The thunderous applause and standing ovations of more than 2,600 spectators said it all: the Montreal Premiere of *Oratorio Terezin* on May 4 at Place des Arts was a spectacular success. Presented as a benefit concert by the Vanier College Foundation, and produced by the Vanier College Music Department, the concert was all it had promised to be—deeply moving, passionately sung, lyrical, and simply enthralling.

“I am proud to say that the Oratorio was a great success, raising close to $50,000,” indicated Vanier’s Director General, Gilbert Héroux. “And I would like to thank the staff and faculty who came out to support our Music Department and the Vanier College Foundation in this immense endeavor.”

A magnificent classical work for symphony orchestra, two choirs and three vocal soloists, *Oratorio Terezin* has been performed all over the world including New York’s Carnegie Hall. Composed by Ruth Fazal, *Oratorio Terezin* commemorates children who were victims of the Terezin concentration camp during the Holocaust.

For the Montreal production the Vanier College Choir and the McGill Conservatory Youth Choir both directed by Vanier Choir Director Erica Phare (Vanier 1983), were joined by two other prominent Montreal choirs, *Concerto Della Donna* and *Le choeur des enfants de Montréal*, and accompanied by *Ensemble Amati* under the baton of guest conductor, Iwan Edwards. Tenor, Colin Ainsworth, baritone, Nathaniel Watson, and soprano, Teresa Maria Gomez were the guest artists, and eleven-year old Marco Bocchicchio of Laval was the child soloist.

Vanier student, Natalia Perez summarizes the feelings of many choristers when she says, “By singing the words of the children of Terezin … I feel transported to the concentration camp and am able to imagine the atrocities of which they were victims. We cannot let the world forget. In the end, for me, that’s what art is all about, opening people’s eyes.”
Vanier Wins Bronze in the 2008 Vanier BDC Case Challenge

It was a very exciting finish to a long day of competition on February 16, as eleven top-notch teams from Quebec and Ontario colleges presented their marketing plans to a panel of judges at the 2008 Vanier College BDC Case Challenge. In the end, the Gold Medal went to Mohawk College, Silver to Algonquin College, and Bronze to Vanier College.

“We are ecstatic!” beamed Director General Gilbert Héroux, “Vanier placed first in Quebec! We are so grateful to BDC for sponsoring this event and giving college students the opportunity to test their business acumen in a meaningful way. All the teams have learned so much from this challenge.”

Bronze medal winners were Vanier College Business Administration students Paul Phung, Tia Morrow, Stefanie Mortillaro and alternate, Aaron Knight, with student coach David Desrosiers, and coach David Moscovitz.

“It’s been three years of growth and we’ve seen the quality of the presentations improve constantly,” said Moscovitz. “This event has become an elite case competition in Canada and we’re now looking to expand into the Maritimes.”

The case challenge is a perfect example of how the collaboration with an organization such as BDC creates learning opportunities for students and motivates them in their educational and career pursuits.

“BDC is proud to support events that stimulate the entrepreneurial spirit in youth,” said Michel Bergeron, Vice President, Corporate Relations. “The Vanier College Case Challenge competition is an excellent way of helping tomorrow’s leaders gain hands-on experience. By being exposed to realistic business situations, student entrepreneurs learn how they can make a difference in a very competitive business environment.”

The teams presented their solutions in front of a panel composed of five judges: Bruno Delorme, Partner, BDC Consulting Group; Guy Hébert, President of the Saint Laurent Chamber of Commerce; Professor Harold Simpkins, Senior Lecturer in the Marketing Department of the John Molson School of Business of Concordia University; Professor Dave Bussiere, Assistant Professor of Marketing at the Odette School of Business of Windsor University; and Charles Bierbrier, owner of Bierbrier Beer, whose company was the focus of this year’s case-study.

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Big Band Benefit Concert honours Wah Keung Chan

When Vanier Music struck up the first note of its 10th Anniversary Big Band Benefit Concert, an annual April event to raise funds for music scholarships, it was in honour of Vanier graduate (MISP), Wah Keung Chan, founding editor of La Scena Musicale a magazine that has become synonymous with knowing what’s happening in the world of music in Montreal.

“We chose to honour Wah Keung Chan,” indicated Nadia Turbide, Coordinator of the Music Department, “because his magazine which is distributed all over Montreal free of charge, is a one-of-a-kind monthly listing of musical events, interviews and articles on musicians, conductors, and composers in Montreal. La Scena Musicale is a goldmine of information. No other local magazine covers music in such a comprehensive way.”

Jazz legend Oliver Jones hosted the concert which featured the great scat singer Jeri Brown as guest artist. The evening started off with the award-winning Vanier Stage Band made up of 19 young instrumentalists and singer Shaday Lavallé under the direction of Jocelyn Couture. Then Jeri Brown took the spotlight along with conductor Christopher Smith and the J.L. Big Band, an ensemble of some of the best jazz musicians in Montreal.
Two Vanier College graduates are among top Nursing students in Québec

Lyn De Leon, a Vanier Nursing graduate, currently pursuing a Bachelor of Nursing at McGill University, was the winner of the 2007 study bursary awarded by the Quebec Order of Nurses (Ordre des infirmiers et infirmières du Québec - OIIQ).

The $5000 bursary is awarded to the most deserving student chosen among all nursing graduates from the four English Cegeps offering studies in Nursing and that are attached to McGill University.

Since the award was inaugurated four years ago, a Vanier graduate has won it for the last three years.

The selection committee criteria for choosing a winner are high academic standing and nursing experience; community involvement and accomplishments in school activities and associations, and in professional and regional organizations; and research and authorship of scientific articles, and booklets, brochures, or pamphlets on health issues and nursing.

Another Vanier graduate, Jennifer Doran, now in Nursing at McGill, also won the $3000 Eaton Foundation Scholarship from the Canadian Nurses Foundation and a $2000 Entrance Scholarship from McGill University.

As well, Jennifer Doran placed fifth out of 2,486 Cegep or University nursing graduates who wrote the OIIQ Registered Nurse licensing exams in September 2007.

The professional examination is the final step that leads to obtaining the license to practice nursing in Quebec. The review aims to assess professional integration of the required knowledge, skills, and judgment necessary to solve the clinical situations that arise in the practice of a nurse debutante.

Next generation of scientists

When awards were handed out at the Quebec Finals of the 30th Super Expo-sciences Bell held in Montreal, last April, Rami Sayar, a Science Plus (now Honours Science) Health Science student at Vanier, was one of the biggest prize winners. He not only earned the Gold Medal in the Senior Category but he also garnered a number of other prizes and scholarships valued at over $11,000. He then represented Vanier College and the province of Quebec at the Canada-Wide Science Fair, in Ottawa in May and will compete at the MILSET International Science Fair in Nabeul, Tunisia, in July 2009.

“I have always been fascinated by video games and I continually have questions about the inner functioning of them,” he explains. “This led me to look into developing my own video games.” It’s not surprising, therefore, that his winning project was on artificial intelligence and game engine design.

Rami describes, “The game engine provides many features that enhance the user experience as well as producing realistic video games. It is flexible enough to be able to accommodate any type of artificial intelligence as well as any game type. The interesting aspect of the artificial intelligence is that I combine two models, neural networks and genetic algorithms to produce a dynamic, learning artificial intelligence. Neural networks attempt to mimic the brain and genetic algorithms mimic evolution theory.”

Rami Sayar is thinking of eventually studying Medicine, but for now his greatest pleasure is “Sleeping!” Not surprising for a seventeen-year-old who until recently worked 16-hour weekend shifts at MacDonald’s “to help pay for Medical School eventually...” while maintaining a very high academic average, and spending countless hours researching and working on his winning science project. And what do his parents think? Grinning ear to ear, Rami answers, “They are ecstatic!”
Hats off to You! Winner

When Vanier College student Stefanie Taylor received a Hats Off to You! 2007-2008 Award last May, she was following in the footsteps of her father, her grandfather and her great grandfather.

And that’s the point of Hats Off to You! a province-wide program run by the Ministry of Education which awards scholarships to young women who dare to follow their own bliss and are enrolled in technical programs leading to traditionally male-dominated occupations. Stefanie Taylor, a student in Architectural Technology at Vanier College won a $500 regional award and a $2000 award for Entrepreneurship.

“Winning this competition is so motivating. It makes me want to keep doing better,” she says of her award. Stefanie comes from a family of builders, contractors and renovators. She grew up watching, learning, and getting a taste for the family occupation in construction and design through helping her father who built two of their family homes. “My dream is to start my own business buying and renovating houses,” she explains, “like they do on Flip that House.”

“Architectural Technology has allowed me to develop my imagination. It has also opened my eyes to the complex world of construction and I believe that I can combine what I have learnt with my determination and strengths to run my own business.”

Stefanie is very proud of her summer. “I got a great job with a construction company,” she says, “and though I was scared, at first, it turned out great. I had to calculate quantities of materials needed for the various projects we were working on: like how much dry wall to order, number of feet of baseboards and wall trim, that sort of thing. I had to figure out a lot on my own. I felt very independent. This past summer was a really big accomplishment. Now I know I can do it and I’m not afraid of my next job.”

Stefanie is now in her final year of the Architectural Technology Program.

From Montreal to Malawi: Learning about AIDS

For six students, one teacher and two staff members from Vanier College it was the trip of a lifetime: three weeks in Malawi living with the villagers of tiny Makupo and learning firsthand about the impact of HIV/AIDS in Africa.

“I thought I was prepared for my trip to Malawi,” says Vanier Nursing teacher, Melodie Hicks. “However nothing prepares you for the warmth, love and giving spirit of these people or the level of poverty in which they are forced to live ... yet never once did I hear a raised voice or a complaint.”

Initiated by the Vanier International Education Service, this trip was the highlight of a Canadian International Development Agency’s (CIDA) funded project, *The Engagement of Youth in Canada’s combat against HIV/AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa* that Vanier obtained in March, 2007.

As part of the continuing CIDA project, the students will share what they have learned about AIDS and life in Africa with fellow Vanier students and with Montreal high school students.
Vanier Nursing Reaching Across Continents
Global Health Issues under study

Hardly a day goes by without a public complaint about the shortage of nurses and the shortcomings of health care in Quebec, but we are not alone. Melodie Hicks, a nurse who teaches in the Vanier Nursing Program, got a good look at how widespread the problem is when she represented Vanier College at the First Global Forum on Human Resources for Health held in Kampala, Uganda, last spring.

“I have been teaching students about ‘the nursing shortage’ and the consequences of burnout for the past 18 years,” indicates Melodie. “The shortage of health care workers is an issue in both developing and developed countries around the world. Because of AIDS, Sub-Saharan Africa has been affected by this shortage to an even greater degree, to the point that access to health care has reached a critical level.”

The conference addressed many aspects of the crisis, such as providing universal access to HIV prevention, care and support, which is a major concern in Africa; improving education and training for health workers; introducing innovation in education and training, and using Nursing Assistants where possible to help nurses.

“E-Learning/distance education was a hot topic,” said Melodie. “The notion of increasing educators’ knowledge as well as students’ access to educational material online was discussed at length. One of the major challenges is internet access or even electricity for many. People felt that if we could develop strategies for better access to internet we could have a massive impact on education.”

“What was made very clear at the forum,” she added, “is that developed countries must fill the gaps in our own work forces from within and not deplete developing countries of their scarce human resources.” But given working conditions in Africa it’s no surprise that a place like Canada is very attractive.

One reason Melodie went to the conference was to explore opportunities for Vanier College to get involved in finding solutions to these problems. “The quickest way to increase access to health care interventions in the poor, rural areas is through the use of Community Health Workers,” indicates Melodie.

“This is where Community colleges could help. Faculty could provide teacher to teacher support or direct training of trainers. If Polytechnics or other educational institutions in Africa would introduce a community health care program, we could assist with curriculum design and implementation. Perhaps even student stages could be possible as an interim measure to support the skeletal workforce while it is being increased. A lot of this support could be provided using interactive internet technology, where possible.”

Melodie’s participation in the global forum was sponsored by the Vanier College International Education Office, and the Association of Canadian Community Colleges.

Vanier to Kampala : A personal connection

Melodie Hicks

Ronald Semakula is a first year nursing student at Vanier. I met Ronald last year on his first day of class and soon learned that he was from Uganda and that his fiancée was studying nursing in Kampala. Six months later I found myself standing with Winnie Nakungu, his fiancée at the Entebbe airport in Uganda. It was something neither one of us could have predicted! As I came through the arrival doors at the airport I was greeted by a beautiful young woman with a smile from ear to ear. She stood waiting with her grandfather and small nephew and held a sign with my name on it. I was treated to a royal welcome back at her family’s home in Entebbe, including a feast at lunch time.

On my last night in Kampala I met up with Winnie and other nursing students attending the Mulago School of Nursing and Midwifery. I had transported a Medical Surgical textbook from Montreal as a gift from her fiancé, Ronald, but I would never have understood the significance of such a gesture if I had not visited the nursing residence where students were living 20 to a room in bunk beds with little space for much else. The rooms were hot and cluttered, with no individual privacy.

Small groups of students sat about in study groups getting ready for a big medical exam scheduled for the following Monday. We came across Winnie and Roy’s group, where she explained how she was now regarded as very valuable because she possessed the only textbook. The students receive lectures together in a large, stuffy lecture hall. The “tutor” lectures on 20% of the material and students are required to learn the remainder on their own. A difficult task if you do not own a textbook and the only internet access is painfully slow and costly. So they share any knowledge or resources they have with each other and their fate lies in the overall group competency.
When the 2008 graduating class of Vanier College gathered at Place des Arts in June to receive Vanier graduation certificates, the Valedictorian student selected to bid farewell to the College and to Cegep studies on behalf of all her fellow students, was Teresa Maria Julian, from the Liberal Arts Program.

Chosen because she was a well-rounded student, Teresa exemplifies the qualities Vanier looks for in a Valedictorian. “Well-spoken, positive, energetic and outgoing,” comments a selection committee member, “Teresa has expressed only high praise for her time at Vanier. Furthermore, in spite of being a very active and highly successful soccer player, she managed to maintain a high academic standard.”

Teresa describes perfectly the challenges she faced while at Vanier. “Every Cegep student has a double life”, she explains. “Mine, is that of a student-athlete. Taking on this role has allowed me to become a leader academically and in the athletic world. While striving for the best in my studies, I was training on the side and leading my team as captain, on and off the field.”

Good time management is definitely one of Teresa’s talents and has allowed her to succeed academically while being involved in extra-curricular activities and committed to helping others.

“Balancing work and school is difficult. I leave school to go to work and then return to train for soccer. But having two jobs, studying, training, tutoring other athletes and friends, and representing my program and school with pride, have enabled me to develop into a caring and devoted person, who strives for the best in everything I do.”

“I would not change my time at Vanier for anything,” says Teresa. “I loved it here.”

Other highlights of Winter and Spring 08

Kudos to three Vanier Millenium Scholars: Jeremie Abikhzer (Health Science), Shawn McGuirk (Health Science, Science Plus), Sean Teixeira (Pure and Applied Science, Science Plus).

International Women’s Week looked at sexuality, politics, feminism and the future.

The 15th Annual Kleinmann Family Holocaust Symposium and Neighbours Who Disappeared, a travelling art exhibit from Prague, explored the Holocaust.

Congratulations to Stephanie Doughty and Mariyana Toseva, recipients of the inaugural Doug Miller Social Justice Award.

6000 Quebec high school students made beautiful music at Vanier during MusicFest 2008.

Graduation 2008 Director General Gilbert Héroux and Valedictorian Teresa Maria Julian

Edwin Ling, (Science & Music) Gustav Levin-schi Scholarship winner, hitting the drums during Spring Drumology.