

Broadway, Opera and Classical Talent Shine at Manhattan School of Music Gala

Hosted by Bebe Neuwirth, the evening featured performances by J'Nai Bridges, Ethan Mathias, Meredith Layne Hungerford, Benjamin R. Sokol and Shane Schag

NEW YORK, NY, UNITED STATES, June 22, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Manhattan School of Music hosted its 2026 Gala at the Rainbow Room in New York City, honoring MSM Board Chair Lorraine Gallard and celebrating MSM faculty under the evening's theme, "A Tradition of Mentorship". The gala was hosted by Bebe Neuwirth, a Manhattan School of Music trustee, member of the school's Artistic Advisory Council and recipient of an honorary Doctor of Musical Arts degree from MSM.

The evening recognized Gallard, an alumna of MSM's Precollege Division, for her 12 years of dedicated service as board chair. Gallard joined MSM's Board of Trustees in 2009 and was elected chair in 2014, helping guide the school through a significant period of growth and distinction. The program also celebrated MSM's acclaimed faculty, whose work across classical music, jazz, vocal arts and musical theater continues to mentor and prepare students for careers on the world's leading stages.

The program opened with remarks by Neuwirth and featured performances by current students and alumni, reflecting the full range of talent nurtured at MSM. Ethan Mathias, a member of the Precollege Class of 2026, performed "Go the Distance" from Hercules, while Meredith Layne Hungerford, a Bachelor of Music candidate in musical theater, performed "Before the Parade



The logo features a large, bold, red letter 'M' on the left. To its right, the words 'Manhattan School of Music' are written in a black, serif font, with 'Manhattan' on the top line and 'School of Music' on the bottom line.

Manhattan School of Music Logo



MSM Board Chair and Honoree Lorraine Gallard with MSM President James Gandre (Photo Credit: PMC / Mark Sagliocco)

Passes By” from Hello, Dolly! with Shane Schag on piano. President James Gandre offered remarks before Benjamin R. Sokol, a triple alumnus of MSM, performed “La calunnia è un venticello” from Rossini’s The Barber of Seville, also accompanied by Schag.

A video tribute, “Celebrating MSM Faculty: A Tradition of Mentorship,” led into the honoree presentation with opening remarks by David Loud, music director of MSM’s Musical Theatre program and a member of the musical theater faculty. Gandre and Noémi K. Neidorff, a member of the Board of Trustees and double MSM alumna, continued the tribute, followed by remarks from Gallard. The evening continued with a performance by three-time Grammy Award winner J’Nai Bridges, an MSM alumna and honorary doctorate recipient, who performed “L’amour est un oiseau rebelle” from Carmen and “You’ll Never Walk Alone” from Carousel, with Schag at the piano.

The 2026 gala brought together members of the MSM community, trustees, alumni, faculty, students and supporters for an evening that underscored the school’s enduring role in New York’s cultural life. Founded in 1918, Manhattan School of Music is recognized for its more than 1,000 undergraduate and graduate students from more than 50 countries and nearly all 50 states, its innovative curricula and its artist-teacher faculty drawn from the New York Philharmonic, the Met Orchestra, jazz, Broadway and other leading musical communities. The evening concluded with farewell remarks from Gandre and a renewed celebration of the transformative power of music education.

Notable Attendees included: J’Nai Bridges (Three-time Grammy Award-winner and MSM alumna), Ted Chapin (former President of the Rodgers and Hammerstein Organization), Jane Chu (former Chair of the National Endowment for the Arts), Lorraine Gallard (MSM Board Chair and Gala honoree), James Gandre (MSM President), Howard Herring (President and CEO of New World



Bebe Neuwirth, Shane Schag, Donna Mckechnie
(Photo Credit: PMC / Mark Sagliocco)



Benjamin R. Sokol (Photo Credit: PMC / Mark Sagliocco)

Symphony and MSM alumnus), Meredith Layne Hungerford (current MSM Musical Theatre student), David Loud (Music Director of MSM Musical Theatre), Ethan Mathias (MSM Precollege alumnus), Anthony Mazzocchi (President and CEO of Kaufman Music Center and double MSM alumnus), Donna McKechnie (Tony Award-winner and Broadway legend), Alicia Hall Moran (mezzo-soprano, composer, and MSM alumna), Jason Moran (jazz pianist, composer, visual artist, and MSM alumnus), Bebe Neuwirth (multiple Tony and Emmy winner and event host), Noemi K. Niedorff (MSM double alumna and trustee), James Roe (President and Executive Director of Orchestra of St. Luke's), Shane Schag (MSM Artistic Staff member and pianist), Robert Sirota (former MSM President and composer), Benjamin R. Sokol (baritone and MSM alumnus), Paul Tetreault (Director of the Ford's Theatre), and Ann Ziff (Met Opera Chairman of the Board).



J'Nai Bridges (Photo Credit: PMC / Mark Sagliocco)

About Manhattan School of Music (MSM):

Founded as a community music school by Janet Daniels Schenck in 1918, today MSM is recognized for its more than 1,000 superbly talented undergraduate and graduate students who come from more than 50 countries and nearly all 50 states; its innovative curricula and world-renowned artist-teacher faculty that includes musicians from the New York Philharmonic, the Met Opera Orchestra, and the top ranks of the jazz and Broadway communities; and a distinguished community of accomplished, award-winning alumni working at the highest levels of the musical, educational, cultural, and professional worlds.

The School is dedicated to the personal, artistic, and intellectual development of aspiring musicians, from its Precollege students through those pursuing doctoral studies. Offering classical, jazz, and musical theatre training, MSM grants a range of undergraduate and graduate degrees. True to MSM's origins as a music school for children, the Precollege program continues to offer superior music instruction to 525 young musicians between the ages of 8 and 18. The School also serves some 6,000 New York City schoolchildren through its Arts-in-Education Program, and another 2,000 students through its critically acclaimed and pioneering Distance Learning Program.

For more information on Manhattan School of Music, its history, and its curriculum, visit:

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IG: @msm.nyc | FB: msmnyc | X/T: @MSMnyc

Norah Lawlor
Lawlor Media Group, Inc.
+1 212-967-6900

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