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‘Amazing:’ MGM Grand Detroit’s seventh Count Day trip was a smashing success at Gompers School

By Scott Talley
Special to the Michigan Chronicle

Visitors to Gompers Elementary-Middle School on Detroit’s west side are greeted by a sign out front which reads: “A great place to learn.”

On Oct. 5, not only was Gompers “a great place to learn,” it was a fun place to be educated as well with help from MGM Grand Detroit.

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2016 Gala is history, but an inspirational song rings on at Wright Museum

By Scott Talley

Special to the Michigan Chronicle

When the music finally ended, more than 500 business and community leaders along with the general public had experienced a special evening during the sixth annual Charles H Wright Museum of African American History Gala, which took place in an elaborate tent on the museum grounds. Proceeds from the Gala directly support the museum's ongoing educational programming.

The 2016 Wright Gala's theme was "Music On My Mind," and true to the theme attendees were treated to an array of outstanding musical entertainment from two-time Emmy Award-winning violinist Damien Escobar, and the Detroit-based band Collective Peace, featuring Grammy-nominated saxophonist, LaDarrel "Saxappeal" Johnson.

Other entertainment highlights included recording artist Mike Ellison's moving, mash up recitation of the legendary poem, "Still I Rise" by Maya Angelou set to the song, "Rise Up" by Andra Day, combined with an original introduction, closing call and response vamp. Wright Museum President Juanita Moore conceptualized the performance with creative execution by Mike Ellison and Collective Peace.

"The gala was fantastic and fun," Moore said. "We are inspired and grateful for the significant support that we continue to receive from the community. We look forward to next year. Detroit is moving ahead very quickly and we're very pleased to be a part of that."

This year's Wright Gala came shortly after the celebrated opening of the National Museum of African American History and Culture, a Smithsonian Institution located on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. Fans of



"Detroit is moving ahead very quickly and we're very pleased to be a part of that."

*— Juanita Moore,
Wright Museum President*

the Wright Museum, say the opening of the new National Museum provides an opportunity to celebrate and rediscover our own jewel in Detroit.

"The Wright Museum (CHWMAAH) was the first museum in the country to focus on the cultural, economic, and social history of African Americans," said Juliette Okotie-Eboh, a longtime supporter of the Wright Museum and senior vice president of Public Affairs at MGM Grand Detroit, a sponsor of the 2016 Wright Gala. "What a thrill it was to know that Detroit was the home for such a significant museum--- and what a proud moment for all of us in the state of Michigan when it (the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture) opened its doors.



"Now, in the nation's capital of Washington, D.C., the African American experience in the United States and other parts of the world—from our journey from Africa to the new world—is captured in a magnificent edifice with an expansive collection of artifacts and exhibits. I am eager to see and experience the National Museum of African American History, and that makes me even more committed to our very own Wright Museum."

Young Isabella Hawthorne of Washington, D.C., who recently toured the Wright Museum for the first time during a visit to Detroit with her mother, Yolanda (a Detroit native), shares Okotie-Eboh's appreciation for the Wright Museum.

"I really enjoyed my visit to the African American Museum in Detroit," said Hawthorne, a seventh grader, who attends the District of Columbia International School. "I walked away with a wealth of information and understanding. I was able to walk through a slave ship, learn about Jim Crow and the Underground Railroad, and after all the horrors put upon my ancestors they were able to survive.

"The dome on top of the museum reminded me of the Capital dome, which I can see from where we live,



and all the museum workers were dressed in Afro-centric clothing, which made the experience more real. Overall, I thought it was an amazing experience, which every child should have."

The Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History welcomes visitors from near and far. Current attractions include "I See Me: Reflections in Black Dolls," an exhibition featuring an array of black dolls, dating from the late 19th century to the present, including babies, fashion dolls, hand-crafted dolls and more. A play area, with a range of dolls mimicking the exhibition, provides hands-on fun and wonder for visitors. While the exhibition draws from the museum's collections, it also presents a large selection of intriguing and historically significant dolls loaned by local and national doll collectors.

The Wright Museum is located at 315 E. Warren in Detroit's Cultural District. To learn more about the Museum including programming, exhibits and how to make a contribution, please visit thewright.org or call 313-494-5800.



Smashing success at Gompers School (cont. from cover)



The occasion was “Count Day,” which has become a proud annual tradition for MGM Grand Detroit. The visit to Gompers was the seventh Count Day trip made to a Detroit school by team members. In addition to providing delicious, nutritious meals, MGM Grand Detroit brought coats and backpacks, indoor and outdoor games with prizes, read to children, and even helped students create their own special “selfies,” with educational themes.

“It was an amazing day,” said Gompers principal Bobbie Posey-Milner, a respected administrator, who was selected as the 2016 Detroit Public Schools Office of Fine Arts/Data Visual Arts Administrator of the Year. “To see MGM Grand Detroit come into our school and organize so well, and to see all the volunteers that made it happen—it was truly a community effort and so important to what we are doing here.”

Most important to Milner is the education of her students, and in order to educate her students to the fullest, funding is needed making attendance on Count Day critical. With MGM Grand Detroit’s help, Gompers, a school of 834 students reached its Count Day attendance goal, which was critical, given that the fall count day in Michigan makes up 90 percent of a school’s funding for the year.

“Attendance matters and in order to learn you must be present,” Milner said. “The MGM Grand Detroit volunteers engaged us all and created a sense of

community.”

Engaging all the students, included sometimes hard-to-reach middle school boys, and for that, Milner gave MGM Grand Detroit extra high marks.

“They made an impact on our middle school boys and that’s hard to do,” said Milner, who shared a story about one of her young men who offered to treat her to a movie with the prize he won from MGM Grand Detroit. “The sense of caring that MGM brought was felt by this student. They showed up and showed out by giving back in a special way.”



good! When I got home, I was wishing I was back at school because we had a whole bunch of fun.”

...**Antonio Hudson**, eighth grader, interested in going to the NBA and being a computer engineer

“It was a good when MGM came to our school on Count Day. It was nice of their chef to come to our school and cook us some lunch, and the games we played in the gym

were fun—I won a Subway card. The book bags they brought had our school logos on them and the staff members were very nice.”

...**Ricardo Frazier**, eighth grader, interested in going to the NBA and his favorite subject is math

“I was grateful that MGM Grand Detroit shared something with us, so we could enjoy Count Day. I just loved the activities and I think the volunteers were wonderful—I loved how they tried to share everything with everyone. They gave us laughter, enjoyment and fun and I like how MGM sponsored our school because they can go to many schools and they chose ours.”

...**Kailah Collins**, seventh grader, interested in being a lawyer or owning her own dance company, or maybe both.

“We played games in the gym room like who could name different songs, or who could draw, and everyone was able to get something or take something home. And the chefs cooked for us and I had the big cookie—the kind with chocolate chips and fudge—they were



good! The people that passed out the book bags were very nice and the MGM volunteers were able to relate; they knew a lot of songs we liked.”

...**Sommer Jenkins**, eighth grader, with many career aspirations, including being a nurse for labor and delivery.

“I like how the chef cooked for us—that was the best meal I had in school in a long time. I also liked how everyone had a chance to win something, and the “selfie” booth was the best part. It was just a really fun experience and we didn’t have to do any class work.”

...**Milyn Ledbetter**, eighth grader, an aspiring OBGYN nurse, whose favorite subject is science.

“Welcome Inside the World of



Addressing breast cancer in anyway we can

MGM Grand Detroit was a proud “Giant Pink Chair” sponsor of Detroit’s Making Strides Against Breast Cancer charity walk on Oct. 8. This year approximately 20,000 people, including MGM Grand Detroit team members, made the special 5K trek along the Detroit River, raising more than \$1 million in the process for breast cancer research. According to the American Cancer Society, this year more than 246,000 women will be diagnosed with breast cancer—about 8,000 of them in Michigan. In 2016, there are more than 2.8 million women with a history of breast cancer in the United States. To learn more about the American Cancer Society’s effort to combat breast cancer, please visit www.cancer.org/cancer/breastcancer



Celebrating fitness and healthy fellowship

MGM Grand Detroit was a proud sponsor of the 39th Detroit Free Press/Talmer Bank Marathon. Race officials confirmed that 26,026 people registered for this year’s event. The roster of races included a 5K and kids fun run on Saturday, Oct. 15, followed by the main events on Sunday, Oct. 16: marathon (26.2 miles), international half-marathon (13.1 miles), U.S.-only half marathon (13.1 miles), and marathon relays. In addition to being a sponsor, MGM Grand Detroit was a popular lodging destination for runners competing in this year’s races, which attracted registered participants from every state except Maine.

A special night for a special cause

Granting the wishes of children with life-threatening medical conditions is a noble mission, and that is why Make-A-Wish®Michigan is a noble organization. MGM Grand Detroit’s partnership with Make-A-Wish includes hosting “Wish Ball – Southeast Michigan” on Nov. 12. The featured celebrity guest for the fundraising event will be Howie Mandel, from NBC’s hit talent competition, “America’s Got Talent.” To learn more about Make-A-Wish Michigan, including how to make a donation or volunteer, please visit www.michigan.wish.org.



MGM Grand Detroit™



A champion for families and our community

Did you know that since 1978 Black Family Development Inc. (BFDI) has strengthened and enhanced the lives of children, youth, and families through partnerships that support safe, nurturing, vibrant homes and communities? MGM Grand Detroit is proud to have a longtime partnership with BFDI and on Nov. 3 MGM Grand Detroit will host BFDI's Annual Presidents' Dinner. A highly anticipated moment during the fundraising event will be the "Dr. Gerald K. Smith Humanitarian Award" presentations, which will honor distinguished professionals that have given much to our community including **MGM Grand Detroit's Senior Vice President of Public Affairs Juliette Okotie-Eboh**. To learn more about BFDI, including how to make a donation to support the organization's programs that benefit local children, adults and families, please visit www.blackfamilydevelopment.org.



Monday evening quarterbacks at MGM Grand Detroit's TAP

The fortunes of the 2016 Detroit Lions are still to be determined, but win, lose or draw, every Monday during the season the "Lions Review" is broadcast live from 8-9 p.m. on WJR-AM from TAP at MGM Grand Detroit. Host Dan Miller recaps the most recent game with Lions Coach Jim Caldwell over the phone and a special guest co-host from the team, live. Autographs from Lions players, giveaways and questions—live and over the phone—are all part of the experience. All ages are welcome in TAP before 10 p.m.



Diamonds are a hotel's best friend

Have you heard that MGM Grand Detroit received the AAA Four Diamond designation in 2016 for the ninth consecutive year? The award is given to hotels committed to providing guests with a personalized experience, and attentive service in comfortable, high quality surroundings. "AAA Four Diamond establishments are attentive to guests needs and consistently deliver memorable travel experiences," says Michael Petrone, director of AAA Inspections and Diamond Ratings. "To maintain the exceptional standards required for this rating on a daily basis is an outstanding achievement."

'Women of Tomorrow' is a game-changer today for young ladies in Metro Detroit



By Scott Talley

Special to the Michigan Chronicle

The organization is called "Women of Tomorrow," but the mentoring and scholarship program performs a tremendous amount of good work today that "inspires, motivates, and empowers at-risk young women to live up to their full potential."

A charitable organization, Women of Tomorrow carries out its important mission through programming that is designed to create pathways out of poverty; prevent high school dropouts; increase access to higher education; and, foster workforce development.

"I believe one of the most effective ways to break the cycles of violence, poverty and abuse, is to uplift the young women who will raise the next generation," said Jennifer Valoppi, Women of Tomorrow's founder and president. "It all stops here. Women of Tomorrow is one of the most unique and powerful organizations of its kind anywhere. Our amazing mentors are the reason for our tremendous success in getting at-risk young girls to overcome their obstacles and live up to their full potential."

Women of Tomorrow has been "changing the world one young woman at a time since 1997" and expanded

into metro Detroit in 2011. Five years later the organization's leadership is still hungry to do more.

"In 2015, the Michigan state graduation rate was 79.7 percent, and the Detroit Public Schools graduation rate was even lower at 77.4 percent, with some schools as low as 56.7," said Jill Harris, director, Metro Detroit Women of Tomorrow. "Now more than ever, students in the Metro Detroit area are facing extreme challenges to graduation such as abuse, poverty, disability, drugs, pregnancy, and much more.



"The Women of Tomorrow mission helps students turn obstacles into opportunities to create a better life for themselves, their family, and society. By giving our young women of today the power to choose where their lives will go, our highly accomplished professional mentors are passing on a legacy of strength and determination, creating a better world for the women of tomorrow."

Given the importance of its mission, and tested methods, Women of Tomorrow has attracted the support of like-minded professionals and organizations that desire to give back, including Juliette Okotie-Eboh, senior vice president of Public Affairs at MGM Grand Detroit, and one of three Women of Tomorrow mentors to young ladies at Hamtramck High School.

"The support of MGM Grand Detroit and mentors like Juliette Okotie-Eboh is integral to the success of

our program," Harris said. "Having someone with Ms. Okotie-Eboh's knowledge and experience in the business world meeting regularly with mentees in a small group setting allows the mentees to see a real life model of success and discover what they can do to reach their goals.

"Our mentors are windows into new worlds and opportunities mentees would not have known otherwise. Through field trips to MGM Grand Detroit and learning from Ms. Okotie-Eboh, mentees can learn about the hotel, culinary, and event-staging parts of the property."

More than 90 percent of Women of Tomorrow student participants graduate from college and have firm plans to enroll in higher education, including Destiney McDonald, a 2016 graduate of the Academy of Public Leadership at Detroit Cody High School, whose gratitude can be experienced through a poignant YouTube post.

"I'm so thankful for this program and if I could get all of my friends and anybody else into this program, I will," said McDonald, a Women of Tomorrow scholarship recipient. "...Graduated with a 3.5 g.p.a. Going off to college with a child—my age—it's like wow! This program has inspired me to never give up no matter how many hardships I face in life. Everything is possible. You can do whatever you want!"

To learn more about Women of Tomorrow please visit womenoftomorrow.org.



DSO Series sponsored by MGM Grand Detroit promises a jazz lover's paradise through 2017

MGM Grand Detroit sponsors some of the most highly anticipated entertainment happenings in our region, including the Paradise Jazz Series at Orchestra Hall.

Music fans that missed the Oct. 7 opening concert featuring Chick Corea and his trio can still look forward to more excellent music.

"I feel fortunate to be able to present some of the biggest names in jazz as well as emerging young artists to a community that appreciates and supports this great American art form," said Detroit Symphony Orchestra Jazz Chair Terence Blanchard.

Following are the remaining series artists and dates for the series, which also celebrates the 75th anniversary of Paradise Theatre.



Dianne Reeves: Christmas Time Is Here
Thursday, December 1, 8 p.m.

Pre-eminent jazz vocalist Dianne Reeves rings in the holiday season with music from her celebrated album "Christmas Time Is Here." She will meld her timeless grace, elegance and charisma into unforgettable jazz renditions of holiday favorites such as "Carol of the Bells," "Little Drummer Boy" and many more. Renowned for her breathtaking virtuosity and improvisational prowess, Reeves will be joined by pianist Peter Martin, bassist Reginald Veal, guitarist Romero Lubambo and drummer Terreon Gully.



Joe Lovano Classic Quartet | Brian Blade & The Fellowship Band
Friday, February 17, 2017, 8 p.m.

Hailed by the New York Times as "one of the greatest musicians in jazz history," saxophone giant Joe Lovano has

distinguished himself for three decades as a prescient and path-finding force in the arena of creative music. An active proponent of straight-ahead jazz, notably collaborating with Hank Jones 10 years ago, Lovano will explore the rich history of mainstream jazz with his Classic Quartet.

The multi-talented young veteran Brian Blade has played alongside such musical luminaries as Wayne Shorter, Joni Mitchell, Bob Dylan and Seal. On this date, Blade makes his Paradise Jazz Series debut as a bandleader.



James Carter Organ Trio
Friday, April 7, 2017, 8 p.m.

"A roaring virtuoso, saxophone scholar, and a showman," according to Rolling Stone Magazine, Detroit-native James Carter is a powerhouse musician and one of the most admired saxophonists of his generation. He garners critical acclaim for his role in helping propel jazz full tilt into the future over the past 25 years. Carter will be joined by Detroit's own Gerard Gibbs on piano and Alex White on drums.



Branford Marsalis Quartet featuring Kurt Elling
Friday, May 12, 2017, at 8 p.m.

Tony Award nominee and the eldest son in the "first family of jazz," saxophonist Branford Marsalis returns to the Orchestra Hall stage along with his top-notch quartet, which the New Orleans Advocate calls, "distinctly modern, ever-adventurous." They will perform with special guest Grammy Award-winning vocalist Kurt Elling in a singular collaboration of musical forces. Elling's deep jazz vocabulary, technical versatility and outstanding intonation will enable the band to

perform a variety of material in new ways.



Fabian Almazan | Pedrito Martinez Group
Friday, June 23, 2017, at 8 p.m.

Cuban-born, New York-based pianist and composer Fabian Almazan brings to the bill Alcanza, his new multi-movement suite featuring a DSO String Quartet. Alcanza reflects the beauties, frustrations and paradoxes of modern life. Almazan has held the piano chair on Blanchard's band since 2007.

World-renowned, Grammy Award-winning, Cuban percussion master Pedrito Martinez and his Peruvian, Venezuelan and Cuban band mates comprise a one-of-a-kind Afro-Cuban ensemble, which ignites a fan base that includes Eric Clapton, Taj Mahal, Wynton Marsalis and Derek Trucks.

Located at 3711 Woodward Avenue in Detroit's Midtown community, Orchestra Hall is internationally recognized for its superior acoustic properties and also serves as the home of the world famous Detroit Symphony Orchestra. For more information on the Paradise Jazz Series, please call 313-576-5111 or visit dso.org/jazz.





CHECK YOUR COAT AND
YOUR EVERYDAY LIFE
AT THE DOOR.

Whether you're ready to play, relax or make it a night
unlike any other, MGM Grand Detroit satisfies any desire.

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An MGM Resorts Luxury Destination

GRAND TIMES AHEAD



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a problem. Call 1-800-770-7111 for confidential help.



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