Greetings from the Chair

40,000. The number of community members, family, and friends who walked through the doors of the University Center for the Arts last year for student and faculty performances.

514. The number of alumni, community members, friends, family, and current and retired faculty and staff members who stood with us in 2011-2012 by contributing to the department.

These numbers show how the Department of Music, Theatre and Dance is evolving due to increased commitment to programs and students. This fantastic progress would not be possible without your contributions to our growing number of programs. Donor support is crucial in this time of decreasing state funding and uncertainty. We recognize how lucky we are to be a part of a vibrant alumni community that values the importance of the arts for all ages.

Todd Queen
Chair, Department of Music, Theatre and Dance

Program Notes from Music, Theatre and Dance

Through the LEAP Institute (Leadership, Entrepreneurship, Arts Advocacy, and the Public), the Department of Music, Theatre and Dance and the Department of Art have integrated an arts management curriculum into current offerings. Students will have the opportunity to intern with the Arts Incubator of the Rockies, a development and advocacy program of the Fort Collins nonprofit arts organization Beet Street, aimed at providing opportunities for artists and creatives in the Intermountain West. Collaboration between community arts organizations and CSU will prepare students for all aspects of a career in the arts.

The new Charles and Reta Ralph Opera Center at CSU has transformed the opera theatre program, providing professional development opportunities and operational support, allowing students to flourish as they learn this incredible art form. The Ralphs also established the Charles and Reta Ralph Scholarship Endowment, providing another stepping stone for talented students to realize their passion for opera.

As hosts of region VII’s Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival in February 2012, CSU theatre took the national spotlight, with many of the regional winners coming from the CSU program. The weeklong event showcased the cutting-edge University Center for the Arts, with its fully professional theatrical resources, to more than 1,400 theatre students and faculty from nine states. With specifically catered workshops and discussion sessions, professional presentations, and acting and design competitions, KCACTF provides an unparalleled glimpse into what it takes to succeed in theatre.

This semester the dance program launched a new website and recruiting materials, illustrating the comprehensive nature of the CSU contemporary dance and ballet programs.

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Music Therapy Alumna Promotes Singing as a Whole-Body Experience

Megumi Azekawa, ’11, recalls her first “goose-bump moment” when she realized that music had a way of helping Alzheimer’s patients.

“I was a certified nursing assistant working with people who had dementia. I was assisting a woman when I happened to hum a song; she started singing along using the correct words. After singing, she was more responsive and could process what I was saying,” said Megumi. “That’s when I asked myself, ‘what is this?’”

Before working in health care, Megumi studied saxophone performance at the University of Washington. After moving to Fort Collins, she enrolled in CSU’s music therapy program, completing her thesis on the “Effect of Voice and Exercise on Parkinson’s Disease” in 2011. With a private practice based in Loveland and regular neurologic voice therapy sessions with the Parkinson’s Support Group of Larimer County, Megumi has undertaken a new project; the Larimer Chorale’s Singing for Seniors program. The new outreach initiative, supported by the Quick Foundation and the AARP, will give seniors a chance to participate in recreational singing. Megumi will select warm-up exercises for the body and voice and musical numbers that are uniquely designed to maximize the benefits of community singing, such as increased lung volume and improved breath control, posture, and alignment.

“Singing is a whole-body experience because it lifts your energy,” said Megumi. “By participating in this group, you will automatically exercise your breathing, posture, memory, and social functioning, and benefit from the experience as a whole package.”

For more information, visit larimerchorale.org.
A Different Kind of Performing Arts Student

The term “nontraditional” student usually brings to mind someone pursuing a career change, or a parent attending college now that their child is older. Last fall, the dance program at CSU enrolled a different type of nontraditional student – a retired ballerina.

Performing arts major Sayaka Karasugi-Ruggles, a soloist with the Colorado Ballet for 10 years, has devoted her life to ballet. From Kumamoto, Japan, Sayaka left her home country to study at Shanghai Ballet in Shanghai, China, and then went to Canada to study at the Royal Winnipeg Ballet School.

“Dance has been my whole life,” said Sayaka. “In order to dance, I left Japan as a child, lived in a different country, learned a new language, and made my career in a foreign country.”

Sayaka's career flourished as she toured with the Royal Winnipeg Ballet. Then, in 2001, she joined the Colorado Ballet, ascending the ranks to soloist.

A dance-related injury led to Sayaka’s retirement in 2011. After leaving the Colorado Ballet, Sayaka thought it was time to go back to school.

“It has always been one of my goals to receive a university diploma. In order to become a professional dancer, I had to choose to work before going to college. When I retired, I had this chance to experience a new side of life,” said Sayaka.

According to Assistant Professor of Ballet Carol Roderick, this is a huge transition from the professional dance world, where dancers are strictly performers.

Sayaka is excited to see the CSU dance program “prepare retiring professionals to transition from active performing and training.” She hopes to teach ballet and modern at the university level.

Matt Murphy Receives 9Teachers Who Care Award

On a February afternoon, CSU alumnus Matt Murphy, '06, is walking through the streets of Boston reveling over his Denver East High School debate students’ performances in the Harvard National Speech and Debate Tournament; 12 students placed in the national competition. As the coach of the Denver East Forensics Team, he trains speech and debate students in a wide variety of communication styles.

Having led 200 students to regional and national competitions, Matt was awarded the December 2011 9Teachers Who Care award from Channel 9News. It wasn't long ago that Matt was fresh out of college and tasked with leading the Speech and Debate team, based on his degrees in English and theatre from CSU.

“It was kind of by accident that I got involved with the Forensics team,” said Matt. “The school said ‘oh, well, your theatre background will be great for the speech part, and your English background would be great for the debate part,’ and it turned out to be one of the hardest things in my life. I was 23 years old and wildly insecure, a first-year teacher exemplified.”

That is when Matt decided to emulate one of his favorite professors at CSU, Professor Emeritus of Theatre Morris Burns.

“I would channel Morris Burns on a consistent basis, because I loved his empathy and compassion. The man was a total inspiration and continues to be,” said Matt. “I would try to do the things he did, because I thought that if it worked for me, it must work for my students.”

Throughout his academic career and into his teaching career, Matt credits CSU for expanding his horizons and getting him to a place where he wants to help other communities.

“The theatre program stoked my intellectual curiosity, and it made it OK to be smart and passionate,” says Matt. “What CSU did was make me realize how the rest of the world is not Fort Collins, how I could leave the University and take the great community that is Fort Collins to different places.”

Save the Date

The Ralph Opera Center Gala
Oct. 26, 2012
FREE with ticket reservation

A Christmas Story by Philip Grecian
Novembe and December 2012

Fall Dance Concert
Nov. 9 and 10

Tickets: csuartstickets.com

CMEA Alumni Reception
Jan. 25, 2013
Broadmoor Hotel, Colorado Springs

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