

Washington Audience Thrills to Performance by the Duke Ellington School Show Choir

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More than 800 people packed the Ellington Theater at the Duke Ellington School of the Arts on March 18 for a thrilling performance by the school's Show Choir, sponsored by DAI. VIPs attending included Mrs. Alma Powell, chair of the America's Promise Alliance, and Ellington school co-founder Peggy Cooper Cafritz.

Approximately 100 students – singers, dancers, musicians, and technicians – put on a two-hour show that featured songs by Leonard Bernstein, Evelyn White, and, of course, Duke Ellington, among others, and genres such as Broadway, spiritual, and jazz. The Ellington Dancers and Orchestra closed the performance with a rendition of Earth, Wind and Fire's "Africano" that had the audience on its feet and clapping to the beat.

The Ellington school was founded in 1974 and named for the famed bandleader, a Washington native. The public school caters to city students who are artistically gifted and can manage a rigorous academic curriculum: fully 98 percent of its students graduate and 95 percent of its graduates are accepted to colleges, universities, or conservatories.

Part of DAI's sponsorship was dedicated to supporting an international travel fund for the students. "DAI's employee owners see every day the role that global exchange, global dialogue, and global connectivity plays in nurturing peace and prosperity," said Dr. James Boomgard, DAI's President and CEO. "Now more than ever, it is crucial that young Americans from all walks of life have the chance to experience the wider world that will be so central to their futures."

In recent months DAI's offices in South Africa, Palestine, Jordan, and Pakistan have contributed to local, development-minded efforts as part of the firm's 40th anniversary celebrations. DAI was founded in 1970.

In addition to remarks by Mrs. Powell, Ms. Cooper Cafritz, and Dr. Boomgard, intermission remarks were given by Head of School Rory Pullens, and closing remarks by Dean of Arts Tina Powell Harris, and Julia Braxton, a member of the Show Choir.



Jabari Douglas, center, of the Duke Ellington School of the Arts instrumental program shares a moment after the performance with Peggy Cooper Cafritz and Dr. James Boomgard.

"Few people have done more to support America's young people than Alma Powell, whose America's Promise Alliance is dedicated to preparing kids for college, work, and life," Dr. Boomgard said. "We are privileged to have Mrs. Powell here as our honored guest, and we thank her for lending her name to this occasion."

Mrs. Powell, wife of former Secretary of State Gen. Colin Powell, urged further donations to the school's travel fund. "Let them share their talents with the rest of the world and shine and shine," she told the audience.

If you would like to make a tax-deductible financial donation to the travel fund, there are two ways you can do so:

- Donate [online](#)
- Mail a check—made payable to Duke Ellington School of the Arts Project, or DESAP—to the Duke Ellington School of the Arts, Attention Tia Powell Harris, 3500 R St, NW, Washington, DC 20007

For a firsthand account of the evening by Paolo von Schirach, a blogger on international affairs, click [here](#).