



Talent Show: Arts Kerfuffle

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Kids singing and dancing, proud parents in the audience, rounds of enthusiastic applause.

Yes, Chicago High School for the Arts' Kerfuffle was just like a high school talent show.

Except tickets cost \$250 and \$500, it took place at the Museum of Contemporary Art and the mayor of Chicago was sitting in the audience. So were Anthony Freud, general director of Lyric Opera of Chicago, and Robert Falls, artistic director at Goodman Theatre.

Mr. Falls introduced the drama portion of the show, during which three juniors performed monologues from August Wilson plays. "I have a junior, and he's at home playing Xbox," Mr. Falls said, to much laughter.

Kerfuffle was the second gala fundraiser for Chicago High School for the Arts, a West Town contract school (different from a charter school in that it accepts students via audition, not lottery) founded four years ago. The school graduates its first class of seniors in June; 92 percent will graduate, and all the graduates are going to college. So far, they've amassed more than \$1 million in scholarships and grant money.

The school has 70 arts partners — among them Lyric, Goodman, Chicago Shakespeare Theater, Chicago Symphony Orchestra and other blue chip arts organizations — that hold master classes and provide mentors for students. Arts programming costs \$2.5 million a year, said Jim Mabie, partner at William Blair & Co. LLC in Chicago and board chair at ChiArts, as the school is known. Mr. Mabie said most of that budget comes from individual and corporate contributions.

The sold-out event began with cocktails and an art show in the MCA's foyer. Guests moved to the museum's auditorium for a varied program of ballet, modern dance, opera and jazz music, and monologues from three August Wilson plays. A full choir sang "Make Our Garden Grow" from the operetta "Candide" as a tribute to Mr. Mabie and his wife, Kay, who are major supporters of the school.

The audience of 300 included Theaster Gates, artist and University of Chicago director of arts and public life initiative; Terry Mazany, president and CEO of the Chicago Community Trust; Linda Rice Johnson, chairman of Johnson Publishing Co.; and Roche Schulfer, Goodman Theatre's executive director. Francia Harrington, director of civic affairs at JPMorgan Chase & Co., and Mirja Spooner Haffner were gala co-chairs.

The event grossed about \$300,000 to fund arts programming at the school.