

open doors

AND LET THE MUSIC FILL THE AIR

After being on the brink of extinction, DC's music program is experiencing a revival on campus



by Debbie Richard, '02, '04, Assistant Director of Marketing

“Defiance was on the forefront of shutting down its music program. Now, I’m pleased to say, it’s on the forefront of bringing it back,” said Andrew Schultz, director of music programs. Just finishing his first year, Schultz has a laundry list of successful first-year accomplishments signifying the return of the arts at Defiance College.

In the mid-90s, Defiance administrators were forced to make the painful decision to drop performing arts programs due to declining enrollment and financial challenges. In recent years, a concerted effort to reinstate those programs resulted in the formation of a committee and establishment of “Raising the Curtain: The Performing Arts Initiative at Defiance College,” a three-year start-up effort.

Fundraising efforts began in 2008 with a three-year goal of raising \$50,000 each year to begin revitalizing the performing



Andrew Schultz, director of music programs, leads initiatives to revitalize the College's music programs.

arts program. Successfully reaching the goal, Schultz was brought on to begin the initiatives set forth in the plan. It's been a great first year.

The Concert Choir began the 2009 fall semester consisting of 35 members, including DC students, faculty and staff. The choir made its debut during President Gordon's inauguration in October, with a follow-up concert the next day during the Celebrate DC Homecoming dinner. Both events were well received. The choir wrapped up the fall semester with a holiday choral concert at St. John United Church of Christ, which included special guests from the Northwest State Community College Choir.

Defiance College opened up the Concert Choir to the community for the spring semester and increased its members to 60 voices. In April, the choir performed John Rutter's "Requiem," accompanied by a chamber orchestra consisting of musicians from the college and community.

Also in the spring, the college created the Chamber Singers. This group was created to serve as an all-student group with practices during the day instead of the traditional evening schedule. This group debuted with two performances – first for the Women's Commission spring brunch and again in April with the musical variety concert which included the student-led DC String Ensemble and local community band Brass Works.

Along with the performance side of the program, the new performing arts initiatives also include an Intro to Music class as well as a one-credit, individual voice lessons class. Both classes will be offered beginning in the fall 2010.

Overall, it has been a very successful start for the returning arts. Schultz agrees, adding, "Students learn more than just music and notes in choir. They learn languages, to come to practice, to be a leader while working with others, and they learn that just one individual voice doesn't predict the outcome, it takes everyone around them."

Schultz also believes Defiance is an amateur-friendly town which helps with the success of other initiatives that make up the performing arts: theatre, pep band and the community band.

The DC Players, a college and community group, performed "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum" and "Steel Magnolias" in newly-renovated Schomburg Auditorium. "You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown" was performed at the Arts and Media Center as well as in condensed version at Defiance Elementary School.

In its second year of activities, the pep band is home to an eclectic group of musicians who have already enthusiastically played at the home football games, marched/rode in the Defiance Community Halloween Parade, and played at many of the home basketball games. The pep band became an official student organization in 2009 and will continue its college spirit during the 2010-11 academic year sporting events.

The Defiance College Community Band, led by Dr. Vincent Polce, was also in full swing during the year with well-attended concerts and musical selections that were crowd-pleasing. The performances include a concert on Veterans' Day with a cameo by the Concert Choir, a Christmas concert, and the annual Cabaret at the college, which was highlighted by a delightful array of desserts and beverages by DC's Sodexo dining services. The band also made a special appearance at Latty's Grove Park in early June for the Music in Your Parks series.

After a successful year, the upcoming academic year is sure to be even better. Performances are already in the works with plans for the pep band to perform at home football games and the DC Players to perform "H.M.S. Pinafore" on Oct 21-24 in Schomburg Auditorium.

Another addition to the performing arts program is the performance of Handel's "Messiah," previously directed by Dr. Richard Stroede. After his passing in May, this important event was transferred to the care and directorship of Schultz who has integrated it into the Concert Choir's curriculum. The seasonal favorite is scheduled to be performed in early December 2010.

A round of applause goes out to the "Raising the Curtain" initiative for bringing back the performing arts. While the first year has been a success, it is important to know that all programs are continuously fundraising to help sustain themselves. The performing

SAMPLING OF 2010-11 PERFORMANCES

Oct. 21-24	H.M.S. Pinafore performed by DC Players
Nov. 6-7	High School Honors Choir
Nov. 11	DCCB Veterans Day concert
Dec. 5 or 12	Messiah
Dec. 7	Holiday Concert
March 19	DCCB Cabaret Concert

arts program is wrapping up its second year of fundraising and steps into its third. If you would like to make a contribution to this successful program, please contact Marcia Mohre in the Office of Institutional Advancement at 419-783-2308.

Performances will be announced on the DC website, Defiance College Facebook page, and the DC calendar as information is available. ♦

Before his untimely death in May, Dr. Richard Stroede, longtime music professor and administrator, was able to participate in the movement to reinstate the arts at DC.

"In my forty year career at DC, it was my joy to help our students continue their participation in the performing arts--but my most rewarding moments came when I witnessed a student without such a background discover the distinctively enriching and humanizing nature of the arts. I believe in the value of the arts in life, whether for pure enjoyment or soul-mending therapy. The most tragic time in my career was when--for very practical reasons--DC was forced to lose most of what had been a century-old tradition in the arts. At this point in the College's development, I can think of nothing more important than assuring that future graduates of our beloved institution will take with them an understanding of what the performing arts can mean to the depth and richness of their life experience as well as a commitment to foster the arts in their own families, careers, and communities."

Dr. Richard Stroede,
Academic Dean Emeritus