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The Joy of Making Music

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The Joy of Making Music

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Wednesday February 2, 2022

By Eric F. Spina

When I tell people that the University of Dayton Orchestra is comprised of a majority of non-music majors (including many engineering students!), they look at me in surprise.

It's a fun fact that says a lot about the Marianist approach to education. We educate the whole person — mind, body, and spirit. Unlike many universities, students don't have to major in music to be part of an ensemble on campus — and that's a drawing card.

"The joy of making music with other people is unmatched," senior mechanical engineering major Ally Brown told the Board of Trustees at its winter meeting.

"It's a passion for all of us," agreed senior electrical engineering major Eric Holler. "I will never lose touch (with) my creativity. I will carry it with me the rest of my life."

Ally and Eric were among six students, mostly non-majors, on a panel assembled by music department chair Dr. Julia Randel to illustrate UD's holistic approach to education.

Combined, this small group of students has participated in more than two dozen music

ensemble experiences as undergraduates.

Talk about joy and passion — not to mention an extraordinary level of commitment on top of their rigorous classwork.

Much like UD student-athletes, these musicians are learning the life skills of hard work, discipline, preparation, teamwork, creativity, confidence, and resilience, which will take them far in any profession. More than two-thirds of the students in our ensembles — from the Pride of Dayton marching band and the University chorale to the World Choir and Ebony Heritage Singers — are not music majors.

If you ask longtime music professor Patrick Reynolds why students from all majors flock to ensembles, he has a ready answer: it's all about coming together in the Marianist spirit of community — and creating harmony.

“My personal philosophy of large ensemble playing is inclusive. I want to create an experience and environment that is welcoming and encouraging for students to continue playing music in college. I want our orchestra to be truly *the* UD Orchestra,” says Dr. Reynolds, who conducts both the orchestra and symphonic wind ensemble.

Without a doubt, these students are some of our most engaged undergraduates on campus. Dr. Randel spoke to the trustees with such pride — and rightly so — about where you can find them performing in the days ahead.

After a highly competitive peer review process, the Ohio Music Education Association invited the University of Dayton Chorale, under the direction of Dr. Steven Hankle, to sing virtually at its annual conference this weekend. The Dayton Jazz Ensemble will perform with the Dayton Contemporary Dance Company in “Inside Out” at the Victoria Theatre Feb. 26-27. More than 200 students will take the stage in “Celebration of the Arts,” a free showcase at the Schuster Center March 3. The Pride of Dayton Marching Band is headed to Dublin to perform in the St. Patrick’s Day Parade. The Department of Music and the Theatre, Dance and Performance Technology program will present “The Sound of Music” in Boll Theatre April 8-9, with a cast of about 30 students from multiple majors, including Anna Delaney, a music therapy major who participated on the panel, in the role of Liesl.

Elsewhere, you’ll find them serving as undergraduate ministers at Masses on campus or singing for Hospice patients or participating in clubs and organizations across the breadth of UD.

“You are great ambassadors for UD,” trustee Cathy Babington told the students. “What a way to build the reputation for the University!”