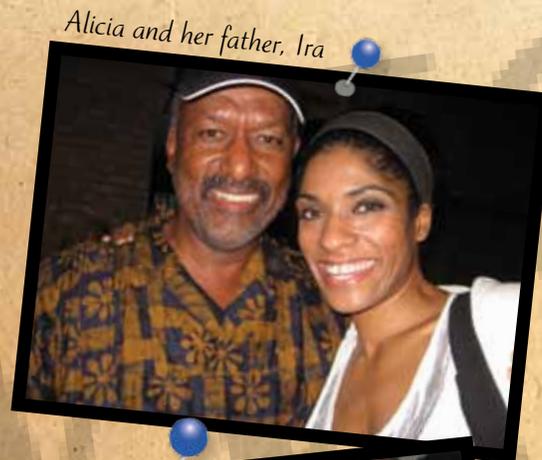
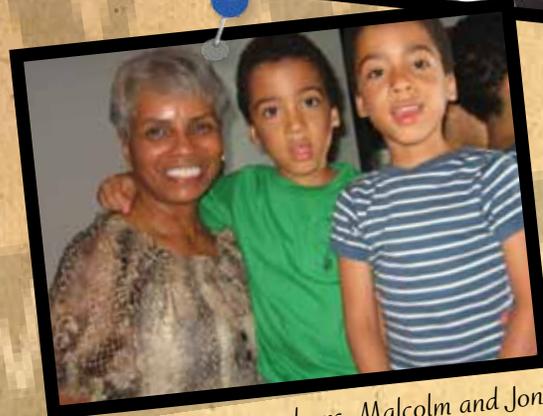




Alicia and her husband, Jason.



Alicia and her father, Ira



Carole and her grandsons, Malcolm and Jonas

## The “Go-To” School

Two Generations of the Hall Family at WSMS

The audience at the Broadway production of *The Gershwins’ Porgy and Bess* on a recent Wednesday night sits enthralled by the attractive woman with the amazing voice in the starring role. What they probably don’t know is that she got her start at West Side Montessori School.

Alicia Hall Moran, parent of twins Malcolm (3Wpm) and Jonas (2Wpm), is herself an alumna of West Side. As her father, Ira Hall, says, when he and his wife Carole, who worked in publishing as an editor, moved to goth and Riverside in the late ’70s with two young girls, the word from friends and neighbors was that WSMS was the “go-to” school. And from their first day Alicia and her younger sister, Stephanie, thrived, finding a place that fostered their development by allowing them to explore their interests, both academic and artistic.

Both girls were (are!) musically gifted, and WSMS supported this talent in many ways. In fact, when Alicia and Stephanie moved on to public school in suburban Connecticut, Alicia was surprised and disappointed to find that their new classroom did not have the broad assortment of instruments that WSMS had.

The sisters pursued separate interests. Stephanie uses her talents in music and performance to great effect as a second grade teacher in Stamford, CT. Alicia, a classically trained mezzo-soprano, married jazz pianist Jason Moran, whom she met at the Manhattan School of Music after graduating from Barnard. For Anthropology class Alicia wrote a paper about Frederick Law Olmsted’s design for Riverside Park that included a look at West Side Montessori School. As she says, WSMS “has an important place in my idea of my

education. It was the beginning.” When it came time for her boys to go to school, WSMS was clearly “where to begin” for them.

Jason is often on the road, performing with his group The Bandwagon or serving as artistic advisor at the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC, as well as on the faculty of the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston. For the Morans, WSMS provided the warm, stimulating environment Alicia remembered, together with the flexibility of an afternoon schedule, so she could spend time with the boys every morning before her own performing commitments took over.

Alicia says she had “ultimate faith in the program” to be as she remembered it, that WSMS felt like a community school then and now. The way our building fits in with the original architecture of the neighborhood is emblematic of WSMS “living out its philosophy. The façade is not a façade, but real; not boastful or ostentatious, but authentic.” Alicia remembered feeling a “sense of separation” as she went from home to school, which was reflected in a “sense of confidence, that there were many things I could do myself, that the relationships in class were my own.” She recalls being “a mover and a shaker” in the classroom.

Malcolm and Jonas have had a similar experience. Alicia requested that they be in separate classrooms, and this has worked out well. She remembers, as far back as the age of four, how having her name on a cubby gave her a sense of entitlement to the classroom. In the same way, her boys love naming and identifying things in the class, writing letters to friends, organizing around people rather



Alicia loves the "do no harm" approach underlying Montessori: "exploring the natural gifts you come with ... the joy when you excel is its own reward."



# alicia HALL MORAN

IN 2012 *THE GERSHWINS' PORGY AND BESS* WON THE TONY AWARD FOR BEST REVIVAL OF A MUSICAL. UNDER THE DIRECTION OF DIANE PAULUS, THIS IS A SOMEWHAT STREAMLINED VERSION OF THE OPERA WRITTEN BY GEORGE AND IRA GERSHWIN,

WITH BOOK AND ADDITIONAL LYRICS BY DuBOSE HEYWARD. AUDRA McDONALD, WHO APPEARS MOST NIGHTS IN THE TITLE ROLE OF BESS, IS JUSTLY CELEBRATED AS PIVOTAL TO THAT HONOR. BUT EQUALLY IMPORTANT TO THE SUCCESS OF THE PLAY ARE THE MANY TALENTED SUPPORTING PERFORMERS. ALICIA HALL MORAN HAS BEEN LAUDED AS AUDRA'S UNDERSTUDY, PERFORMING THE LEAD ROLE UPWARDS OF 50 TIMES, FILLING IN FOR HER FREQUENTLY IN THE WEDNESDAY EVENING PERFORMANCE, AS WELL AS DURING THOSE TIMES WHEN AUDRA TAKES A WELL-DESERVED BREAK. ALICIA HAS APPEARED AS A MEMBER OF THE ENSEMBLE ON NON-BESS NIGHTS SINCE THE PLAY OPENED IN JANUARY.

ALICIA'S ECLECTIC CAREER, VARIED INTERESTS, AND BROAD TALENT HAVE EARNED HER HIGH PRAISE IN VENUES AS VARIED AS THE 2012 WHITNEY BIENNIAL (FOR WHICH SHE AND JASON PUT TOGETHER A COLLABORATION OF ARTISTS, PRACTITIONERS, AND MUSIC), CABARET SHOWS (*ALICIA HALL MORAN + THE MOTOWN PROJECT*), AND DANCE (CREATING VOCAL MUSIC FOR *CHAPEL/CHAPTER* WITH THE BILL T. JONES/ARNIE ZANE DANCE COMPANY).

WE CAN'T WAIT TO SEE WHERE ALICIA'S TALENTS TAKE HER NEXT!

than things. She sees music as a natural integrator in the classroom, giving activities an organic sense. She loves the "do no harm" approach underlying Montessori: "exploring the natural gifts you come with ... the joy when you excel is its own reward."

Returning to WSMS after 30+ years, Alicia was pleased that the renovations over the years have not disturbed the core feeling of the school, and Ira had a similar reaction when he returned for Grandparents and Special Visitors Day last spring. As a board member from 1977-1981, he was part of the team that hired former head Marlene Barron, not so long after WSMS moved to 92nd Street. After a distinguished career in business and finance, and service on multiple boards including that of Stanford University, he was impressed by the current state of the WSMS facilities, and excited by the social development so evident in the classroom: "the individual attention available with multiple educators in the classroom, the way the kids interact respectfully with each other, how the children complete tasks in a free and flexible but orderly way."

There have been many changes at WSMS over the past 35 years, but as the Hall and Moran families can attest, the core mission of the school has stayed the same: to build a lifelong love of learning in a socially, culturally, and economically diverse community that promotes individual creativity, openness to differences, and respect for self and others.