

Overhaul in store for concert hall

Rain-interrupted performances might soon be squelched

BY BONNIE BIRDELL
Staff Reporter

Ophelia Parrish is getting a few nips and tucks.

Five years ago, the building that houses Truman's music, art and theatre departments underwent a makeover of massive proportions. But the original renovation missed a few spots that could be corrected soon.

The original overhaul included the addition of an entirely new wing to the former junior high school building, which included a 300-seat theater, a Black Box theatre, practice spaces, computer labs and a number of other improvements. The wing also became home to a performance hall with seating for 500.

Therein lies the problem.

Jay Bulen, music department chairman, said that ever since the work on OP was finished in 2002, the University has been locked in a lawsuit against Walton Sparks, the company that contracted and constructed OP, because of the poor quality of the performance hall.

He said the University and the company reached a settlement in the summer of 2007. In an October 2006 meeting, the Board of Governors approved \$1,044,100 for "fine arts remedial work," a figure that includes the \$750,000 from the settlement.

"When buildings are built there are almost always things that aren't satisfactory," Bulen said.

Bulen said problems such as lack of soundproofing currently plague the performance hall. He

said that not only do large windows on the north side of the hall allow sound from Normal Street, but an air conditioner positioned directly on top of the hall also makes a loud buzz when it turns on every 15 to 20 minutes. Vents placed beneath the stage create a distraction as well.

But Bulen said one of the biggest problems with sound is the roof. Aside from the noise of the cooling unit, the roof allows heavy sounds of outside weather.

During last year's New Music Festival in October, it poured, and students and faculty worried that the event would have to be delayed even though it was taking place indoors.

"The roof becomes like a drum when the rain comes," said Thomas Hueber, professor of music. Hueber also said the problems were with the initial design and the renovations essentially will fix design flaws, such as the loud roof, to make the hall more usable.

"[The acoustics] make it very hard to hear, but if we get a fairly hard rain, it makes it hard to hear anything other than rain," Hueber said.

Bulen said one of the goals of the new work will be to decrease this interference as much as possible.

"Over the concert hall and choral practice room, ... they're going to increase the mass of the roof," he said.

Bulen said this will be accomplished by adding paving stones as an additional layer between the hall and the elements.

Aside from fixing the outside sounds that come into the hall, the music department hopes to fix the sounds coming from inside the hall. Although it might not seem like much of a problem to the general public, music faculty

and students alike are distraught by the acoustics in the room.

Complaints of a strong echo within the hall are prevalent. Bulen said that students often are unable to send recordings of their senior recitals as part of applications to graduate schools because of a "washy" sound. The acoustics keep the music from sounding the way it was intended, Bulen said.

Theron Perkowski, a music graduate student, said the reverberations in the room cause pieces to sound slow and sloppy and students think their recorded performances are not a fair reflection of their hard work.

"It really sounds like a lot of our performances are dirty and unclean and unpracticed and unrehearsed," Perkowski said. "But the truth is that every single ensemble here rehearses beyond the call of duty."

Perkowski said musical ensembles meet for as many as five hours a week for one hour of credit, and said he thinks the music students have earned this renovation.

"If there are enough of us that are suffering from an inadequate learning environment, then it needs to be fixed," he said.

Bulen said that as a performer himself, he often has to adjust his position on stage several times during a performance to achieve a decent sound. He said student performers and ensembles must do the same to keep echoes to a minimum, but it shouldn't be necessary.

"We're teaching our students to perform in an environment that is not optimal," he said. "... It's like teaching them bad habits."

With work scheduled to be completed during upcoming winter and summer breaks, Bulen said he is optimistic about the hall's future.

"It's a beautiful place, and we're proud to have it," he said. "I hope we can get these problems under control so we can get a better result from our work."

Bulen said the renovations are for the students' benefit.

"You teach them to make a beautiful sound, and they can't hear it," he said.

"It's a beautiful place and we're proud to have it. I hope we can get these problems under control so we can get a better result from our work."

Jay Bulen
Music Department
Chairman



Jackson Groves/Index

A lack of soundproofing in Ophelia Parrish Performance Hall has plagued performances during rainy weather since the building was remodeled in 2002. The University Board of Governors initially approved new soundproofing in October 2006.

TCRC offers array of classes, services

Telecommunications Resource Center partners with Hablantes Unidos

BY SHELBY HIGGINBOTHAM
Staff Reporter

The Telecommunications Resource Center is teaming up with Hablantes Unidos to unite the Kirksville community.

The partnership will yield a program known as Building Strong Families, which is targeted toward the Latino community. Kevin Baiotto, coordinator of Kirksville's TCRC, said Building Strong Families is meant to provide education for Latinos in Adair and Sullivan counties.

Baiotto said the TCRC, which provides technology services to Kirksville citizens, decided to participate in the program because it saw an opportunity to help strengthen the northeast region.

The program is designed and funded with the help of donors in the community, University of Missouri-Columbia

extension and Alianzas, a company based in Kansas City that helps Latinos integrate into rural areas.

"There is a little over \$4,000 in cash and then \$2,000 in donations," Baiotto said. "It's about \$6,000 we have to make this happen."

Classes that will be offered through the Building Strong Families program deal with factors that influence the way a family is managed.

TCRC will offer classes that include information on diabetes, how to maintain a healthy diet and healthy heart, fitness, money and stress management and a class in searching for employment.

Baiotto said that in the food courses, students will learn about the kinds of foods that are important to a healthy diet, and in the fitness courses students will be taught the

proper way to do certain exercises and stretch.

The course on money management will allow students to have a chance to work with a checkbook and improve their money-counting skills. Each course will include discussion time with a specialist from the MU Extension.

Members of Hablantes Unidos will translate the class handouts and interpret what is being spoken. They will also integrate members of their group into the class to make the setting more diverse.

Sarah Martin, a member of Hablantes Unidos, said the program of Building Strong Families started in Milan because of the large Hispanic community there.

Hablantes Unidos, which translates as "united speakers," is a Truman organization that focuses on the Latino community.

Members offer English classes

for native Spanish speakers living in Kirksville and Milan during the week at Mexican restaurants in Kirksville.

Hablantes Unidos also hosts soccer games every Sunday night to help the Hispanic community bond.

"The program has definitely been successful in Milan, and I anticipate it doing well in Kirksville," Martin said.

Tonya Schaffer, a Kirksville resident, said she thinks the program will help Kirksville become more united as one town instead of having many different groups.

"I think the program will help, but I don't know if there will be a lot of [participants]," Tonya Schaffer said, regarding participation in the Building Stronger Families program.

The Building Stronger Families program began in Milan on Sept. 11 and classes will begin on Sept. 25 in Kirksville. Both courses will end in April.

The TCRC also is offering introductory classes in Publisher, Word, Powerpoint, e-mail and general computing skills throughout the fall.

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Funding for this project was also provided in part by the Missouri Foundation for Health. Missouri Foundation for Health is a philanthropic organization whose vision is to improve the health of the people in its community.