

CHARLES VANDA SERIES ANNOUNCES SEASON

LAS VEGAS — Kathleen Battle, St. Petersburg Philharmonic, Principal Dancers of the New York City Ballet and Yo-Yo Ma are just some of the spectacular performances that will

"SOMETHING WITHIN ME" CELEBRATES THE ARTS AS A FORCE FOR POSITIVE CHANGE

Bill Cosby hosts Award-Winning Documentary, Premiering Wednesday, September 8 at 8 p.m. EST on PBS

In the heart of New York's South Bronx, a small Catholic grade school has made giant leaps in creating hope for children who live in one of the country's poorest communities, a place plagued by drugs, violence, and crime. The school's "secret weapon"? The arts.

SOMETHING WITHIN ME, an award-winning documentary film premiering Wednesday, September 8 at 8 p.m. EST (check local listings) on PBS, profiles St. Augustine's School of the Arts, where a unique curriculum centered on the arts, especially music, unleashed the creative and intellectual potential of young people, raised test scores and enrollment, and earned the admiration of parents and educators nationwide.

Hosted by actor-comedian Bill Cosby, **SOMETHING WITHIN ME** was the winner of the Audience Award, the Filmmakers' Trophy, and a Special Jury prize at the prestigious 1993 Sundance Film Festival. The hour-long film is presented on PBS by Thirteen/WNET.

Filmed entirely on location at the school, **SOMETHING WITHIN ME** follows the students, teachers, and parents of St. Augustine's during the course of the 1991 fall term, mixing enlightening interviews with engaging footage of the children in the classroom, in rehearsal, and in performance.

By 1985, St. Augustine's enrollment had dropped so low the school was in danger of closing down. Father Robert Jeffers, the school's director, approached Thomas J. Pilecki, a concert pianist and St. Augustine's music teacher who ran its successful after-school music program. Challenged to develop a new curriculum, Pilecki integrated the arts into the instruction of reading, math, history, geography and literature, so that each subject would reinforce the other.

"The arts fuel the academic, and the academic fuels the arts," notes principal Pilecki, who was named a *Reader's Digest* American Hero in Education this year. "There are different intelli-

gences that might not be covered in one area or in the classroom. But if they have the experience of many different types of learning, those differences in intelligence will all be dealt with."

Each student at St. Augustine's, regardless of his or her talent or ability (there are no auditions for admission), studies music theory, learns piano and a second instrument, plays in ensembles, sings in chorus, and takes a rigorous academic schedule, including science, math and humanities courses. The goal of the curriculum is not to turn out professional musicians, but to graduate eighth graders who have discovered the satisfaction of learning and developed the discipline and self-confidence to overcome the difficult challenges of life in the South Bronx.

SOMETHING WITHIN ME captures this unique philosophy of education by moving from rehearsal rooms to classrooms to counseling sessions. In music theory class, the session begins with classical music and meditation. Gary Schall, the teacher, calls the class "basically an English, math, and music class all rolled up into one." In dance class, students learn how to do an *assemble*; while in the second-grade humanities class, students get a taste of African history by performing the trium-



phal scene from the opera "Aida," and seventh graders discuss values through a reading of the play "Twelve Angry Men."

Despite monetary setbacks, the curriculum's positive effect is quantifiable. In the course of the last eight years, St. Augustine's enrollment has tripled approximately 400 students (96 percent are African-American, the rest Hispanic and Asian). Most significantly, reading and math scores, which were previously among the lowest in the South Bronx district, are presently among the highest.

St. Augustine's teacher Gary Schall notes: "Reports have been published [stating that] arts education, music education is basically becoming extinct. It's dying, and people aren't realizing the implications of this at all."

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be featured in the prestigious Charles Vanda Master Series this coming season at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

"In celebration of our 18th season, we are presenting Las Vegas with a true season of masters. It will be a delight for everyone who loves music and great art," said Rick Romito, director of the Performing Arts Center. "We were determined to provide not only the greatest music available in the world this year, but in addition we wanted to provide our audiences with an opportunity to enjoy the best of a variety of classical genres."

"Kathleen Battle, who opens our series for example, is one of the most-acclaimed singers of our time. Yo-Yo Ma is considered by many to be the foremost cellist in the world. And similarly, Mummenschanz is considered the foremost mime entertainment throughout the world," said Romito.

The season opens October 8 with Kathleen Battle, whose lyric soprano voice and unique artistry have captivated audiences around the world. Battle appears regularly with the world's great opera companies and symphony orchestras and



KATHLEEN BATTLE

has toured extensively in recitals across the United States, Canada, Europe and the Far East.

Her many recordings and television appearances have brought her voice and musicianship into millions of homes worldwide. She has received critical acclaim from the world press. Bernard Holland of the New York

Times wrote, "One never stops wondering at Ms. Battle's pristine musicality and flawless delivery..."

On October 14, there will be a performance of the St. Petersburg Philharmonic Orchestra. Formerly the Leningrad Philharmonic, the St. Petersburg Orchestra is Russia's oldest sym- (See *Charles Vanda*, Page 14)

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