New music center on Central Avenue

IT’S TIME TO TAKE YOUR SEAT

The University of Memphis is completing the private fundraising effort to build the New Music Center for the School of Music on Central Avenue. The goal is to raise $10 million, which the State of Tennessee will match with an additional $30 million. As they approach the $10 million dollar mark, the School is offering the chance for everyone to dedicate a seat in the new Concert Hall.

The “Take Your Seat Campaign” presents the opportunity to have a nameplate on a seat in the orchestra or other premium section of the Concert Hall. Donors can also name a seat in honor of a family member, friend, faculty member, student, or anyone they wish to designate.

According to John Chiego, Director of the School of Music, “The ‘Take Your Seat Campaign’ gives everyone the opportunity to show their support for the University of Memphis and the Scheidt School of Music, and gives music lovers the chance to be a part of the future of Memphis music in a way that will last for many years. The Music Center will be Memphis’ new crossroads for every type of music. More than ever before, the Scheidt School of Music will be ‘Where the music is!’”

The naming opportunity is offered at two levels. At the $2,500 level, the donor will receive a nameplate on a seat in the orchestra section or other premium section of the performance hall. The donor’s name will also be included on a special Donor Wall recognition plaque which will be prominently displayed in the new facility. At the $1,000 level, the donor will receive a nameplate on a seat in the performance hall. All seats will be assigned in the order in which the gifts are received. To learn more about the campaign, or to dedicate a seat, visit memphis.edu/musiccenter/takeyourseat.php.

On February 9, the School presented a kickoff performance for the campaign titled Love Songs to Memphis which featured Joyce Cobb and the Southern Comfort Jazz Orchestra.

If you love music, get ready to
SIT UP
SIT BACK
SIT PROUDLY
Vocal Department Turns Up the Volume

The vocal department at the School of Music is having an eventful year that started with eight students performing with Kristin Chenoweth at the Orpheum. Chenoweth, the popular star with credits in musical theater, film and television, is an advocate of music education. She and her director thought it would be fun to bring in a college group to sing backup with her. Looking for a local school with a strong music program, she invited students from the UofM.

The vocal faculty wanted to involve graduates, undergraduates, performance majors, and music education majors. With short notice, the students worked with Opera Director Mark Ensley and had only one rehearsal with Chenoweth. The evening of the performance they sang in the last two songs of the evening, Upon this Rock, and I Was Here from Chenoweth's album, “Coming Home.” The students who had the honor of performing were Emily Newton, Michaela Nuss, Korynn Lacher, Phillip Bone, Daryl Tolbert, Robert Nunez, Gabriella Galletti, and Jacob Allen Paul.

In October the School of Music hosted the National Association of Teachers of Singing (NATS) regional auditions for over 120 high school and college level soloists. Voice faculty from the Scheidt School presented sessions on subjects that were of interest to singers. NATS was founded in 1944, and is the largest professional group of teachers of singing in the world with more than 7,000 members in the United States, Canada, and other countries. Professor Susan Owen-Leinert lectured on the composer Louis Spohr for the Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton. The title of the lecture was “The Forgotten Master” and it highlighted her publication of Spohr’s complete Lieder in 12 volumes.

Assistant Professor of Voice Mary Wilson, soprano, performed as soloist in Beethoven’s Symphony #9 with the Pacific Symphony in Orange County, California. Her CD and DVD of Handel’s Messiah with the American Bach Soloists in Grace Cathedral, San Francisco was released in November. She also performed the work at the University of Michigan, with the Portland Baroque, and with the Denver Colorado Symphony.

Dr. Randal Rushing recently returned from a recital tour with performances in Croydon, London and Regensburg, Germany, culminating in Memphis, with performances at Church of the Holy Apostles in Collierville and Rhodes College. Rushing performed the “Songs of Travel” of the well known British composer, Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958) at St Michael and All Angels Croydon, with Jane Gamble accompanying him on the Bluthner piano Vaughan Williams left to the church.

UofM students with Kristin Chenoweth

UofM students with Kristin Chenoweth

Students with Kristin Chenoweth

Attention high school students.

Audition dates for 2016-2017 have been announced.

Dr. Frank Shaffer to Retire

Frank Shaffer was born a percussionist. According to his mother, she had to pad his crib when he was six weeks old because he was always bumping his head against the slats in rhythm. By the sixth grade, he was playing in his school orchestra, conducted by Jan Longdon, a former member of the Pittsburgh Symphony. He was selected to represent the school in the all-city orchestra where he embraced himself because he had not yet learned to play the cymbals. “But I didn’t let that deter me,” he says. Being in the orchestra eventually led him to lessons with Eugene Fabrizi.

Later, while he was playing as an extra percussionist with the Pittsburg Symphony, Shaffer completed his bachelor’s degree at Duquesne University. He attended the Yale Summer School of Music and Art, where he was invited to audition at Yale as a master’s student. His studies there concluded in a DMA. The time was punctuated with stints with the New Haven and Bridgeport Symphony Orchestras, a folk-rock band called Joneri that did an 11-week USO tour in Asia and Australia, and his job teaching private lessons to children at the Neighborhood Music School and elsewhere.

In 1975, Shaffer accepted a teaching position at what was then the Memphis State Department of Music. At the same time, he became a member of the Memphis Symphony Orchestra, where Vincent DeFrank was conductor. He plays with the orchestra to this day and will continue after his retirement from the School of Music. In addition, he is active in the Percussive Arts Society, an international association, and is currently chairman of its health and wellness committee. The committee addresses repetitive motion and hearing issues and is committed to the prevention of injury among percussionists. Under his direction, the UofM percussion ensemble performed for the Society’s international conventions in 2001 and 2004.

According to Shaffer, the Scheidt School of Music has become more organized and focused over the years. He says, “We have made an effort to take a hard look at curriculum to make sure we are meeting the needs of our students. We’ve assembled a world-class faculty; there’s not a single weak link there. Our student orchestra is not only known as the best in the region, but for our size, one of the best in the country.”

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Joshua Palazzolo Wins Presser Award

The Presser Award, presented by the Rudi E. Scheidt School of Music, has been given to Joshua Palazzolo, senior violin performance major. The award and scholarship is the most prestigious and valuable scholarship prize of the many made by the school. According to the School’s Director John Chiego, “Joshua Palazzolo represents the highest level of academic and musical achievement of an undergraduate in the Rudi E. Scheidt School of Music. We are proud to name him as our Presser Scholar for this year.”

The Presser Foundation that funds the scholarship is one of the few private foundations in the United States dedicated solely to music education and music philanthropy. The award goes to the rising senior with the highest GPA who is also an outstanding musician.

Joshua has been playing the violin since age 5. He has studied with a violinist in the Detroit Symphony and in a pre-college program at Vanderbilt University. It was while at Vanderbilt that he learned about the violin faculty at the School of Music and became interested in attending college in Memphis. Since coming here he has performed with the Contemporary Chamber Players, the UofM Symphony Orchestra, and various chamber music ensembles. He is currently substituting in the Memphis Symphony Orchestra.

Joshua studies in the studio of Dr. Marcin Arendt. He credits his professors with teaching him how to play and how to approach music. He also acknowledges the great influence of the UofM Symphony Orchestra’s two assistant conductors, Kevin Sutterlin and Mathias Elmer.

Joshua says “Playing music is not about people’s expectations and how they rate you, it’s about what you can give to them.”

Marcin Arendt observes, “Joshua Palazzolo is a wonderful violinist and I am very happy to work with him as my student. I am not at all surprised that he earned the Presser Award. He is a hard worker who takes everything he does seriously. He is a talented interpreter of the music he performs, paying close attention to details while at the same time painting a complete picture. He is also a great colleague to his fellow U of M students. It is a joy to work with Joshua and I look forward to hearing many great things about his future.”

Wind Ensemble and Southern Comfort to Perform at GPAC

In March, the UofM Wind Ensemble and Southern Comfort Jazz Orchestra, the top two wind groups at the School of Music, take their distinctive sounds to the Germantown Performing Arts Center. The theme and title of the program is “Standards,” which will feature landmark pieces from both the big band and wind ensemble repertoire.

Southern Comfort will play selections from the Great American Songbook, such as Blue Skies, I Can’t Stop Loving You, and Poor Butterfly, as well as jazz big band classics from the Thad Jones and Gordon Goodwin jazz orchestras.

Dan Kalantarian will conduct the concert’s opening with The Grand Canyon Fanfare by James Newton Howard, transcribed by Mr. Kalantarian. The work is a musical representation of the expansiveness of the famous site. Dr. Armand V. Hall, III will conduct Blue Shades by Frank Ticheli, a piece that features quick shifts of syncopated rhythm, elements of blues, and a Benny Goodman style clarinet solo.

Dr. Albert Nguyen will conduct the Hindemith Symphony in B-Flat. A cornerstone in wind band repertoire, it was originally premiered by the U.S. Army Band (Pershing’s Own) with the composer conducting.

In addition to the “Standards,” the program will include the Tennessee premier of Don Grantham’s Tuba Concerto, performed with School of Music faculty member, Dr. Kevin Sanders. The UofM was one of several colleges and universities that formed a consortium to commission the work in an effort to increase the repertoire for tuba and wind ensemble.

The concert is scheduled for March 17 at 7:30
Groups and Ensembles

The University of Memphis’ student-run record label, Blue TOM, presented their annual fall music festival, This is Memphis, in October. The event featured some of the talented artists that attend the UofM, including Ben Callicott, Mary Owens, Drew Erwin, and the Bluff City Soul Collective.

Student

DMA candidate Geoff Durbin, trombone/euphonium, won an audition to become the newest member of the Presidio Brass Quintet. By combining a brass quintet, piano and percussion instruments with fresh, original arrangements, Presidio’s sound has become a trademark for the ensemble from San Diego, CA. Geoff is a student of John Mueller.

Micah Pounds, senior choral music education major, was a Berkshire Choral Scholar at the the Berkshire International Choral Festival in Massachusetts. Micah is a student of Ryan Fisher.

UofM music business sophomore Drew Erwin performed with Kelly Clarkson at the Verizon Arena in Little Rock. Drew is a student of Ben Yonas.

Congratulations to Chelsea Miller, soprano, on her first place finish in the Sara and Las Savell Vocal Competition of the Beethoven Club. Her win came with a $1,000 cash prize. Chelsea is currently in the Artist Diploma program where she serves as an Artist-in-Residence with Opera Memphis. She is a student of Mary Wilson. Congratulations also to alumna Trisha Phillips Huntley, soprano, on her second-place finish. Trisha holds both bachelor’s and master’s degrees in vocal performance from the UofM.

Emily Hinkle, junior vocal performance major, won first prize and Phillip Bond, sophomore choral music education, won second prize in the Undiscovered Tigers talent competition at the University of Memphis.

Naomi Ziegler, junior music education major, was recently elected to serve as the NAFME Collegiate West Tennessee President.

Lindsay Hammond, Jenny Henderson, Ellen Koziel, and Nancy Summitt, PhD music education students, presented research at the 2015 Mid-South Music Education Research Symposium at the University of Mississippi.

Winners of the 2015-16 School of Music Soloists Competition were Kimiko Yamada, euphonium; Mathew Palazzolo, cello; and Mary Love Himebook, flute. They will perform with the UofM Symphony and Wind Ensemble in the spring.

Alumni

Congratulations to former DMA student Natalie Bergeron, soprano, who made her debut with Theatro de São Paulo in the role of Elsa von Brabant in Wagner’s Lohengrin.

Natalie is a recent grant recipient from the Wagner Society of New York and a winner in the Liederkranz Wagner Division, which included a debut at Carnegie Hall’s Weill auditorium. Most recently she was seen as Maddalena opposite Marcello Giordani as Andrea Chenier with the Orchestra La Verdi Milano.

Six 2014-2015 BM and ME graduates were recently hired to teach in the MidSouth area: Dante Webb: Southwind High School; Nathan Dumser: Bolton High School; Jacqueline Cooper: A.B. Hill Elementary; Melanie Scarborough: Evans Elementary; Sam Schirmer: Horn Lake Middle School; and Kevin McKenzie: Northpoint School.

Dr. Jeffrey Murdock (UofM Ph.d. Music Education, 2015) was recently named Associate Director of Choral Activities at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville.

Faculty

Lenny Schranze, viola, was the Valade Fellow, Instructor of Viola, Coordinator of Strings and Advanced String Quartet Program, Interlochen Arts Camp, and faculty at the Interlochen Viola Institute. Recent performances included working with the Martha Graham Dance Company and performances with Marcin Arendt, Annie Fullard (Cavani Quartet at the Cleveland institute), and Astrid Schween (new cellist of the Juilliard String Quartet).

Dr. Jack Cooper, director of jazz studies and associate professor at the School of Music, is spending the 2015/2016 academic year serving as composer and arranger in residence with the Berlin Jazz Orchestra. He is collaborating with jazz artists Marc Secara and Jiggs Whigham, who co-direct the BJO. Dr. Cooper will also serve as visiting professor at the SRH Hochschule der populären Künste. Cooper’s Trombone Sonata is featured on the album Blues, Ballads and Beyond.

Jeff Cline, Associate Professor in the Music Industry Division, celebrated the album release of “Asumani: New Chamber Works by Kamran Ince.” As recording engineer, Mr. Cline had the pleasure of collaborating with Ince, and artists including LA Opera mezzo soprano Peabody Southwell and the PRIZM Ensemble. The album was released on the Albany Records label.

Cathal Breslin, professor of piano, was in Valencia, Spain as one of 10 international judges for the “Jose Iturbi” Valencia International Piano Competition.

An article that Dr. Ryan Fisher co-authored with Dr. Brian Silvey, was recently published in the current issue of the Journal of Research in Music Education. The title of the article was “Effects of Conducting Plane on Band and Choral Musicians’ Perceptions of Conductor and Ensemble Expressivity.”
Travel Provides Transformative Experience for Choir

This spring members of the University Singers and Chamber Choir will travel to Germany and Austria to perform and to experience a new culture. The trip begins in Munich, where they will give a concert in a cathedral, tour historic sights, and visit Dachau, just outside the city. Their next stop will be Salzburg, the birthplace of Mozart. Here they will perform in a small church outside the town where another group from UofM performed four years ago. The members of the church were so impressed, they asked the group to return for another concert. In Regensburg, they will sing in another large church.

One of the highlights of the trip will be a visit to Marktoberdorf, one of four castles that the Bavarian State has renovated to serve as music academies. The choir will rehearse there, experience a Renaissance dinner and travel to nearby historic sites.

According to Director of Choirs, Dr. Lawrence Edwards, “I have taken choirs all around the world…Scotland, England, China…and I think the reason these trips are worthy of our support is that it changes the world view of our students.” He believes the experience helps the travelers understand that there are similarities between cultures that transcend the differences. “When they first arrive,” he says, “they are frightened to be in a place where they don’t speak the language. But music gives them a vehicle for connecting to another culture. That connection and what it does to you as a person can’t be replicated in any other way.”

Edwards hopes to take 25-30 students, which means all of the UofM choristers will not be able to make the trip. The main reason for this is funding. The cost is $2,800 per student and many cannot afford it. There are some funds available from the University’s travel abroad program. Also, generous benefactors like Robert Yates and Charles Hubbert have helped students who needed extra funding. Both have been on tours with the choir and see the immeasurable benefit of travel. “My long term goal,” says Edwards, “is to do a tour with every member of the choir before I retire.”

Edwards ends the discussion by saying, “Music is the vehicle for connecting, but that is only half the experience. We see our students’ confidence increase. They just grow up a little over there.”

Focus on Friends of Music: Delores Kinsolving

A lifelong Memphian, Delores Kinsolving is a devoted alumna, arts educator and patron. With a thirty-year career in the Memphis public school system, she initiated numerous music programs that are still in place today. Today Delores focuses on strengthening the professional arts in Memphis. She generously invests her time by being a member of the Advisory Council for the Rudi E. Scheidt School of Music, the Board of Directors at GPAC and the Board of Directors for Opera Memphis.

According to Ms. Kinsolving, “I was privileged to sponsor Giovanna Maresta, an assistant Director at La Scala Opera Theatre in Milano, Italy, to come to The University of Memphis to stage and direct the opera Don Giovanni for the fall semester and back again to direct the Barberie di Siviglia during the spring semester. How exciting these experiences were!”

“Then in February, 2012, I also was privileged to be a sponsor of The Phantom of the Opera which was a sellout the entire run of the show. We were the only university that was given the rights to do the show… what a wonderful production! This production was presented by the U of M Rudi E. Scheidt School of Music and Department of Theatre and Dance.”

As an undergraduate, Ms. Kinsolving learned to play the cello during freshman year and went on to play in the Music Education Orchestra under the direction of Noel Gilbert. Learning to play the bassoon in her sophomore year, she played it in the University Orchestra under the direction of Paul Eahart. She shares that, “these were wonderful experiences of playing in an orchestra. We are so fortunate to have the University of Memphis right here in ‘our own back yard’ and to be the only University in the state of Tennessee to offer a Doctorate of Music degree.”

A lifetime member of the University of Memphis Alumni Association, Ms. Kinsolving is a longstanding supporter of the University’s opera program. She has generously made provisions in her estate plans to create The Delores Kinsolving Operatic Audition Endowment Fund as a lasting legacy of her devotion to her alma mater.
Moriah Drinkard Succeeds In Music Business

Moriah Drinkard, a 2015 graduate of the music business program at the UofM, has been named Director of Operations for the talent development complex of the Consortium Memphis Music Talent (MMT). The organization, founded by musician David Porter is a non-profit dedicated to developing a viable music industry in Memphis for the future. MMT provides young talent with education, insight from internationally successful music industry veterans, and real world experience.

The talent development complex will be a facility downtown for people who have been through the program and deemed emerging stars. The musicians will have access to a recording studio, stage, and choreography room. As Director of Operations, Moriah will be responsible for making each stage of the process work smoothly from the time a musician comes through the door until they are ready to launch their career.

Moriah learned of the position when she was recommended by another UofM music industry student, Matt White. She was thrilled upon learning she had been hired, saying, “I was always interested in David Porter and the Consortium. I’m just passionate about the cause.”

Looking back at how she got into the music business program, Moriah says, “I was a performer in a rock band when I was in high school. I wanted to be an artist and thought the music business program would help me in that career and also serve as a backup plan.” She says she really began to focus on artist management after taking a course in management, marketing and promotion. Her class project was to work with a local music group, assisting them in development and publicity. She even managed a crowd funding campaign for them that contributed to the production of a new album. She says the most useful skills she learned at the UofM were organization, time management, publishing, and copywriting, all of which will serve her in her new job.

Long term, Moriah hopes to take another shot at becoming an artist because she misses writing and making music. “For now, I feel successful by helping others to become successful.”

Southern Comfort and Jazz Singers Go To the Library

The Southern Comfort Jazz Orchestra and UofM Jazz Singers perform in many venues including the Levitt Shell, GPAC, and Harris Concert Hall. In November, they took the show to the Benjamin Hooks (Main) Branch of the Memphis Public Library as the first performers in the “Who’s Making Music in Memphis” concert series. The goal of the series is to give music students and the general public an opportunity to meet some of Memphis’ finest musicians and music industry moguls.

The concert featured a lecture portion before the performance and a question and answer after show. With this type of format the series gave important information to students who may want to pursue music as a career. And, for the general public, they had the pleasure of personal interaction with the performers. Participating in this series goes toward fulfilling the School’s dedication to taking its music off campus and into the greater community.

According to the Memphis Public Library’s Maria DeBacco, “The Rudi E. Scheidt School of music seemed to us to be a perfect partner for our series because we are looking for high quality performers who are willing to reach out to potential University of Memphis music students and the general public. We thought we would start the series off with a bang and what better ensemble than the Southern Comfort Jazz Orchestra to do just that.”

For the concert, UofM faculty members Sam Shoup and Tim Goodwin created a program dedicated to Memphis jazz musicians from the 1920s, ’30s, and ’40s. The first salute was to Jimmie Lunceford, former band director at Manassas High School and the first band director at a public school in Memphis. His big band was so renowned, they played at the Cotton Club in New York during its heyday. Southern Comfort performed several of his arrangements including Taint What You Do, It’s the Way That You Do It, Blue Heaven, and Stratosphere.

The second part of the program included arrangements by Gerald Wilson, a big band leader from Memphis who was popular in Los Angeles in the 1940s. The group rounded out the show with some classic Count Basie.

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For times and locations, please visit our website, memphis.edu/music or call 901.678.2541.