St. Thomas Boys Choir Helps Usher in the Holiday Season

BY STEPHANIE SIMON | NEW YORK CITY
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There is a boarding school in New York City where just a few kids learn to sing at the highest levels. You can hear them at services and concerts at St. Thomas Church on Fifth Avenue.

Inside the St. Thomas Choir School in midtown Manhattan, 25 talented students ranging from third through eighth grade are getting a rare educational experience.

"St. Thomas is unique in America," said Daniel Hyde, the director of music at St. Thomas Church. "We have cathedrals, colleges and choir schools in England, whereas here, we are the only one. It all revolves around the kids, and their singing and their schooling."

"We're trying to teach them a love of intellectual artistic things," Hyde said. "Our kids, some of them speak three different languages, and the music that we sing exposes them to maybe that fourth, fifth, possibly even sixth language. If they don't go on to be musicians, all our kids graduate the end of the eighth grade, and they get places at competitive high schools, often with good scholarships attached. So it's a life-changing start."

It is for Quinn Vanasco. Like all the boys, he sings 15 hours a week.

"It's a lot," he said. "And on top of that, we have homework and everything."

"It's hard but it's fun," said student Gio Mota. "Just the feeling of people like enjoying what I sing."

In addition to the big Handel's Messiah concerts, the boys choir performs at church services several times a week.