

SAN FRANCISCO WALDORF SCHOOL

The Eurythmy Issue

Celebrating 20 Years of the San Francisco Youth Eurythmy Troupe

Astrid Thiersch, Artistic Director

Here and Now



Tuesday, February 3, 2015 at 7:00 pm

Wednesday, February 4, 2015 at 4:00 pm

Kanbar Hall, Jewish Community Center of San Francisco, 3200 California Street

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What is Eurythmy?

Eurythmy was created during the European modernist arts revolution of the early 1900's, when Rudolf Steiner, the Austrian philosopher, scientist, and founder of Waldorf education, was asked if new meaning could be given to the art of dance.

Steiner explored the world of human speech and music, seeking archetypal forms and movements within the sounds themselves. Sound is always formative, but its world of forces is usually invisible. In eurythmy, the aim is to "speak" and to "sing" through movements and gestures that reveal to the eye what language and music sound to the ear: it is often referred to as "visible speech" and "visible music."

In performing or stage eurythmy, the human being becomes the instrument that speaks and sings through gesture and choreography. Stage eurythmy has moved audiences worldwide with its blend of colorful flowing movement and profound expression, creating a space alive with the forces that shape us and our world.

Through its source in archetypal movements, eurythmy naturally embodies therapeutic qualities. Breathing, circulation, coordination, sensory integration, spatial orientation, and social awareness are all improved through the practice of eurythmy. Individual therapeutic eurythmy can also be given as an adjunct to medical treatment for a wide variety of conditions.

The performing/stage art has also come into the Waldorf schools as pedagogical eurythmy, given to children from kindergarten through high school in a developmentally appropriate curriculum.

- David Weber, HS Faculty



Photo: Scott Chernis

Eurythmy in the High School

Ninth grade students arrive at the high school with various backgrounds in eurythmy, ranging from ten years in school to none. The introduction to eurythmy is a complex group formation with copper rods. Elements of spatial awareness are the foundation of the rod work. Precision and teamwork are of great importance. The students are also introduced to the gestures of the consonants and vowels. They then encounter the possibilities for transforming these gestures artistically in different styles of poetry, contemplative, dramatic, and humorous. The extremes of musical pitch are explored in tone eurythmy, and gestures for tones and intervals are reviewed. Students learn music pieces together, using gestures and group choreography. A new relation to movement often arises, challenging students to bring a rich inner life of feeling to outer expression.

In tenth grade eurythmy, the students are asked to perfect the performance of a poem and a music piece. Style and expression are explored, and the choreography and gestures of each piece are memorized. Group work gives way to individual work, and each student performs solo in front of the class, having to stand on her or his own throughout an entire piece. This requires the ability to sustain thought in movement and gives a moment of self-reflection. Each student is also asked to create a form for a poem and to choose her or his own gestures. They then compare different ideas, and the first principles of choreography emerge for discussion as they perform for each other. Tenth grade students grow increasingly capable of dramatic expression in movement, as their inner soul-life matures.

In the eleventh and twelfth grades, six blocks of eurythmy, each six weeks long, are offered as a combined elective. They are scheduled concurrently with physical education and outdoor education offerings. Students are expected to choose one block a year in each discipline, and the remaining three blocks according to their preference. Thus some students participate in one block of eurythmy each year, while others take up to four.

The six eurythmy blocks are dedicated to different themes to allow the students to focus on and deepen their work in a particular element. Their own creativity and contributions to the themes are highly encouraged in class. Conversations about eurythmy are a vital part of enhancing the students' experience of their movement. Since all classes take place at the end of the day, the lessons are structured to emphasize qualities of harmony and balance for the students' health. Representative themes for the six blocks are: Contrast of Tone and Speech; Modern Poetry; Tone Eurythmy; Original Choreography; The Zodiac; and Rejuvenating Exercises.

Therapeutic Eurythmy When, Where Why and How?

"In the beginning was the word" and before the word was movement ... intelligent, highly sophisticated and articulate, formative movement. During the course of an ordinary school day, the most extraordinary work of therapeutic eurythmy gives rise to healing impulses and miraculous moments. As a foundational support to academic learning, students and adults may benefit from this highly specialized and comprehensive intervention.

"Through the child's active participation in targeted exercises, physical, emotional and mental forces are strengthened and brought into harmony with one another. The goal is to address underlying imbalances, which lie at the root of developmental issues and learning difficulties. Students generally attend eurythmy therapy sessions on an individual basis, meeting twice weekly for a period of 6 to 7 weeks" (SFWS Educational Support: online brochure).

Attention, concentration, focus, coordination, balance and spatial orientation can all be addressed. With a doctor's recommendation, health related issues such as asthma, allergies, migraines, anxiety, depression and many other conditions can also be addressed. Academic challenges associated with auditory processing, visual integration, reading, spelling, comprehension, expressive writing and math are all included in the repertoire of possibilities.

As a highly artistic discipline, eurythmy also affords a pedagogical experience of intelligent, articulate gesture which fortifies understanding by creating a listening space coincident with self expression. While therapeutic eurythmy can address specific imbalances, ultimately, therapeutic eurythmy is wholesome, integrating and quite simply, healing for any individual.

-Judith Kutney, GS Educational Support

Upcoming Public Events

Saturday, January 24, 6-9pm **Family Folk Dance** grade school campus
Wednesday, January 28, 6-7:30 **Open Session of Board Meeting** grade school campus
Tuesday, February 3, 7pm **Here and Now, Eurythmy Performance** jccsf, 3200 California Street
Wednesday, February 4, 4pm **Here and Now, Eurythmy Performance** jccsf, 3200 California Street
Tuesday, February 24, 7-9pm **Town Hall** high school campus
Saturday, May 9, 6-11pm **Spring Night** general's residence

Visit our online calendars and news pages at www.sfwaldorf.org.

You're-with-me! from the beginning: Eurythmy in the Grade School

In a nice line with soft-soled shoes they step across the threshold of the eurythmy hall and, while Mrs. Dukhovny plays a welcoming tune on the piano, the children follow me in a spiral pattern to the center of the room and then from there back out to the circle. Here we greet the day with our arms moving to a verse:

Guarded from harm, Cared for by angels, Here stand we, Loving and strong, Truthful and good.

A few exercises to warm up hands and feet and we are ready to for a story. The children listen and follow my movements. Each gesture goes with a picture and relates to its sound and quality.

Much can be learned from how the children are able to engage in this activity. Some are actively imagining in their mind while others are getting so busy with their movement they lose the ability to listen to how the story continues (and everything in between). There is a wide spectrum in every class that we hope gradually evens out as we repeat and expand in the following weeks. Every week I add to the plot, planting a seed of anticipation, until the whole tale is told.

This storytelling process allows children to develop their “feeling” life in a unique way. They are imagining (engaging their “thinking” life), while moving (engaging their “will activity.”) Bringing together thinking and doing out of a positive imagination is healing.

Now we have not created angels quite yet, but we continue to cultivate in eurythmy a connection between the movements and the world around.

One of the goals of Waldorf education is to establish healthy breathing. This is not a set of breathing exercises, but really “breathing” as a metaphor for rhythm, in all its manifestations. Much in our life and being tends toward the chaotic and irregular, today and always. It is an ideal to come to the balanced and beautiful and rhythmic, and when we are in its presence we feel different and somehow whole.

Rhythm is already in the word eu-rythmy so we only need to add the Greek prefix “eu-“, which means harmonious or healthy. So eurythmy is in some way a healthy breathing class.



Middle School Eurythmy. Photos: Scott Chernis

How does it look in the middle school?

A group of young adolescents congregates in front of the eurythmy hall, busy discussing the latest and greatest, tossing a ball in the red circle, making a bathroom run, feeling the latest growing pain or draping themselves over the railing. As they cross the threshold to enter the hall, each one faces me briefly for a handshake, a quick look in the eye (are you ready?), or a reminder to do their best. We begin our class in a circle, reluctantly leaving behind the comfort of pockets and hoodies to assume uprightiness and composure. The ritual of an opening verse sets a mood of greater consciousness:

Stronger than steel is the sword of the spirit, Swifter than arrows the light of truth is, Greater than anger is love and subdueth.

We warm up with a rhythm, alternating hand and foot movements in a rapid pattern. Gradually, the sluggishness disappears until we are ready to move to the substance of the class, engaging a music piece or poem. Often I am able to choose a poem related to their studies in Main Lesson, allowing for a different engagement with the content. If we work with a music piece, I choose something to support their abilities to understand musical complexities.

The students are asked to engage with the elements that form their expressive repertoire and use them consciously in relation to text or music. The choreography – or “forms” as we say for short – has developed in complexity over the years. The students are now often asked to move with a forward-facing orientation, while steps take them forward, backward, right, and left. Social awareness, orientation, and trust are all required.

The small space of the eurythmy hall can be as wide as the ocean, as high as a fountain, as sparkling as a star. The students have the opportunity to leave the challenges of puberty and work with their tender and urgent feelings in a different way, one that is expressive and balancing.

All the while the premise continues: to engage the active will to reveal the thinking and feeling and keeping all three in a harmonious balance.

- Monika Leitz, GS Eurythmy Teacher



San Francisco Youth Eurythmy Troupe presents a Eurythmy Performance
Astrid Thiersch, Artistic Director

Image Weaving

影像穿梭



Monday, February 14, 2011 at 7:00 pm
Tuesday, February 15, 2011 at 4:00 pm

Kanbar Hall, Jewish Community Center of San Francisco, 3200 California Street

Tickets: BrownPaperTickets.com
and San Francisco Waldorf Grade/High School offices
adults \$20 advance/\$25 door children \$12 advance/\$15 door
for more information visit www.sfwaldorfhighschool.org

Program previews the Troupe's tour to China in February 2011

San Francisco Waldorf High School · 415-431-2736 · www.sfwaldorfhighschool.org

The San Francisco Youth Eurythmy Troupe, a eurythmy elective for grades ten through twelve, began in 1995 at the request of eighth-grade graduates who wished to continue eurythmy as a performing art. It is offered as an elective alongside various music groups, and meets twice a week in class, and once a week after school.

The Troupe works toward the performance of a major public program every year, which includes a wide variety of pieces. In speech eurythmy, a tale, humoresques, and poems featuring large and small groups, duos, and solos are performed in different languages and styles; music pieces include a large group orchestral piece, smaller group pieces, and solos. The students are taught advanced eurythmy elements, such as expression, soul gestures, tones and intervals, as well as techniques of stage preparation and performance.

The Troupe has presented a full program of artistic eurythmy at theaters in the City for the past twenty years. Each year includes a tour: the Troupe has performed at schools, teacher and youth conferences, and in public venues in the Bay Area, New York, Texas, Switzerland, Germany, Belgium, Holland, France, Italy, Egypt, India, Japan, China, and Taiwan. The Troupe maintains a high standard of commitment to artistic work, and presents a public face both of eurythmy and San Francisco Waldorf High School. The San Francisco Youth Eurythmy Troupe is unique among Waldorf schools, and has received acclaim worldwide.

This year, the Troupe tours to Thailand. In addition to visiting famous temples, markets, and the sights of Bangkok, the students will stay with local families from two schools, Panyothai Waldorf School and Tripat Waldorf School. Performances will be given for all the children in both schools, and for the community and public. This cultural immersion is always a profound experience for all participants. Our students gain an understanding and love for different cultures while bonding on a universal level with their new "foreign" peers. The school communities often express great gratitude for the artistic gift of the Troupe's performances, and the revelation of a high aspect of Waldorf education.

Stories and photos from the Troupe's performances and tours can be found at: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/San-Francisco-Youth-Eurythmy-Troupe/144081042274818>. Video from the Troupe's performances can be found on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=upt5it63f-i>



AWAKENING

A Eurythmy performance
San Francisco Youth Eurythmy Troupe
Astrid Thiersch, artistic director

Special guest performer:
Frank Chester, geometric artist

Saturday, February 16, 3 and 8 pm
Cowell Theatre, Fort Mason, San Francisco

The program includes: *Princess Sinhalda*, a fairy tale; *Hymn by Pharaoh Akhnaton*; poetry by Rumi; *Prelude from Aida* by Verdi; music by Beethoven and Chopin, and more.

\$15 children, \$20 adults. For tickets call San Francisco Waldorf High School, 415-431-2736, or see www.brownpaperickets.com. Proceeds from these performances will support the Troupe's trip to Egypt, February 20 to 29, 2008.

20 Years of Eurythmy Troupe Performances

1996	Great Fear, Greater Courage	West Coast
1997	Eurythmy	West Coast
1998	Eurythmy and Song	West Coast
1999	Flame of Peace	Germany
2000	Eurythmy, Humor, and Song	West Coast
2001	The Story of Taro	Switzerland
2002	Traces	New York
2003	Spirit Dance	Switzerland
2004	Sounds and Silence	Texas
2005	Soldiers Return	Germany
2006	Other Spaces	Japan
2007	The Lost Path	Italy
2008	Awakening	Egypt
2009	Endless Time	India
2010	Wings	France
2011	Image Weaving	China
2012	Stars Once Spoke	New Zealand
2013	The Wish of all Wishes	The Netherlands and Belgium
2014	In Sun Light and In Soul Light	Taiwan
2015	Here and Now	Thailand

San Francisco Youth Eurythmy Troupe presents a Eurythmy Performance
CELEBRATING 20 YEARS
Astrid Thiersch, Artistic Director

Here and Now



Tuesday, February 3, 2015 at 7:00 pm
Wednesday, February 4, 2015 at 4:00 pm

Program previews the Troupe's tour to Thailand, February 11-19, 2015

Kanbar Hall, Jewish Community Center of San Francisco
3200 California Street

The San Francisco Youth Eurythmy Troupe

San Francisco Youth Eurythmy Troupe Program 2015
CELEBRATING 20 YEARS

Here and Now

Kanbar Hall
Jewish Community Center of San Francisco,
3200 California Street, San Francisco, CA 94118

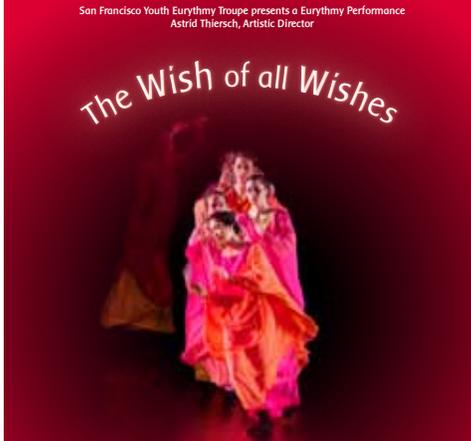
Tuesday, February 3, 2015 at 7:00 pm
Wednesday, February 4, 2015 at 4:00 pm

The world-renowned San Francisco Youth Eurythmy Troupe premieres its 20th annual performance "Here and Now" prior to touring in Thailand. This enchanting spectacle of movement, color, and light is performed to music and the spoken word. The program includes a tale, "Godfather Death"; poetry by V. Soloviev; humoresques about animals; music by Beethoven, Chopin, Mendelssohn, and more!

Tickets: BrownPaperTickets.com and
San Francisco Waldorf Grade/High School offices
adults \$20 advance/\$25 door children \$12 advance/\$15 door
Visit www.sfwaldorf.org for more information.

San Francisco Youth Eurythmy Troupe presents a Eurythmy Performance
Astrid Thiersch, Artistic Director

The Wish of all Wishes



Tuesday, February 5, 2013 at 7:00 pm
Wednesday, February 6, 2013 at 4:00 pm
Special guest: SF Waldorf Grade School Circus Program
Kanbar Hall, Jewish Community Center of San Francisco, 3200 California Street
Tickets: BrownPaperTickets.com and San Francisco Waldorf Grade/High School offices
adults \$20 advance/\$25 door children \$12 advance/\$15 door
for more information visit www.sfwaldorf.org
Program previews the Troupe's tour to The Netherlands and Belgium, February 16-25, 2013
San Francisco Waldorf High School . 415-431-2736 . www.sfwaldorhighschool.org

San Francisco Youth Eurythmy Troupe
Astrid Thiersch - Artistic Director
presents

Wings



Friday, February 12, 8:00pm
Saturday, February 13, 2:00pm
Cowell Theater at Fort Mason

Special Guests
David Katz, voice
Paul Scheffert, piano

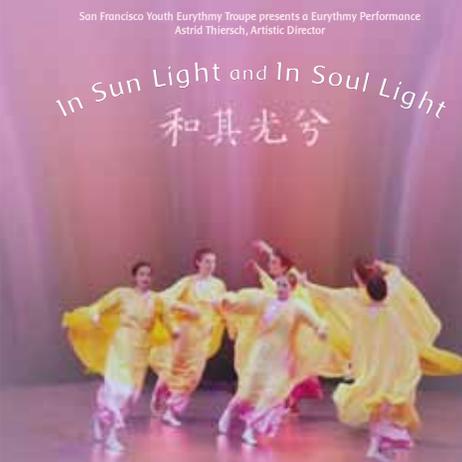
The program includes:
"The Seven Ravens", a fairy tale
texts by Steiner, Obama,
Verlaine, Silverstein
music by Saint-Saëns,
Debussy, Beethoven

Appropriate for all ages

Tickets (\$22/\$15) available at the Cowell Theater Box Office
415-345-7575 or www.fortmason.org/boxoffice,
San Francisco Waldorf School Offices, or at the door
www.sfwaldorhighschool.org / 415-431-2736
SFYET will tour to Paris February 14-22, 2010

San Francisco Youth Eurythmy Troupe presents a Eurythmy Performance
Astrid Thiersch, Artistic Director

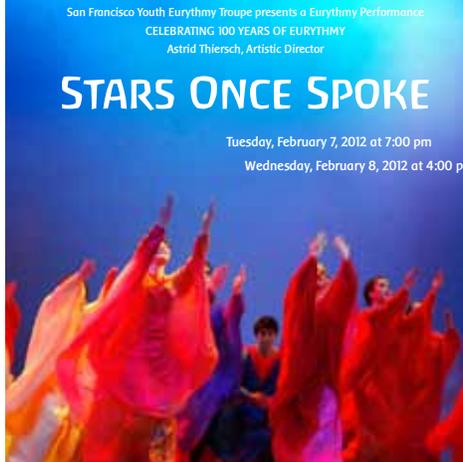
In Sun Light and In Soul Light
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Tuesday, January 28, 2014 at 7:00 pm
Wednesday, January 29, 2014 at 4:00 pm
Kanbar Hall, Jewish Community Center of San Francisco, 3200 California Street
Tickets: BrownPaperTickets.com and San Francisco Waldorf Grade/High School offices
adults \$20 advance/\$25 door children \$12 advance/\$15 door
for more information visit www.sfwaldorf.org
Program previews the Troupe's tour to Taiwan, February 13-22, 2014
San Francisco Waldorf High School . www.sfwaldorhighschool.org

San Francisco Youth Eurythmy Troupe presents a Eurythmy Performance
CELEBRATING 100 YEARS OF EURYTHMY
Astrid Thiersch, Artistic Director

STARS ONCE SPOKE

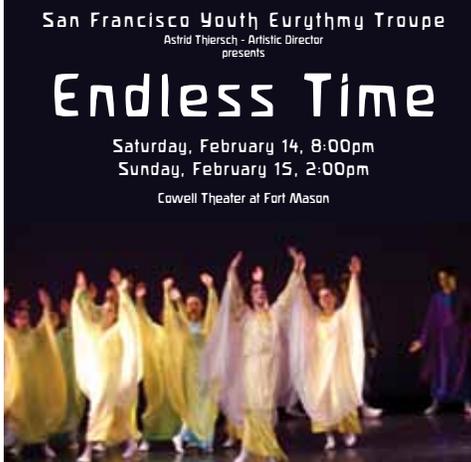


Tuesday, February 7, 2012 at 7:00 pm
Wednesday, February 8, 2012 at 4:00 pm

Special guest artist: Phillip Greenleaf, saxophone
Kanbar Hall, Jewish Community Center of San Francisco, 3200 California Street
tickets: BrownPaperTickets.com and San Francisco Waldorf Grade/High School offices
adults \$20 advance/\$25 door children \$12 advance/\$15 door
for more information visit www.sfwaldorf.org
Program previews the Troupe's tour to New Zealand, February 15-25, 2012
San Francisco Waldorf High School . 415-431-2736 . www.sfwaldorhighschool.org

San Francisco Youth Eurythmy Troupe
Astrid Thiersch - Artistic Director
presents

Endless Time



Saturday, February 14, 8:00pm
Sunday, February 15, 2:00pm
Cowell Theater at Fort Mason

A spectacle of movement, color, and light, performed to music and the spoken word.

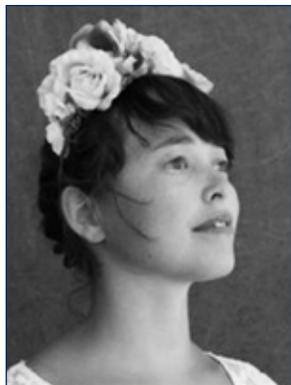
The program includes:
The White Snake, a fairy tale,
Endless Time by Tagore, poetry from The Bhagavad Gita,
Neruda, and Gandhi, music by Beethoven, Sallie, and Debussy, humoresques, and more!
Appropriate for all ages

Tickets available at the Cowell Theater Box Office - 415-345-7575 or www.fortmason.org/boxoffice,
San Francisco Waldorf High School front desk, or at the door.
www.sfwaldorhighschool.org / 415-431-2736

Alumni Corner

Alumni Interview: Isabella Serrano (Class of 2011)

SFWHS to the Eurythmeum Stuttgart



Fully immersed in a recent Eurythmy performance, a piece by Franz Schubert at the Eurythmeum Stuttgart where she is a student, Isabella Serrano found perfect tone through movement and music – something akin perhaps to the flow of an elite athlete who is “in the zone.”

“I used to play the cello,” Isabella recounts. “When there is perfect pitch in any key, the D string vibrates. That is when you know you are completely in tune. And that is similar to what is possibly in eurythmy –

when one is able to truly make tones and intervals visible, it will sing.”

Isabella returned to San Francisco Waldorf School over winter break to talk about her unique path from the high school (Class of 2011) to international eurythmist-in-training. She is nearing the end of her four years of study at the Eurythmeum Stuttgart in Germany where she will graduate with a Bachelor of Arts in Eurythmy.

The conversation was sprinkled with insights into the world of a young eurythmist who is deepening her understanding of the meaning behind the movement and discovering the sweeping possibilities of the practice -- in education, the arts, therapy.

“When you see Eurythmy in Germany and compare it to the practice here, we are just so new,” notes Isabella. “It is simply not as widespread or developed, and there are great possibilities to share the art form. Eventually, I’d like to come back and offer eurythmy to people who wouldn’t come in contact with it – people outside of Waldorf education of all ages. It is awesome and all-encompassing in its breadth, and more people should have opportunities to experience eurythmy.”

Isabella attended a Waldorf charter school in grade school that had everything but eurythmy. So her first exposure came at San Francisco Waldorf High School, and she took to it immediately, first in ninth grade class and later as a member of the school’s performance troupe where she toured internationally. She describes herself having stage presence from a young age, feeling alive in performance, and drawn to movement.



As high school graduation approached, Isabella applied to colleges but didn’t know what she wanted to study. “Art or communications were possibilities,” she recalls, but questioned, “Is that really me?” She was drawn to continue her studies of eurythmy and found a mentor in Astrid Thiersch, the high school’s Eurythmy teacher. “I saw her practice Eurythmy. I saw her art and her life and her role as a teacher. I decided that is what I want – to learn and to

teach eurythmy.”

Isabella didn’t know much about Steiner’s philosophy, but followed her heart to Germany to study. Like many adventurous young people, she did not know what she was getting into. First, there were immense practical challenges of living independently abroad: with only a few months of the language under her belt, she began her undergraduate studies in German. The intensive program includes six hours of eurythmy daily in addition to course work in anthroposophy, taught using the block system – at a place that she describes as a Waldorf college.



“The first year I returned and wondered if I could keep going,” notes Isabella. “Where is the sun? It was cold and grey, and I wasn’t able to fully express my feelings about the studies. (Steiner is difficult enough to read in English!) But I said, ‘Ok, I really love eurythmy. Keep going. It will be fine.’ Now I am almost finished – I did it.”

Isabella looks back fondly to her years at the high school, noting the confidence she gained from her academic studies and the practical toolkit that gave her a broad range of unusual skills. (She earns college money by sewing.) She and her classmates also recognize their strengths in creative problem solving, applicable in all facets of life.

“I understand German well now, but recognize that I am not a eurythmy expert. I see this as a lifelong journey – to understand Steiner’s teachings and to express myself through the art of eurythmy. It is time to go out in the world and try out what I have learned.”



Isabella interned with Astrid Thiersch in 2014, during which she performed in the Eurythmy Concert.

Photos: Scott Chernis

Alumni Updates

Jacob Wilmer (SFWGS 2006) was published in the August 2014 issue of *Journal of Chemical Theory and Computation*. The article, “Optimum Exchange for Calculation of Excitation Energies and Hyperpolarizabilities of Organic Electro-optic Chromophores,” was a joint effort between UC-Merced, University of Washington, and University of Vermont. Jacob graduated from UC-Merced in 2014, and has remained there to work on another theoretical chemistry research project for publication. He is also studying for the GRE and applying to graduate school.

Alumni News

Save the Date!

- GS Class of 2010 Reunion: March 7, 2015, 6:30-9pm Eurythmy Room, Grade School Campus
- GS Class of 1990 25-year Reunion: May 2015, TBA
- Summer Alumni Reunion: Saturday, June 20, 2015