Létourneau Organ Finds New Home in the School of Public Health

On December 4, a gala reception and concert featuring performances by organ faculty Michele Johns, James Kibbie, and Marilyn Mason was held in the new Community Meeting Room at the School of Public Health. The occasion was to unveil the newly installed James Walgreen Organ, relocated to this beautiful new space at the SPH, a stunning two-story atrium filled with natural light, from its former home in the School of Music, Theatre & Dance. The first organ to be built for the U.S. by the Quebec firm Orgues Létourneau, the 702-pipe instrument was originally displayed at a convention of the American Guild of Organists in 1990. Through a generous gift from James Walgreen to honor his parents Jean and Charles, the School acquired the organ in 1994 and installed it in Dr. Kibbie’s studio. The move to SPH was made possible by the generosity of Marilyn Mason and the combined efforts of Johns and Martin Philbert, Senior Associate Dean at SPH and an accomplished organist in his own right.

“The organ is the most recent and obviously most conspicuous of several measures we are taking in developing an informal program of public health and the arts,” said Kenneth Warner, Dean of SPH. “There are so many wonderful stories that accompany this beautiful Létourneau organ in its new home in the School of Public Health. There is the story of how it came to rest here, the story of its careful and loving reconstruction, and the story of our relationship with the School of Music, Theatre & Dance. I am looking forward to our noon-time lunch concerts and future interactions among the faculty and students of our two schools.”

Dean Kendall remarked, “At a recent symposium sponsored by U-M’s Arts on Earth initiative, we focused on scientific-artistic interactions—how the arts affect the brain, evolution, physical and mental health, and our collective conscience. One of the goals of that symposium was to pollinate sustained creative interdisciplinary work. This organ, then, becomes a symbol of that very meaningful work, a testament to U-M’s leadership in creativity.”

A brown bag organ series, scheduled for alternate Wednesdays at 12:15, has been launched, free and open to the public and featuring both graduate student and area professional organists. Other performances this term included “The Young and the Restless,” the annual recital presented by undergraduate organ majors in Kibbie’s studio. Coming up: organ concerts drawing from a growing roster of artists as well as music for other instruments and styles.

John Kendall on the Suzuki Teaching Method

John Kendall, who moved to Ann Arbor in 2005 to be closer to his son’s family when Christopher Kendall was named dean, was the key influence in bringing the Suzuki method of teaching to the U.S. He visited the School in January for a presentation and demonstration with Ann Arbor’s Phoenix Quartet. Mr. Kendall, who taught for over 30 years at Southern Illinois University, visited Japan in 1959 to learn more after seeing a film on the method at Oberlin. During that two-month visit, he met Shinichi Suzuki, who developed the technique on the belief that any child, if properly trained, can develop musical ability. Kendall returned to the U.S. to start a pilot Suzuki project. In 1964, he brought a group of Japanese students to tour the U.S., a visit that generated so much interest news of this groundbreaking technique was carried forth by sheer word-of-mouth. Today the Suzuki method is used to teach violin, viola, cello, piano, guitar, flute, recorder, harp, and bass in more than 35 countries. Stephen Shipps, professor of violin at MT&D, said, “John Kendall changed our musical world. He’s one of the most important string teachers in the second half of the twentieth century in America.”

Létourneau Organ Dedication, l-r: Angela Mercurio, flute; Michele Johns, Marilyn Mason, James Kibbie, John Trotter, conducting
Mark Clague Becomes Instant Campaign Song Expert

Quite to his own surprise, Mark Clague, musicology faculty member, has become what he describes as “an international talking head” on U.S. presidential campaign songs. He was interviewed by Wisconsin Public Radio in a syndicated show that was soon picked up by press in spots as widely divergent as Japan, Turkey, and Brunei. The campaign song, it appears, dates back to George Washington who used a marching ditty in his bid for the first presidency. Candidates today may have as many as four or five songs, changing them to appeal to different demographics: “Country music in the south, maybe more rock in the north, perhaps songs with a Latino influence in the southwest,” Clague said. An unforeseen pitfall can be songs chosen without careful scrutiny of the lyrics.

Dvorák in Love

In the fall of 2004, Timothy Cheek, voice faculty member and expert in Czech diction, spent a sabbatical in Prague studying the songs of Antonín Dvorák. Some of the fruits of that study were presented in two concerts, one in January, the second in March. Dubbed “Dvorák in Love,” the concerts featured a cycle of eighteen songs, called Cypresses, written by Dvorák in 1865 when he was 23 and smitten with one of his piano students. Eventually the composer would destroy most of his youthful work, but this cycle remained. In fact, the composer returned to it over the years for inspiration. “When I saw the manuscript,” Cheek says, “I was struck by the inspiration, exuberance, daring, and confidence of the writing.” In the January concert, Cheek took selected works inspired by Cypresses for performance by the graduate student group the Rossels String Quartet and student and alumni soloists. Some works quoted parts of the original Cypresses while others were revisions of the songs. “One got an idea of all these gorgeous works as being reminiscences, very different from the immediacy of the original cycle,” Cheek said. At the March concert, Cheek and Seth Carico (MM ’07), performed Two songs for baritone, written by Dvorák the same year. “Never published, they were, I believe, the beginnings of yet another song cycle about unrequited love,” Cheek said.

Attention U-M Organ Alumni: Meet in Minneapolis at AGO

All U-M graduates from the Organ Department are invited to a gathering at the 2008 AGO convention, scheduled for June 22-26, 2008 in Minneapolis. The reunion will be held on Wednesday, June 25, from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. at the convention hotel, the Hilton Minneapolis. All organ alumni should receive a postcard reminder soon. Please contact Dr. Larry Schou to RSVP no later than May 20: 605-677-5275 or Larry.Schou@usd.edu. Please contact Dr. Schou as well if you wish to make a donation to help defray costs. You may send your donation to Maureen Schafer, Director of Alumni Relations, U-M School of Music, Theatre & Dance, 2005 Baits Drive, Ann Arbor, MI 48109-2075. Please make checks payable to The University of Michigan; in the memo line write “AGO Alumni Gathering.”

Ann Arbor Dance Works Enters 23rd Year

Ann Arbor Dance Works, the resident professional dance company of the University of Michigan, will mount a major performance series this June 4 to 7:00 at the Duderstadt Center Video Studio on North Campus. Dedicated to the collaborative process, the company is a collective of dance faculty and guest choreographers. The series will feature
works by guest artists Alan Good and alums Daniel Gwirtzman, Lindsey Dietz, and Jason Marchant. New work and recent repertory by faculty members Amy Chavasse, Sandra Torijano, Jessica Fogel, and Robin Wilson will round out the concert series, presented in two different programs.

**New Exhibit on the History of the Fiddle**
The Stearns Collection of the School of Music, Theatre & Dance opened its newest exhibit “Fancy Fiddles” in the Vesta Mills Gallery at the Earl V. Moore Building last fall. Two years in the making, the exhibit describes the development of the fiddle throughout the world by illustrations, text, and comparative examples. The fiddles displayed, arranged regionally and mostly dating from the 19th and 20th centuries, feature two basic forms: the long-necked spiked fiddle played with the spike standing on the floor or on the player’s knees, and the short-necked fiddle usually held against the shoulder or chest, sometimes under the chin, or resting upright on the lap. Each instrument underwent stabilization and non-invasive restoration in order to ensure its well being through the exhibition’s run. While the instruments were being prepared, the Vesta Mills Gallery was getting a significant makeover. A new reader rail was added to provide more detailed explanations while the existing cases were given a more aesthetically pleasing background. “Fancy Fiddles” is open during School of Music, Theatre & Dance business hours, including evening concerts and recitals. Admission is free. Group tours can be arranged by calling (734) 936-2891.

**1950s Michigan Daily Article Helped Make Case for New Building**
On a recent visit to Ann Arbor, we met up with H. David Kaplan, BA ’56 (LS&A), who now resides in Federal Way, WA. He had an interesting story to tell. It seems that Kaplan had a hand in the University’s decision to build the E. V. Moore Building. As a staff writer for *The Michigan Daily* in the 1950s, Kaplan wrote a feature article on the intolerable crowding at the School. *The Detroit Free Press* picked it up and by 1955 architect’s plans had been submitted to the Board of Regents. In a photo featuring then Dean Earl V. Moore standing before a proposed sketch of the new building complex, we see, in Dean Moore’s hand: “To David Kaplan—

With warmest appreciation of your deep interest and active participation in the School of Music now and in the hopes for the above building in the immediate future.” The rest, as they say, is history. The School moved from its long-time facility on Maynard Street into the new building designed by famed architect Eero Saarinen in 1964. In a ceremony in 1975, the building was dedicated and named in honor of Dean Moore.

**Charles Owen Marimba CD**
Susan Owen-Bissiri, daughter of Charles Owen, who taught percussion at the School of Music, Theatre & Dance and was principal percussionist with the Philadelphia Orchestra for 18 years, has compiled a CD of her father’s percussion solos. Over his 20-year tenure with the U.S. Marine Band, The President’s Own, Mr. Owen performed solos from memory thousands of times, Susan writes. He also arranged countless pieces from violin and piano literature as xylophone or marimba solos with band accompaniment or as vibraphone solo or duet.