Campaign for Distinction
Fine Arts Focus

In 1986, Pittsburg State University launched an ambitious capital campaign to raise $9,844,000 to meet critical needs. Since then, the University has realized about $5,500,000 toward that goal. As a result of the Campaign thus far, the University has established the O. Gene Bicknell Center For Entrepreneurship, the public radio station, KRPS, and completed Phase I of the renovation of Carnie Smith Stadium. In addition, the endowment assets of the PSU Foundation have almost tripled. Almost $1 million in endowed scholarship funds have been realized in the past two years.

As the Campaign moves into the next phase, attention will be focused on those components that have to do specifically with the Fine Arts: continued funding for Radio Station KRPS, the establishment of a University Art Gallery in Porter Hall, and the acquisition of a new organ for McCray Recital Hall.

From the very earliest years of formal instruction in music at Pittsburg State University, the organ has played a central and important role. The presence of first-rate instruments in both major performance facilities on campus insured that the organ would remain in the mainstream of the institution's musical activity. The large auditorium in Carney Hall was served by a four-manual Austin organ, an instrument that had been given a gala dedicatory recital by the renowned Pietro Yon in the year 1926. A smaller instrument in McCray Recital Hall was replaced, in 1957, by a 29-stop organ built by the Reuter firm of Lawrence, Kansas. This organ received an equally memorable dedication by the venerable E. Power Biggs.

The fortuitous combination of quality instruments and gifted artist/teachers such as Rose Buchmann and Martha Pate produced, over the years, an impressive number of very capable organ students. For some, the road led to advanced degrees or foreign study, and eventually, academic appointments and/or full-time church positions. Others have continued to make important contributions to their respective communities as part-time church organists and teachers of keyboard instruments.

While the Reuter organ has served admirably for more than 30 years, the time has come to make a major shift toward a new mechanical-action (tracker) organ. The world's leading organbuilders have, in the last 25 years, rediscovered the advantages—both artistic and practical—to this time-honored approach to organ construction. Any institution with a serious commitment to quality organ instruction must recognize the importance of providing such an instrument for its students and audiences. The new organ, of 35-40 stops and three manuals, will be housed in a hardwood case and will sit in the position now occupied by the Reuter organ.

An organ of this size and quality is a handcrafted, unique design that requires the skill and expertise of a master builder. An instrument large enough for McCray Recital Hall may be expected to cost approximately $500,000. The other Fine Arts components, mentioned above, will bring the cost of this phase of development to about $750,000.

The presence of a new tracker organ will make possible many far-reaching benefits. Beyond its primary role as the major instrument for PSU organ students, faculty, and guest artists, it will serve as a focal point for future workshops and symposia. The installation of a major new organ of this quality will attract national attention from the organ profession. Plans call for dedicatory festivities that will include a recital by an artist of international reputation. A major enhancement for the cultural climate of this region, it will help to create a positive image for the arts in Southeast Kansas. The presence of Radio Station KRPS opens many more opportunities for broadcasting and/or recording... both to its regular listening audience (estimated at 500,00 people) and, through recording and subsequent distribution, to public radio audiences across the country. Finally, it is expected that the presence of such an instrument will have a positive effect on the music programs of our region's churches, both through continuing studies for present organists and through the attraction of new, young musicians to this instrument.

The very best American organbuilders are, quite naturally, very much in demand. Their backlog of work usually translates into a waiting period of anywhere from four to six years. It is hoped that a builder will be chosen, and a contract signed, before the close of 1989. Alumni will be receiving further information about this project in the near future.
Millard Laing
IN MEMORIAM
—by Gene Vollen

Dr. Millard Laing (1912-1988) was chairman of the Department of Music from 1953 until he retired at the end of the spring, 1978 semester. For 25 years, Dr. Laing guided the affairs of the department and used his influence to assure that the highest level of excellence would be attained. With the exception of Robert Schott, Robert Kehie, and Susan Marchant, the current faculty joined the department during his tenure, and he was justifiably proud of the role he had played in bringing this kind of artistic expertise to Southeast Kansas.

A native of Colorado, Dr. Laing received his education from the University of Kansas, the Eastman School of Music, and the University of Michigan where he specialized in music literature. While music was his central interest, he developed expertise in many other areas. One such area, which surprised some who met him for the first time, was skiing. He became so proficient in this field that he was chosen to teach Alpine skiing to the troops during the Second World War.

A strong advocate of the standards established by the National Association of Schools of Music, Dr. Laing worked with the faculty to assure that Pittsburg State University had a vital and comprehensive music program. He felt, for instance, that the best way to encourage young people to study stringed instruments was to give them regular opportunities to hear live performances of the literature written for these instruments. To this end, he founded the Resident String Quartet and, in the process, provided specialized instruction, leadership in what is now the Southeast Kansas Symphony, and, of course, numerous opportunities to hear solo and chamber music performances.

It was through Dr. Laing’s leadership—and I might add, determination—that the Reuter organ was added to the stage of the recital hall. Typically, Dr. Laing chose the preeminent organist of the time, E. Power Biggs, to perform the dedicatory concert in 1956. In 1962, he installed a state-of-the-art recording system, so that performances in McCray Hall could be taped for broadcast. He also created the Listening Lab in Room 205; prior to this, the “lab” had simply been a phonograph in a large room. PSU's listening lab was one of the first to convert to cassette tapes as support material for listening assignments (1968).

In 1966, he and Jack Overman, among others, worked with Mrs. Bess Timmons to establish a non-denominational chapel on campus. Dr. Laing was always proud of his part in helping to convince Mrs. Timmons that a chapel would be an appropriate way to memorialize her family. In 1969, the first of the Annual Advent and Christmas Concerts was given in the chapel, which proved to be an admirable place in which to perform early music and chamber recitals—an idea that had been in Dr. Laing’s mind from the beginning.

As a specialist in music literature, Dr. Laing was the guiding spirit in the establishment of the Music in Humanities course that is so well remembered by PSU alumni. In order to better demonstrate to non-musicians the concept of structure in music, he invented—or further developed—the idea of graphic notation which, on one page, showed the organization of an entire movement, etc. He went on to publish this material, and several other schools used it as the text for their music appreciation courses.

Another example of Dr. Laing’s ability to read the “wave of the future” was his establishment of the first piano laboratory. This was an entirely new idea at a time when many larger and more famous schools were making do with a room full of acoustic pianos. This laboratory was eventually replaced with a newer version, but not until after it had served literally thousands of young musicians as a means to complete their background or get them started toward the serious study of music.

Dr. Laing had talents in the parallel arts as well. A fine wood carver, he constructed violins and other early stringed musical instruments. His interest in technology led him to design and construct a solar home, into which he moved prior to retirement. His technical know-how was profound, and what he did not know, he researched until he felt confident enough to try it.

Two things stand out in what is remembered. One is Dr. Laing’s great love for music. His colleagues used to say that he never heard a performance that he could not compliment, even when the performance was mediocre. We eventually realized that Dr. Laing was listening to the composer as much as he was listening to the performer and could come away having heard the genius of Mozart or Schubert, etc., which, when you think about it, is as it should be. The other remembrance is of his enormous vitality and reservoir of energy. There never seemed to be a moment when he was at repose. If he wasn’t hurrying someplace, he was busy thinking of what to do next. Nita, his wife of 45 years, described her husband’s energetic approach to life with these words: “Millard lived, right up to the moment he died.”
GROUP ATTENDS NAJE CONFERENCE

PSU jazz musicians, led by Professor Robert Kehle, attended the 16th Annual National Association of Jazz Educators In-Service Conference in San Diego, January 10-15, 1989. This was the largest student group representing the state of Kansas at the meetings.

Professor Kehle reports that, while most of the time was filled with clinics and concerts, there were several opportunities for sightseeing. Side trips included a visit to the famed San Diego Zoo and a brief excursion to Tijuana.

Performers and clinicians included household names from the world of jazz: the Badie Band, Take Six, Michael Brecker, Pete Christlieb, Matt Harris, Branford Marsalis, Rich Matheson, the U.S. Army Blues, Bill Watrous, Rob McConnell, and many others.

ROBERT SCHOTT HONORED

Professor Robert Schott, who will retire from Pittsburg State University this May, was honored at a banquet and concert offered by his students, colleagues, and friends on the weekend of March 4, 1989. Keith Lemmons (BME ’79) served as coordinator for the festivities. A full report will appear in the summer issue of PSU Music Notes.

SUMMER ‘89

A number of summer workshops and short courses will be available to interested persons this summer.

Annual Master Class in Solo Vocal Literature, June 4-9. Guest clinicians: Rudolph Felner, Richard Berry, Gene DeGruson, Nancy Jones. For information, contact Prof. Margaret Theunemann (316/231-7000, Ext. 4481)

Summer Music & Fine Arts Festival, June 11-16. Musical instruction and related fine arts activities for young musicians. For more information, contact festival director, Dr. Paul Carlson (316/231-7000, Ext. 4469)


Calendar of Events

March
21 Timmons Chapel Series: PSU Composers Concert, 8:00 p.m.
27 Pre-college Recital, Nicole Jordan, flute, 8:00 p.m.
28 Senior Recital, Li-Chun Kuo, cello, 8:00 p.m.
30 SA1 April Fool’s Concert, 8:00 p.m.

April
4 Joint Recital, Julianne Rivera, soprano, and Kirk Pemberton, baritone, 8:00 p.m.
6 Graduate Recital, Steven Edmund, piano, 8:00 p.m.
7 Waddell Chamber Music Competition, 6:30-10:00 p.m.
8 State Music Festival (Solo/Small Ensemble), all day
9 University Choir, 3:00 p.m.
11 State Music Festival (Large Ensemble), all day
13 Waddell Competition Winners Concert, 8:00 p.m.
14 Senior Recital, Glenna Howard, oboe, 8:00 p.m.
14 + Jazz at McCarthy’s, 9:00 p.m.-midnight
18 Collegium Musicum, 8:00 p.m.
20 Senior Recital, Megumi Fukuda, piano, 8:00 p.m.
23 *University/Centennial Choir Oratorio Performance: Haydn Lord Nelson Mass, First United Methodist Church, 3:00 p.m.
24 Graduate Recital, Kurt Duffy, violin, 8:00 p.m.

25 Timmons Chapel Series: Poetry Reading, 8:00 p.m.
27 *Performing Arts and Lecture Series: Bali Dance Troupe, Memorial Auditorium, 8:00 p.m.
28 + Jazz at McCarthy’s, 9:00 p.m.-midnight

May
1 Graduate Recital, Jeffrey Maynard, baritone, 8:00 p.m.
2 Senior Recital, Gina Kruger, piano, 8:00 p.m.
4 *Solo and Chamber Music Series: Thomas Stacy, English horn, 8:00 p.m.
6 Elementary Music Festival, all day
7 *SEK Symphony, with Thomas Stacy, English horn, Memorial Auditorium, 3:00 p.m.
11 4-State Festival Band, all day
11 4-State Festival Band Concert, 7:30 p.m.

June-July
(see separate article about summer workshops)

+Tickets required. For further information, contact the PSU Department of Music (316/231-7000, Ext. 4466)

+ Cover charge.

All events take place in McCray Recital Hall unless otherwise noted. Please consult local news media for any changes in the above information.

Successful Sequential Movement, June 12-15, 1 pm-4 pm. Joyce Medford, clinician.

Orff Schulwerk Training Course, Level I, June 19-30, 9 am-4 pm. Alexis Zolczer, guest clinician.

Music and You, K-8, Macmillan Textbook Presentation. July 6-8, 9 am-4 pm.

For information about the following two workshops, contact Dr. Gary Corcoran (316/231-7000, Ext. 4471):

Percussion for the Non-Percussionist, June 29-July 1. Dr. Gary Corcoran, clinician. Methods of teaching percussion for today’s band and orchestra; “hands-on” opportunities; marching percussion; teaching of rhythm.

Motivation: A Band Awards System, July 6-8, 9 am-4 pm. John Cheary, guest clinician. Motivation techniques; classroom procedures; grading; methods of rewarding achievement.
ALUMNI NEWS

A special thank you from Miss Campbell to all her former students who wrote to her following last issue’s article.

Ronda (Wyckoff) Bailey (MM ’81) is teaching at Fort Scott Community College, directing the band and teaching woodwind techniques.

Rolland Bushner (BM ’42) has retired from his long and distinguished career in Foreign Service. From 1946-62, he held diplomatic posts in Tokyo, Bangkok, Korea, Iran, and Indonesia. During the period 1963-87, he served as director of Committees on Foreign Relations for the Council on Foreign Relations, New York, NY.

Theobell Campbell (MS ’62) was honored by the Kansas Federation of Music Clubs as 1988 Music Educator of the Year. The award was presented at last spring’s state convention in Coffeyville.

James J. Collins (att. 1975) signed a contract with Awake Productions for one of his songs, later recorded and released by artist Perry Godfrey.

Gail Hamilton (MM ’78) was honored by the National Federation of Music Clubs as 1988 Handicapped Artist of the Year.

Carla (Alleger) Henson (BME ’77) continues to direct the orchestras at Riverton Schools, a post she has held for eleven years. She and her husband, Tim, have two daughters: Ashley, 22 months; Shelby, 8 months.

David Lowe recently sang in a performance of Amahl and the Night Visitors at Alice Tully Hall, New York. The performance was under the direction of the composer, Gian Carlo Menotti.

Deborah Pierce (BME ’79, MM ’81) received a tenured appointment as music cataloger/reference librarian at the University of Washington, Seattle. She continues to sing and play harpsichord in the area. In May, 1988, she gave a joint recital of Baroque music with Seattle soprano, Nedra Gaskill.

Don Siebers (MM ’74) and his wife, Tina (MM ’66) are teaching in the Des Moines, Iowa public schools. Don teaches strings at the elementary and junior high levels, and he serves as conductor of the Des Moines Area Junior Youth Symphony. He plays violin in the Des Moines Symphony and does extensive free-lance work as violinist/violinist in the area. Tina teaches general music and orchestra at the junior high level. Together Tina and Don work with the Southside Des Moines Elementary Orchestra. Their two children are active in the city’s youth symphony and chamber players.

Mindy Stevens (BS ’85, MS ’88) was married to Craig Cloninger at Pittsburg’s First United Methodist Church on September 24, 1988.

Iralene Swain (BME ’70, MM ’72) has been engaged to sing the role of Serena in Gershwin’s Porgy and Bess in West Berlin, February 15 through April 15.

Jo Anne (Young) Taylor (BME ’77) is pursuing a master’s degree in music education at UMKC Conservatory, while teaching vocal music at the Kansas City Academy of Learning, a private, alternative school. She continues to perform with the Schola Cantorum of Kansas City and the Choral Arts Ensemble.

Mary Lynn (Hamilton) Walker (BME ’74) is still on staff at Buhler Grade School, where she works with 396 children on a daily basis. She continues to give private piano lessons at home and has started helping with two children’s choirs at her church.

Heather Williams (BGS ’82) has moved, with her husband and two children, from San Diego to Tucson, AZ. She will be working with the Public Defenders office and plans to play in the Southern Arizona Symphony, a local community orchestra.

Helen (Aiken) Wyatt (BM ’64, MM ’68) lives in Los Angeles. She left her position in Long Beach, where she was in charge of an at-sea civilian college faculty for 28 Navy ships. She is very active as an author and has been published widely in newspapers, trade journals, and other sources. Helen continues to sing in a 40s Big Band part-time. She is frequently a guest soloist in Long Beach churches.

Obituaries

Hans Beerman, emeritus professor of foreign languages, February 6, 1989 in Sarasota, FL. A vigorous supporter of activities in the Department of Music, Prof. Beerman was well-known for his wit and his impressive recall of musical facts and figures.

Gus Dean Dittman (att. ’50s), January 28, 1989, in Los Angeles, CA, of a diabetes-related stroke. An actor/singer whose career had taken him to Broadway as well as Hollywood, he was the recipient of an Obie Award for his role in The Cradle Will Rock. He sang the national anthem for three American presidents; he also had command performances for the kings of Norway and Sweden. Recent television roles included appearances on Chees, Who’s the Boss, and Designing Women. Memorial services in Frontenac were held on February 18, 1989.

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED