The old adage, "If you can't do, teach," does not apply in the NKU Department of Music. In fact, it's a source of pride in the department to have faculty who remain as committed to their own musical growth as to that of their students. All music professors actively play outside of NKU or are involved in one of the faculty ensembles on campus. "All full-time faculty at NKU have specific expectations in three areas: teaching, research/creative activity, and service," explains Dr. Kurt Sander, Chair, Department of Music. "In order to meet these expectations, our teachers must engage their field in the area of their expertise."

Music faculty are required to actively participate in their fields in several ways: performing, conducting, research, and composition. Sander holds himself to the same standards. "I am currently the director of liturgical music at St. George Russian Orthodox Church. While most of my creative energy is dedicated to music composition, I also appear on occasion as a bass/baritone soloist."

Sander believes that teaching and doing go hand-in-hand. "Teachers who are able to show a student the results of years of dedication can provide a real-life demonstration of what it means to work hard and achieve excellence," he says. "It's an obvious truth, that those who don't understand what constitutes greatness can never hope to teach it to their students."

During the first weekend in April, the NKU Department of Music Opera Workshop staged a full-scale production of Mozart's beloved Cosi Fan Tutte in Greaves Concert Hall. Performed entirely in English and billed under its English title (Women Are Like That) to increase accessibility to a wide variety of opera goers, the opera was a huge hit with audiences.

"We had good audiences for all the performances," says Gayle Grout, Professor of Voice. "[They] laughed at all the right places and even in ones I didn’t anticipate. Setting the opera in present time helped some people get into it more."

A cast of eighteen opera students, most of whom shared roles over four performances, began rehearsals last fall and were accompanied by a full orchestra. Kristen Whalen is a junior vocal performance major who played Dorabella for two performances, and she feels that the production was a valuable step in her career.

"It was enlightening," she says. "It helped me put into perspective what I want to do with my life."

Whalen enjoyed the positive feedback from the audience, as well. "Opera these days is not as popular," she explains. "[But] they were really receptive! Lots of laughs as opposed to yawning. It seemed like they were on the edge of their seats."

For Whalen and her fellow performers, the highlight came at the end. "[It was] the feeling afterward, the feeling of knowing I accomplished something so big," she says.
NKU Percussion Faculty Expands

NKU’s percussion program has seen terrific growth and expansion over the past few decades. So much so, in fact, that it recently became necessary to bring in two new faculty members. Scott Lang, Director of Percussion Studies and fourteen-year member of the Department of Music’s teaching faculty, speaks excitedly about the addition of Dan Dorff and Stan Ginn last fall.

“It’s very exciting to me, the fact that we’ve gone from two teachers here to four,” he says. “We were getting so busy here with the advent of the jazz degree and Brian Hogg’s great work, I was getting so swamped between my teaching job here and the work that I do off campus that we’re supposed to do as faculty, furthering our careers by being musicians.”

But bringing in Dorff and Ginn did more than just lighten some of the teaching load for Lang and fellow percussion professor, Dick Jensen. It also served as a great opportunity to teach, in-depth, a variety of percussion styles which are not included in the typical percussion curriculum. Dorff and Ginn both came to NKU with backgrounds in highly specialized instrumental forms, as well as their rich understanding of the more common and general percussion styles.

“Dan is just fantastic. He has the orchestral percussion training, and he’s a fantastic drum player and teacher, as well,” Lang says. “Then to show you how astounding Dan’s musical ability is, he plays as a rehearsal pianist for Cincinnati Ballet. I don’t know any percussionist that plays piano well enough to also make a living playing piano. That just blows me away.”

Dorff teaches applied drum set and jazz, as well as participating in the NKU Faculty Jazz ensemble.

Stan Ginn comes from a very different musical background than Dorff, and brings his own vast and varied skills teaching congas, bongos, and world hand drums, as well as directing the Steel Band. “Obviously my first goal is to graduate our students well-rounded, so they can leave here playing anything decently,” Lang says. “But as percussion has gotten so specialized, it’s really hard for one person to be able to be up enough on this and that and the other. So one of my goals has been to grow the program, and at that point, hire some people who can teach at a higher level on different instruments than I can. Dan is an example of that.”

Primarily, Lang extols the benefits of having Dorff and Ginn available to the students.

“The students are incredibly excited to have these four different people to learn from,” he says. “Dick [Jensen] and I keep shaking our heads when we hear these students playing hand drums better than we’ve ever played them. And they’ve only been taking lessons for a year. It’s just really exciting.”

Freshman Flutist Receives Scholarship Award

Freshman flute student Meaghan Spencer was awarded a scholarship from the Women’s Clef Club of Cincinnati. Each year, the club selects one music student from NKU and one from CCM for the scholarship, which helps cover academic expenses.

Spencer will have the opportunity to perform for the club at a special luncheon on May 4th. “Meaghan is doing really well. She’s a very bright student,” says Toni Sheffer, Preparatory Department Director. “The women of the club are very supportive of these young musicians, and they’re usually quite thrilled with the students and anxious to see them succeed.”

Spencer had no idea she was even being considered for the scholarship. “I was surprised!” she says. “Toni emailed me and said, ‘Congratulations, you’ve been chosen as the recipient of this scholarship!’”

At the moment, Spencer is selecting and preparing her music for the luncheon. “I’m thinking about playing Chaminade Concertino, or possibly Bach’s Sonata,” she says. “I’m also working on Hue’s Fantaisie.”

For young students like Spencer, opportunities like this are rare, but she understands the significance of having her hard work recognized. “I’m really excited to play in front of [the club],” she says. “And about just being able to perform in front of known musicians who can respect the music.”
Music Department Welcomes Grant Knox to Voice Faculty

When Grant Knox joins the music faculty at NKU in the fall, his students will be calling him “doctor”. Knox is gearing up to finish his doctorate from Northwestern University’s Bienen School of Music before packing up his life in Chicago for a move to Greater Cincinnati, where he’ll begin his first professorial job right here at NKU.

Knox is a gifted performer, having sung with a wide variety of prestigious organizations. But while he loves the stage, he knew he’d eventually move toward teaching. “I’ve always been interested in teaching,” he says. “I have a desire to teach and to mentor young singers. I never intended to be a full time performer. It’s always been my goal to combine teaching and performing.”

Knox is particularly excited about coming to live and work in Cincinnati. “I think the location is really great,” he says. “I’m really happy to be in an area that has so much to offer in the arts. We’re coming from Chicago, so that’s what we love.”

When he arrives, Knox promises to bring enthusiasm and a diverse skill set in his work with his private students and Opera Workshop. “I have very good piano skills for a singer, which is rare, and I hope that I’m able to use some of those skills in coaching and preparing my students,” he says. “I hope I can really try to build a personal relationship with my students. I think that’s important because singing is very personal and expressive.”

NKU Presents the 2nd Annual Jazz Festival

NKU jazz says hello to spring with the 2nd Annual Jazz Festival taking place over the weekend of April 29 & 30. Director of Jazz Studies Brian Hogg promises that audiences who attend both nights will “at the very least, get their money’s worth times ten.”

Hogg is excited about the impact the festival will have on both students and audiences, as some of the finest jazz musicians in the country perform with some of the most talented jazz students in the region. “It’s a chance [for the students] to see what it takes to play at the top level,” he explains. “If an audience member comes to both nights, they’ll be knocked out.”

Audiences have the option of attending one or both nights, with a nice price break for purchasing both nights. Tickets are available by calling the Fine Arts box office at (859) 572-5464.

Preparatory Department News

The Preparatory Department is busy as always. Fresh off a successful trip to Chicago for both the Youth Orchestra and the Youth Sinfonia, where the former placed third in a national field and the latter scored a 97% in their adjudication, the department is now preparing for the Children’s Choir’s Washington D.C. Memorial Day performance.

In addition to the extensive student performance schedule, the Prep Department is also planning a few things for the community. “We have a vocal pedagogy workshop that we’re doing in August for the local area teachers,” says Toni Sheffer, Preparatory Department Director. “It’s a chance for them to learn how to teach these young voices.” The conference will take place August 12th and 13th, and will be led by several voice experts, including NKU Professor Emeritus Nancy Martin.

Additionally, a fundraiser for the department is being planned for October. “It’s going to be a Bluegrass Bands Festival,” Sheffer says with a laugh. The three bands which will be performing are The Retread Bluegrass Band, My Favorite Bluegrass Band, and Vernon McIntyre’s Appalachian Grass featuring NKU alumni soloist Jenny Lee.

Information about these and other Preparatory Department events are available by contacting Toni Sheffer by phone at 859.572.7737 or by email at sheffer@nku.edu.
Alumni News

Rob White, Class of 1986
After graduating in May 1986 with a B.A. in music, Rob returned to Active Duty in the U.S. Army. He recently retired from Active Duty as a Lieutenant Colonel with a total of 33 years of military service. During his career, he was the 296th Army Band Master in Fort Benjamin-Harrison, Indiana and the Band Master of the 82nd Airborne Division Band in Fort Bragg, North Carolina. He had numerous tours in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Iraq. Rob just returned from one year as a contractor in Bagram, Afghanistan and now resides in Loveland, Ohio with his wonderful family. He is looking to getting involved with a local community band. Rob is also pursuing a career as a Teacher by working with the “Troops-To-Teachers” program. Rob says, “During my tenure at NKU as a student, there were [several] professors that really gave me direction. They were Steve Goacher, Dr. John Westlund, Dr. Jon Gresham, and my advisor, Dr. Phillip Koplow. I was able to pursue my love for music with the help of these fine educators.”

Gary Ruschman, Class of 1997
Gary studied voice at NKU, ending his time at NKU as an Outstanding Graduate in Music in 1997. He went on to earn his master’s degree with honors from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. Gary currently resides in Minneapolis and performs with Cantus, the nation’s only full-time, artist-led vocal ensemble. In addition to the recent release of his twelfth professional recording, That Eternal Day, Gary was named CityPages Classical Artists of the Year and Minnesota Public Radio’s Artists in Residence. He works nationwide as a clinician and teacher, as well as teaching and singing in underserved Minnesota communities.

More Exciting News!

} Russ Hinkle, adjunct bassoon professor, was recently honored when Mt. Healthy High School named its brand-new auditorium “Russell Hinkle Fine Arts Auditorium.” Hinkle has been directing music at Mt. Healthy for over forty years.

} Bass player Scott Patterson has been accepted to Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music with a substantial scholarship. Patterson was also offered a Graduate Teaching Assistantship from Texas Tech University. Congratulations, Scott!

} Flute professor Nina Perlove was named as the new Executive Director for the American Classical Music Hall of Fame.

We want to hear from you!

Alumni of the Northern Kentucky University Department of Music are part of the program for life, and we want to hear from you. Tell us about your life after graduation, whether it’s a musical or career accomplishment, a big move, or any other exciting news. Keep us in the loop!

How can you submit your information? Easy!

By phone: (859) 572-6399

By mail: Music Office
Northern Kentucky University
Fine Arts 253
Nunn Drive
Highland Heights, KY 41099
Schedule of Events

May

- May 6—Northern Kentucky Children’s Ensemble and Youth Ensemble in Concert
  7:30 p.m.
  Greaves Concert Hall

- May 7—Northern Kentucky Youth Strings
  2:00 pm. & 4:00 p.m.
  Greaves Concert Hall

- May 8—Mother’s Day Chamber Music concert
  7:00 p.m.
  Greaves Concert Hall

- May 8—Undergraduate Commencement
  1:00 p.m.
  NKU Bank of Kentucky Center

See you next fall!

May 2011

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Senior percussion student Adam Nurre plays the marimba with the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, March 2011.

Photo courtesy of Jonathon Eaton

The Faculty Jazz Ensemble rehearses.

Photo courtesy of Jonathon Eaton

Ben Knueven performs with the Brass Choir

Photo courtesy of Jonathon Eaton
Nota Bene

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For tickets contact:
Fine Arts Box Office
Phone: (859) 572-5464

Nota Bene is a great way for students and alumni to advertise their talents and services—free!

Send us your information (instrument, band or ensemble name, contact information, etc.) and we'll feature it here in the Talent Connection! Each issue of Nota Bene reaches over 1000 people. You never know where your next gig will come from!

Northern Kentucky University's Department of Music offers a full range of performance and education opportunities to music majors. Our graduates pursue successful careers as professional performers, college and university faculty, public school music teachers, private studio instructors and in allied fields within the music industry. Our students have been accepted for graduate study at such renowned institutions as the Juilliard School, Indiana University–Bloomington, The San Francisco Conservatory of Music, University of Wisconsin–Madison, Iowa State University, the Eastman School of Music, and the Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music.

This issue of Nota Bene was designed and edited by Jen Davis