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## Teaching and Music are One to BRIO Winners

by Shanell Garcia

**Penny Prince** does not compartmentalize her careers as music teacher and as composer. When making a new piece, she collaborates with her own students. Two such compositions, “Cuando” and “In the Name of All of Us,” helped the Riverdale resident earn a Bronx Recognizes Its Own Award (BRIO) from the Bronx Council on the Arts (BCA) earlier this year.

The pieces were part of a play performed at Lehman College, where she teaches, about bus boycotts during the civil rights movement in the 1950s. Ms. Prince said she was able to write “Cuando” from the perspective of the Latino community by channeling the voices of her Lehman students.

She has also taught at P.S./M.S. 37 and Riverdale Country School among others.

The artist says she has made over 200 musicals during the course of her career, including works just for the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale and the Riverdale Temple. “Riverdale has always been open to, if I have an idea or if I want to do a performance some place, they’ve always welcomed me,” said Ms. Prince. “Riverdale is supportive of people who have ideas and want to do something.”



Another Riverdale resident won a BRIO for composition this year. **Tamara Cashour** was recognized for a classical piece called “Queens Suite.” The work is about seven sources of personal inspiration, from Queen Latifah to the late Diana, Princess of Wales.

Like her fellow winner, Ms. Cashour has years of experience in education, having taught in the Bronx and directed a musical at the nearby Luisa Pineiro Fuentes School of Science and Discovery (P.S. 307). (Both winners also declined to state their ages.)

“I remember in high school reading about the Bronx and about New York City and a couple of books that teachers had written about teaching in urban schools and thinking, I want to do that some day,” said Ms. Cashour. “I didn’t quite go that route directly, but I have done that kind of work along with my composition and would love to do more of it.”

Ms. Cashour is also an organist at the Presbyterian Church of New Rochelle and the rehearsal/performance pianist and assistant conductor with the Bronx Concert Singers at St. John’s Lutheran Church in the South Bronx.

Ms. Cashour moved to Riverdale two years ago after living in Manhattan for over 30 years.

“I’d like to thank BCA somehow. I will write a piece somehow to honor this area because it’s just been very peaceful for me coming from Manhattan,” said Ms. Cashour. “I’m an excitable gal, but I find that I actually can concentrate here and I like to take my walks by the river and the boats, that’s definitely a plus.”

Ms. Cashour acquired her musical talents from her pianist grandfather, who inspired her starting when she was 3. “Most of my friends were being forced to play the piano and take piano lessons,” said Ms. Cashour. “They didn’t want to practice, so I’d say let me practice. Finally I was 13 and I said I’m a big girl now and so I asked for a piano. I practiced and practiced and was accepted to a school in Virginia as a piano major.”

Ms. Prince moved to Riverdale after studying at the Manhattan School of Music. “I moved here and I didn’t know how gorgeous it was in the Bronx,” said Ms. Prince. “I fell in love with Riverdale and I’ve been here ever since.”

Ms. Prince, who started playing the piano when she was just 4 years old, credits her mother for her musical ability. “My mother used to play and I would sing and dance around the house,” said Ms. Prince. “I started going to the piano and I could play anything by ear. Then I started taking lessons. It’s the love of my life. I just love music.”

Both women continue to compose original works. Ms. Cashour said she will likely make a “Queens’ Suite Part Two” about other influential women. Ms. Prince is preparing for the fall semester at Lehman. “To me, music fulfills something inside me. No matter what has gone on in my life, whether it’s good or bad, music brings me peace and clarity and it’s just emotionally and intellectually fulfilling,” said Ms. Prince. ■