Cherri Northcutt



The Katy High School Cantante Choir gears up to perform at the Katy/West Houston Jazz Festival

Photo by Visual Services of Texas



The Seven Lakes High School Sensations perform the song "Hair" during the show Green Light Songs from Red Light Musicals

Cinco Ranch High School Bravo Show Choir members before their performance of "The Magic of Musicals"



Singing, dancing, costumes, and drama! Taking a page from the TV show *Glee*, Katy ISD's high school show choirs offer show-stopping performances that give even Broadway a run for its money.

Catching the Show Choir Fever

The show choir program first kicked off in Katy ISD with the Expressions at Taylor High School. The group was started in 1981 by then choir director Gail Land. "At the time, show tunes were all the rage," Land remembers. "We didn't even have an auditorium back then."

Now, with five of Katy ISD's six high schools offering a show choir, there are more and more opportunities for musical theater students to learn all about performing, making costumes, decorating the set, and working the lighting and sound.

Bravo

Cinco Ranch High School

Students in the Bravo show choir at Cinco Ranch High School are encouraged to find and even write their own music. "Watching them take the initiative is exciting," shares Bravo director Dorothy Wilson. For musical revues, she asks each student to write down their vision for the show. They then share their ideas and brainstorm with the group about themes and song choices. "I offer seniors the opportunity to coach and prepare a song with the group," Wilson adds.

Senior Melanie Mozer has been in Bravo for two years and has learned much in her time with the group. Mozer hopes to continue her love of performing by auditioning for the Longhorn Singers at the University of Texas next year. "One of my favorite things is diving into music with others that are just as passionate about it as I am," she shares.

Cantante

Katy High School

Like many other area show choirs, Cantante at Katy High School prides itself on sharing their music with the community, performing for organizations like the Brookwood Community. KHS junior Savannah Herrera serves as Cantante historian and has enjoyed interacting with the community. "In Cantante, we gain technique and

The Taylor High School Expressions host their annual Madrigal Dinner, complete with Renaissance style songs and costumes



Photo by Piche Photography



Mayde Creek High School Encore members after a production of *My Fair Lady*

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skill, but we do much more than that," she says. "We gain confidence in ourselves and learn to get creative."

Cantante director Robert Dierdorf looks for opportunities that help his students grow and evolve their musical boundaries. "These kids are expanding their styles of music and learning a new set of skills," he shares. He loves the process of preparing for each new show, starting with the chaos that comes from learning new material. "Then, we turn it into something the kids are proud of, and the audience thinks it looks easy," says Dierdorf.

Encore

Mayde Creek High School

With upcoming shows that include performances of popular Broadway songs and iconic jazz selections, Mayde Creek's Encore show choir is stepping in to the spotlight. "We do a lot of pop and Broadway music, because it appeals to the kids and the crowds," shares Encore director Timothy Klingler.

Klinger looks for songs that suit both his students' abilities and personalities and that stretch their musical knowledge. "You get to do music that's outside the regular choir stuff," shares Encore member Nathan Wilson.

Expressions

Taylor High School

After more than three decades of singing in the community, the THS Expressions now perform in an annual Broadway revue, Madrigal Dinner, and coffee-house show called Songfest. "They're out singing in the community and they're visible beyond the walls of Taylor High School," shares Expressions director Kevin Riehle.

The group is very close and takes a team-building retreat every year to the Hill Country. "We really build the spirit and energy of the group on retreat," says Riehle. "What I hope to give them is a deep and abiding love for music."

Sensations


Seven Lakes High School

Performing several popular shows a year requires teamwork that lends a family feel to the Sensations show choir at Seven Lakes High School. "We're like a family," shares senior Bekah Smith. "We'll be there for each other no matter what." Smith believes that being a part of the show choir has helped her have more confidence and better communication skills.


Sensations director Shannon Carter agrees that the camaraderie and teamwork within the show choir is unique. "The kids really get to know each other," he says. Over the years, he has seen how the program has led students to be successful in their future studies. "The lessons you learn can be applied to any field," he shares. KM

CHERRI NORTHCUTT lives in Katy with her husband and two daughters. She is a big fan of musical theater.

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