From the Podium

Dear Friends,

It has been far too long since our last newsletter. You’ll see as you peruse this one that a lot has happened.

In all honesty, much of what is reported in these pages is just from this year because it has been a watershed for us in fine arts. Not only did we spend the first season in our new building, the Rozsa Center, but we had a calendar change from quarters to semesters. That brought many schedule changes along with it, so we instituted our new curriculum, featuring many new opportunities for our students in the arts.

There is no way we can report on everything here, but you’ll read about some of the highlights. It has been a year full of them! There is a whole new energy in the fine arts at MTU these days. We finally have some of the tools and facilities to do justice to the efforts and talents of our students. We couldn’t be more excited about this year and the future.

We ended our season of concerts with two performances of Carl Orff’s colorful Carmina Burana for chorus and orchestra. It was a sensational finale to a sensational season. In the audience at the last performance was the first concertmaster of the Keweenaw Symphony Orchestra, Philip Raker. He was already an upperclassman when the group was formed thirty seasons ago and hadn’t had a chance to hear a concert since. As I spoke to him afterwards, I could tell that he was proud of what he and others had begun so many years ago. It probably seemed like tough sledding at the time, yet his investment of time, talent, and energy has yielded great results over the long haul.

I invite you to come see, in the next season, what your efforts as a student musician at Tech mean to the students and community today. You will be proud of the heritage you helped build.

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Officers and Staff

Student Directors for 2001-2002
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Carrie Majkrzak

Percussion Coordinator
Andy Wynn

Pep Band Manager
Nathan Erickson

Music Librarian
Nathan Ferrier

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Thanks to our outgoing president and vice-president Len Schmidt and Cyn Oszust for a job well done!

Thanks also to former SD Andy Barnes, former PB manager Joe Baker, and former music librarian Jared Klenow.

Of course we couldn’t function without fine arts administrative aide Karen Snyder and secretary Carol Frendewey.
Henry Charles Smith

Henry Charles Smith brought an international reputation and a wealth of experience as a performer and educator to the Band Festival in its first year. As associate conductor of the Minnesota Orchestra, he conducted more than 1,000 concerts, and he played more than 2,000 concerts as principal trombonist with the Philadelphia Orchestra under the batons of Eugene Ormandy and others. With the Philadelphia Brass Ensemble, which he founded, he received three Grammy nominations and won a Grammy for Album of the Year, Classical. His recordings and editions are internationally known.

Smith was music director of the World Youth Symphony at Interlochen for 16 years and conductor of the Young Artist Orchestra at Tanglewood. He has been on the faculties of the Curtis Institute of Music, Indiana University, Temple University, St. Olaf, Luther, and Bethel colleges, the University of Texas, and Arizona State University. Guest conducting appearances include the Detroit Symphony, Phoenix Symphony, San Antonio Symphony, St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, Indianapolis Symphony, orchestras in Edmonton, Tucson, Delaware, Oregon, Dallas, and Kansas City, and, most recently, the National Symphony Orchestra in Washington, DC. He is currently music director of the South Dakota Symphony.

Tech’s New Band Festival: See a Need – Provide a Service

One of the highlights of any high school band’s year is Band Festival, a chance to play for a panel of professionals who can tell you what you are doing well and what needs work, and the opportunity to hear other groups play as well. Once you get to college, you seldom have that opportunity, at least not as part of a concert band.

Wind Symphony conductor Jeffrey Bell-Hanson always thought that was a shame, especially in a school where geography makes it difficult to hear what students are doing at other colleges. "When we finally knew the Rozsa Center would be built," says Bell-Hanson, "one of the first projects I wanted to tackle was to start a festival for bands like ours. Students (and their directors) in the big music schools will occasionally have the opportunity to play at a directors’ convention of some kind, but those opportunities are few and far between and can be taken advantage of only by the very top bands. For smaller schools like ours, especially non-major programs, that isn’t practical."

Bell-Hanson started small by asking colleagues at other upper Midwest universities to share concerts. After exchanges with University of Wisconsin-LaCrosse and with Northern Michigan University, the time finally came for the new building to open. Michigan Tech hosted the first festival on March 30 and 31, featuring the NMU Symphonic Band and Tech’s Wind Symphony. Guest clinician Henry Charles Smith heard and worked with both groups and also conducted a festival band comprised of members from both ensembles. James Bicigo, the director of bands and low brass teacher from University of Alaska-Fairbanks appeared as trombone soloist with the Festival Band.

"It was a small start but a great success," Bell-Hanson said. "Everyone felt that it was an extremely valuable weekend for the students and conductors." Bicigo was impressed enough to reserve a spot for his own band for next spring.

New Band at Tech

The Campus Concert Band took its place this spring alongside the Wind Symphony, the KSO, and the Huskies Pep Band as the newest ensemble on the Michigan Tech campus. Designed especially with Pep Band members in mind, the CCB offers the opportunity for participation in a concert band without the demands of a yearlong rehearsal and concert schedule on top of an already busy athletic calendar; the rigors of preparing for an audition, and the heavy technical demands that the Wind Symphony and KSO tend to make on members.

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2000-2001 Season Highlights

October 5-7—Official Dedication Events for the Rozsa Center for the Performing Arts, and the world premiere (KSO) of Milt Olsson’s Celebration for chorus and orchestra.

October 22—Keweenaw Symphony Orchestra’s first full concert in the Rozsa Center, featuring guest pianist Andreas Klein on the new Steinway “D” he helped the fine arts department find.

October 22-29—“Bulgarian Week” at Michigan Tech began when the KSO played the regional premiere of movements from Classic and Romantic, a suite by Bulgarian composer Pentscho Vladigerov. Guest flutist Natasha Uzunova and clarinetist Michael Deynov Ivanov of the Vratsa State Philharmonic Orchestra in Bulgaria were in residence all week, giving programs in local schools, speaking and playing at Tech Tea Time, giving a solo recital, and, finally, performing with the Wind Symphony on the Rozsa Center stage October 29. Group Bulgarí, part of the Bulgarian National Folk Ensemble, performed a concert of traditional Bulgarian music in the Rozsa Center on Monday, October 23.

October 29—Return of Band-a-Rama! One of the music division’s favorites was reinstated after a fourteen-year hiatus. The Wind Symphony, the Jazz Lab Band, and the Huskies Pep Band took over the stage of the Rozsa Center for a fast-paced collage of music and fun.

November 3—The Jazz Lab Band, R & D Jazz Band, and the Echoes from Heaven Gospel Choir joined forces for a new community favorite, the annual Jazz and Gospel Showcase.

December 10—Milt Olsson led the KSO and the Concert Choir in another world premiere, Olsson’s own Mass, composed during a recent sabbatical leave, and the community favorite, Messiah, by George Frederick Handel.

December 15—The Wind Symphony returned to McArthur Theatre (formerly Walker Theatre) for a pre-commencement holiday concert. Featured as soloist was local soprano Mary Jane Cargile, joining the WS for a new transcription of the “Pie Jesu” from the Requiem by Gabriel Faure.

February 24—The Jazz Lab Band, the combo Jaztec, and the Frank Mantooth Quartet join forces for the world premiere of a newly commissioned work. The occasion was the annual Black History Month Jazz Concert.

March 15-18—The First KSO Concerto Competition culminates in a series of events, including a solo recital by the three winners, rehearsals, and a recording session with the KSO, and concerto performances with the orchestra. Our winners were Eunice Keen, violinist and high school junior from Northfield, Illinois; Elizabeth Chung, cellist and eighth-grader from Schaumburg, Illinois; and Ashu Kejarival, senior saxophone major from Northwestern University. These young people were chosen by recorded audition from among fifty-four entrants representing the entire upper Midwest.

March 30-31—The First Michigan Tech College Band Festival featured clinic sessions for each participating band with guest conductor/clinician Henry Charles Smith and a special combined Festival Band concert on the Rozsa Center stage conducted by Smith.

New Band at Tech

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Rehearsals for the CCB began spring semester 2001. They were scheduled to fit into the Pep Band rehearsal slot one day each week until the end of the semester. After spring break, the group rehearsed twice each week.

Years ago, the Pep Band became a concert band during the third trimester. Unfortunately, that meant those who wanted the concert band opportunity but couldn’t commit to the Wind Symphony (Symphonic Band in that time) had to wait until March. The new calendar allows us to offer this program sooner in the year without derailing the Pep Band schedule. It also allows new students who hesitated or had schedule problems in the fall to get involved in the second semester without having to try to fit into an existing ensemble. We’re all starting from the beginning together, with time to really make a lot of progress.

With about fifty members, the CCB played its debut concert for a small but appreciative group of senior citizens at Algonquin retirement community. The buffs, there are plans next season to share a concert in McArthur Theatre with the Wind Symphony. Jeff Bell-Hanson conducted the group this spring. Next year, the new Pep Band director will hold the baton.
Bell-Hanson Hangs Up his Stripes

Saying, "It's been a great ride," Jeff Bell-Hanson closed his remarks at the end of his last awards banquet as director of the Huskies Pep Band. During the banquet, held each year by the DaWGs student organization of the Pep Band, band members presented the outgoing director with several mementos of his era with the band. The largest was a thick quilt which included panels from all of the sections, and even a pair of the old stripes.

Bell-Hanson is the third director of the Huskies Pep Band since it became an independent ensemble around 1969. Don Keranen was the first, and Michael Griffith took over about a decade later. Bell-Hanson first led the Pep Band in 1986 during Griffith's sabbatical leave. He returned to take the reins permanently in fall 1989.

The history of the band actually goes back much further, even beyond the 30-year tenure of Don Keranen’s predecessor B. Franz Schubert. Schubert’s band, however, was a single unit that played for athletic events, performed concerts, and even played for ROTC ceremonies. The band really gained its national reputation after it became just the Pep Band and began dressing in its trademark striped overalls.

Bell-Hanson has taken the traditions of the band seriously during his tenure as director. He spent nearly three years trying to find a way to replace the original, worn-out stripes. As important as they are to the band’s image, he considers it time well spent. Even so, he has tried to build the band’s future. He initiated the DaWGs organization in 1991 as a way to help maintain esprit de corps at a time when some of the traditional incentives for band members (like free admission to athletic events) were no longer so attractive.

"My smartest moves as director were usually not my initiatives at all," Bell-Hanson said. "The best moments were when I could get out of the way and let the students really take the lead. The addition of a percussion coordinator to the band staff came about because a student (Ryan Johnson) with lots of drum corps training and experience took the initiative to really improve our inventory and playing traditions. I was smart enough to get out of his way and help him as much as possible."

The Department of Fine Arts is continuing its search for a Pep Band director/music technology specialist. The new faculty member will direct both the Pep Band and Campus Concert Band and oversee the development and operation of the department’s new computer lab.

Jazz pianist Jack Reilly, music educator and composer of Orbitals, the new concerto to be premiered in October by the Keweenaw Symphony Orchestra.

World Premiere!

Get ready to chalk up another big accomplishment for the fine arts department at MTU. This fall, the Keweenaw Symphony Orchestra will usher another new orchestral work into the repertoire, this one composed especially for the orchestra by New York composer Jack Reilly. The piece, Orbitals, for jazz piano trio and orchestra, was commissioned to commemorate the opening of the orchestra’s new home, the Rozsa Center. The premiere performance will feature Reilly at the piano, Richard Simon on bass, and Paul Kreibich at the drums.

The trio’s performance with the KSO will be the grand finale of a week-long symposium at MTU on jazz and classical music. The week will feature special master classes by the trio, open rehearsals, a lecture-demonstration on the music of Bill Evans, a topic in which Reilly is one of the foremost experts, a public recital, and an appearance at Tech Tea Time, a popular University forum held on Wednesday afternoons.

Reilly is no stranger to the KSO. In 1993, the orchestra premiered his variations for orchestra, ‘Chuang-Tzu.’ Though well-suited for the KSO, it was not written especially for the orchestra. Music Director Jeffrey Bell-Hanson calls it serendipity that Reilly and the KSO found each other for that occasion. Mr. Reilly was present at the premiere, and performed a solo jazz piano recital while he was in Houghton, but there was no part for him to play with the orchestra on that occasion. Four years later, when the KSO performed a Michigan premiere of Reilly’s Concertina for jazz piano and orchestra, the composer was unable to make the journey to Houghton.

This time, composer and orchestra will finally have the opportunity to make music together. Not only will Reilly play the solo piano part in his own piece, he’ll perform George Gershwin’s popular Rhapsody in Blue in the same concert.

This occasion marks the coming together of several important aspects of the University’s fine arts programs. First, it acknowledges the tremendous development of the KSO during its thirty-year history. Second, it brings the orchestra together with the Jazz Studies Program, headed by Mike Irish, in a way that showcases the

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Huskies Pep Band Poised for the Future

Everyone could see it, hear it, and feel it this year. There is a renewed fire in the Huskies Pep Band as it enters the new millennium. As they retire current director Jeff Bell-Hanson and prepare for new leadership in the fall (See “Bell-Hanson Hangs Up his Stripes”), everything is looking positive. Even the bank account of the DaWGS Organization is way up. (The president has requested a special prosecutor to check that out.)

Things just seemed to click for the band last fall with new members. There was a lot of fresh talent in the group. Combined with the strong commitment and leadership of the returnees, the band has been one of the peppiest in a long time—and that’s pretty peppy!

There has been a lot for the group to be excited about. There is a new rehearsal room and some new equipment to go with it. They have great student leaders, as always. Ward Rietz and Andy Barnes led some barn-burning performances this year. The group put on a fantastic show in the Rozsa Center at the Band-a-Rama in October, and the teams have been giving them a lot to cheer about. Anyone who saw the GLI this year knows what a memorable set of games that was!

The band’s reputation is now spreading in Europe as well. When Bulgarian musicians Natasha Uzunova and Michael Deynov Ivanov visited Michigan Tech in the fall, they quickly became fans of the Pep Band. They had never seen anything like it, but they knew right away that there was something special about this group. As Natasha said, "I lohv dees Pep Bahnd!" The two took a videotape of the Band-a-Rama home with them and have shown it to colleagues and friends in Bulgaria. The country may never be the same.

Though he knows he’ll miss some of the excitement next year, outgoing director Bell-Hanson is pleased to be handing over such a strong, vibrant group to his new colleague. "Whomever is finally chosen to lead this group for the next dozen years or so is going to have a wild ride and a lot of fun in the process!"

What’s Needed

Here are some of the projects that still need support:

- **Orbitals**—Newly commissioned concerto for jazz trio and orchestra in commemoration of the opening of the Rozsa Center. (See “World Premiere!”) Commission Fee: $10,000; Preparation of score and parts: $6,000
- New set of quad-toms for the Huskies Pep Band—approximately $600
- Two to three new or reconditioned Sousaphones—approximately $2,500 each
- Two concert French horns (F-B-flat)—approximately $2,800 each
- One four-valve euphonium—approximately $3,500
- Support for ensemble travel: concert tours, away athletic events

You may send your tax-deductible donation to the Michigan Tech Fund. Make sure you designate your donation for the support of the band and orchestra program in general, for a specific ensemble, or for one of these projects. As always, thank you for your support. We could not continue to offer excellent arts opportunities without you.

New Websites

The band and orchestra program will soon increase its presence on the World Wide Web. For years, we have been represented solely by the eye-catching DaWGS website, originally designed by Bill Binder, and now maintained by Jenn DeForge. Though it represents the Pep Band well, it says little or nothing about the rest of our fine ensembles.

You can now read about the Wind Symphony, the Keweenaw Symphony Orchestra, and the new Campus Concert Band on their own pages. The pages for the Wind Symphony and KSO even include pictures and sound files! Those features will be added to the Campus Concert Band page in future seasons.

What is really significant is that prospective students can now request information about these and other fine arts programs with an on-line form designed by FA faculty member Deb Bruch. It’s easy and, best of all, it’s available yearlong, not just during the summer when we have the most time to initiate contacts with students.

The addresses of these new pages are not available at the time of this writing. However, you can easily find them by visiting the fine arts department website at <www.fa.mtu.edu>.

What’s New

There is a lot of new stuff around the band room these days. Of course the band room itself is new! Here are a few of the items that the University and you have helped us acquire:

- Steinway D nine-foot grand piano for use on stage in the Rozsa Center
- A Baldwin nine-foot grand piano—donated for use in the rehearsal room by Richard Brown
- New, state-of-the-art timpani from the American Drum Company (five drum set)—to be delivered later this summer
- New Ludwig bass drum in suspension stand
- New chau gong and stand
- Cases for all of the Sousaphones
- New percussion cabinet and trap table—maple finish
- New Venus concert harp
- Many new digital and acoustic pianos for the Rozsa Center practice rooms, rehearsal rooms, and offices
- Ten computer workstations for the Concept And Music Laboratory (CAML), the computer lab of the Fine Arts Department. Four are PC-based, and six are Mac-based with MIDI keyboards.
Minors Available

It is now possible to minor in music at Michigan Tech. Three new minor programs became available this fall along with all of the other curricular changes at the University. Students can now receive a General Music minor, a minor in Music Technology (especially focused on music and computers), and in the jazz idiom.

These minors only became possible with the addition of a full-year music theory sequence. So far, the theory courses are extremely popular. We have a waiting list for next year, and some people are already planning to take the course the following year. We are adding a section of Music Theory I in fall 2001 to accommodate extra students.

While only a few people have declared music minors so far, we know many will do so in the next year. We graduated our first music minor, James Roell, this spring. Appropriately, Jamie, also our Fine Arts Award winner in music this year, was chosen to play the national anthem at commencement on the alto saxophone.

World Premiere!

importance of this unique American musical genre to the classical music of our time. Finally, it involves the University Campus Enrichment Program (Valerie Pegg, director), sponsor of the trio’s residency through the generous support of the James and Margaret Black Endowment. The KSO also receives some support for guest artists and for the commission fee from the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs.

Even with all this support, a commission is an expensive business. Funds are still needed to help pay the considerable costs of producing and copying the score and parts for the orchestra (estimated at around $6,000) and for the commission fee of $10,000. Bell-Hanson believes that it is well worth the cost. A commissioned work carries the name of the commissioning orchestra forever. "Whenever anyone plays this piece, they'll know that they have the KSO and Michigan Tech to thank for making it possible," said Bell-Hanson.

Moreover, it demonstrates in a dramatic way the synthesis of mind and soul that Michigan Tech tries to facilitate for all of its students. Finally, it honors the efforts of everyone who worked hard in the last thirty seasons to make this orchestra a success. From a certain perspective, this accomplishment stands out among the many milestones in Tech’s history. Bell-Hanson said, "When we can build a better auto component or patent a new chemical process, it's a major accomplishment, but when we can also give a new symphonic work to the world, something many college and university orchestras have never done, that's news."

If you would like to contribute to this project, make your donations to the Michigan Tech Fund. Be sure to earmark your gift for the "Keweenaw Symphony Orchestra," and include a note that it is to be used for Orbitals.