

# TAKING A PIECE OF THE BIG APPLE

## Westminster harmonizes with the New York Philharmonic

By Jess Decina

Performing in front of hundreds of people in the city with accompaniment from one of the country's leading orchestras, the New York Philharmonic, is no easy task. But it's all in a day's work for the members of the Westminster Choir College (WCC) Symphonic Choir, according to junior Tara O'Connor.

"I was less nervous and just excited more than anything," she said. "It is always such an honor to be able to work with such accomplished musicians as well as being able to put on a stunning show."

O'Connor and about 90 other members of the choir performed in "The Magic of Mozart Festival," which ran from Thursday, Jan. 26, through Saturday, Jan. 28, in Avery Fisher Hall in New York City. The choir members lent their voices to "Mass in C Minor," the final piece. The concert kicked off a three-week festival of city-wide events to celebrate Mozart's 250th birthday.

The WCC Symphonic Choir comprises 180 junior, senior and graduate students who are voice majors. No strangers to performances of this caliber, the choir members have sung with major orchestras — more than 300 appearances have been with the New York Philharmonic. To prepare for the three days of performances, the choir practiced four days a week last semester with its director, Assistant Professor Sun Min Lee.

"The New York Phil[harmonic] is one of the leading orchestras of the world; working with them is an honor,"



Photo by Annmarie Mercieri

Westminster students prepare for their performance on Friday, Jan. 27. The choir sang alongside the New York Philharmonic in Avery Fisher Hall.

she said.

According to Lee, the ensemble traveled back and forth to the city since Tuesday, Jan. 24, for one rehearsal with the orchestra and one dress rehearsal the following morning. Although the schedule was "demanding," Lee said, the opportunity makes it worthwhile.

"[The performances] are part of their learning experience," Lee said. "They try to achieve a higher level of excellence."

Performing with professional orchestras has become an integral part of WCC's curriculum. Dustin Struhall, a senior and tenor in the Symphonic Choir, found the experience surreal, although somewhat of a norm.

"[Performing] is something we have to do," he said. "It's humbling, but it's also a lot of fun."

Struhall said the choir has per-

formed with the New Jersey Symphony, the Philadelphia Philharmonic and the Dresden Philharmonic. The performances became an integral part of the students' time at WCC.

"Each experience, regardless of how many times I've performed on that stage, is a great honor and blessing," said junior Marco Melendez. "There are not many other collegiate choirs throughout the world that receive the opportunity to collaborate with musicians such as those of the New York Philharmonic."

The experience, said O'Connor, is always a rewarding one and also gives her and the other choir members a sense of responsibility.

"Being able to uphold the respect that Westminster has spent years earning is an important part of the experience and a good thing to have an awareness of," she said.

Although performing with famous orchestras has become part of the choir members' lives, it is also a part of their education at WCC. Just as students at Rider often take internships, pursue independent studies, or write senior theses, students at WCC study and analyze the different composers' techniques.

"As future educators or performers, this will most definitely come in handy," Melendez said.

Lee added that the preparing and performing of this music will "educate them and prepare them for the world that they will live in and learn in." Many students will go on to apply this experience to their careers, she said.

"Reaching such high standards and high level of music making is invaluable," Lee said.

With a week's worth of traveling, three performances and one dress rehearsal, the entire process was taxing for the choir members' time and voices, Melendez said.

"We were reminded of how demanding the task ahead of us really was," he said. "It was most definitely not something to take for granted nor something to just brush off."

With such intense work to be done, Struhall admits that there are always a few pre-performance worries. It is, however, forgivable to make a few mistakes when singing with nearly 90 other people.

"There's 86 other people up there besides me," he said. "It is somewhat nerve-wracking, but you're still surrounded by everyone else. We just get up there and do it."

## Q&A: What do you think about the new food nutrition facts in Daly's?

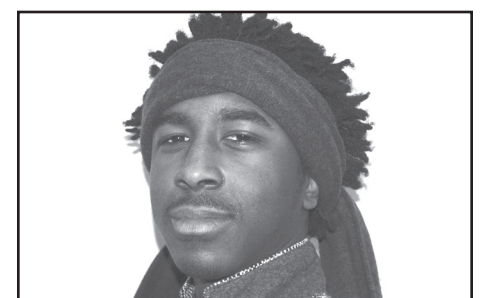
By Nicole Southern

Photos By Stephanie Nardi



"I'm glad that they are informing us about what we're eating, but the font is too small and it's hard to read. You have to be up close to read it."

— Estefania Juncal, Senior



"I think they are very interesting. Some of the meals don't appear to coincide with what the health facts say. I love Daly's!"

— Alverson Layne, Sophomore



"I thought the food was a lot less healthy than it actually is."

— Dan Ford, Freshman



"I didn't even notice."

— Ryan Kincaide, Freshman

## My day in NYC with the WCC Choir

By Annmarie Mercieri

Talent slowly filled the seats as the Westminster Choir College (WCC) Symphonic Choir loaded the buses and headed to New York City to perform with the New York Philharmonic on Friday, Jan. 27.

As I found an open seat, I anticipated what the concert was going to be like. I wasn't completely certain what to expect in the upcoming hours. The ride there was full of discussions on music, harmonies and different pieces. Some of the choir members even mentioned the hopes of some day conducting their own choirs.

It felt as if this was any normal day in the lives of these amazingly talented students, as if they have been doing this for their entire lives. The kindness that exuded from them made me feel like I was home again, joking with my friends.

When we arrived in NYC we were given time to relax, grab some Starbucks and enjoy what the city had to offer, but when 7:30 p.m. arrived, the choir returned to Avery Fisher Hall and began its final preparations for that evening's performance. It was a very mellow scene with students relaxing, enjoying books, reviewing music and catching a quick nap.

Eventually, Chai Lattes were finished and the warm-up began. I headed upstairs to see the performance and read the program about our school. Yet, nothing beat the pride I felt when I watched the choir take its place behind the New York Philharmonic. The group offered a flawless, breath-taking performance and received exactly what it deserved, a standing ovation. I found it fascinating to be able to say "that's my school, performing with a prestigious orchestra."

Again, the buses were loaded to return home. The ride back to Princeton consisted of picture taking, jokes shared, snacks and discussions on the performances. As soon as eyes began closing, a quiet song trailed through the whispers, and before we knew it we were home again.