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RAD RENAISSANCE GRANTS CELEBRATE PITTSBURGH'S 250th

Through RAD, Pittsburgh has been celebrating the region's 250th birthday with more than a dozen "Renaissance Grant" projects that tied into the official theme, "Imagine What You Can Do Here.

RAD's Renaissance Grant program pairs the work of assets with students living and studying in Allegheny County to produce projects of real value to the community.

An update on projects:

Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area: Seeing Pittsburgh exhibit

Now on display at the Bost Building in Homestead, the Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area worked with 44 Pittsburghers, from age seven to 70-plus, to define their 11 Pittsburgh communities with photos and stories of their daily lives. The photographers used disposable, film, digital and even cell phone cameras to record their impressions. "The project exceeded our expectations," said Ron Baraff, curator at Rivers of Steel. "These photographers are seeing Pittsburgh today, not how it was, but what it means to be a Pittsburgher right now."

Saltworks Theatre Company: Imagining Pittsburgh through Plays

Kelsey Miller (age 13) of Beechview and Langston MacDiarmid (age 13) of Lawrenceville are budding playwrights at Rogers CAPA School in Pittsburgh who worked with Saltworks Theatre Company to write plays imagining what can happen in Pittsburgh - and won the opportunity to have their plays produced.

Appreciation, written by Kelsey, transports two disillusioned teenage girls to the Hill District of the 1930s and ultimately shows "you can do anything here and rebuild the riches in the city," according to Kelsey.

Dylan's play, Chauncey, is set in 1889 and features a gruff, humorous steamboat captain who is faced with the competition of trolleys and learns to accept change. "In Pittsburgh, I imagine not just what you can see, but also the growth and challenges that are here. I imagine growing here," said Langston.

Over the last six months, Rogers students researched the "imagine" theme, wrote their own drafts of plays, and worked with Saltworks staff and students on revisions. The winning plays were chosen from these efforts and will be produced on stage at Rogers CAPA in November.

Calliope Folk Music: When We Shine

The new CD When We Shine is the product of Calliope's Songwriting Project funded by a RAD Renaissance Grant. "When we shine in this city, we really do shine, whether it's helping our country to win a war with manpower and steel, inventing the air-brake, curing polio, or winning a sports championship," Calliope writes in the CD liner notes. "When the chips are down, this city always seems to rise to the challenge and brings out the best qualities that make Pittsburghers a unique, hardworking, humble, passionate, brilliant, and compassionate people."

The songwriting project teamed up veterans Rick Malis and Tom Breiding with Calliope Folk Music School graduates to collaborate on songs that "touch on our city's history, accomplishments, and unique character." The songs were also performed at Calliope's summer festival this past July.

Renaissance and Baroque Society: The Battle of Ft. Duquesne concert

The commissioned concert The Battle of Ft. Duquesne, highlighting the rich history of the historic battle, was presented in September. The Chris Norman Ensemble paired 18th century music with student actors from Carnegie Mellon University, who researched and read from works of the time.

Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh: Imaging Pittsburgh through Photography

Tom Morrison (now an 11th grader at Chartiers Valley High School) won "Best Achievement in Photography" in the Carnegie Library's annual high school photography contest, this year sponsored by a RAD Renaissance grant. All student photo entries will become part of the library's historic collection. Some of the photographs will be also be featured in a photo book Pittsburgh: 1758-2008 (a joint publication of Carnegie Library and the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette) to be published in November.