

# Spotlight On...

## Marblehead High School Choral Program

The Marblehead High School Choral program directed by Ms Amanda Roeder boasts of two diamonds in the rough. The Jewel Tones and Luminescence, two a cappella groups were recently featured in Choral Director Magazine. Ms Roeder began teaching at Marblehead High School in 2002. Since that time the number of students involved in the music program has doubled and a number of choral ensembles have been added. The first group to be added was a co-ed auditioned group which met after school called Chamber Choir. This group sang an eclectic mix of styles with accompaniment and a cappella. The group sparkled when singing contemporary a cappella and the audiences enjoyed this style of singing, so the group focused on this genre and were renamed Jewel Tones. Two years later a second auditioned group for girls was added, Luminescence. Since then two more a cappella groups have been added, one for boys, and one for teachers.

The a cappella ensembles at Marblehead High School have recorded CDs which have earned them recognition from the a cappella community. In 2008, the Jewel Tones album, *Tied Together*, was nominated for two Contemporary A Cappella Recording Awards (CARAs) for best high school album and best high school song. The album also earned them a track on the annual Varsity Vocals CD, Best of High School A Cappella. In 2009, the Luminescence album, *nonpareil*, earned a track on Best of High School A Cappella as well as three CARAs for best high school album, best high school song, and best high school soloist. The students fundraise the money to pay for studio time through paid gigs, sponsorships from local businesses and families and have even been known to put out a basket and sing on street corners. The groups also have the support of the Marblehead parent group, Friends of the Performing Arts.

The success of the Marblehead program is based upon shared responsibility between director and students. The ensembles have student managers who organize the music library, maintain the equipment, and plan fundraisers. The students run their own warm-ups and lead sectionals. The upperclassmen understand that they must act as role models for the younger students and they take that responsibility very seriously. Testament to individual growth through responsibility was expressed in this personal reflection: "Singing in Marblehead High School's choirs has been one of the most rewarding experiences ever for me. There is an open environment that I had never seen before I came to high school, and it has really helped me open up, and discover my own personality. I feel like it has taught me how to be a leader, and I've found that I've started stepping up and becoming a leader in all other aspects of my life as well."

Those of us in music education are often consumed by the tasks of choosing the repertoire, teaching the rhythms, the mechanics of breath support and all that contributes to the development of musicianship. However, we teach on many varied levels and personal growth not only exists but flourishes far beyond the conductor's baton. The real accomplishments, those never listed as a title in the concert program, are eloquently expressed by one of Marblehead's High School singers. "There is no place in school where teamwork is as constant, nor where competition is entirely forgotten. Fun and hard work are braided within every moment; few other classes offer such an education. The greatest moments are when you realize that all of the sound around you, the tidal wave of awesomeness, exists only by the effort of everyone; Then you realize that without you and your singers, there would only and always be silence."