

*"Conducting is an opportunity not only to be an educator, but also to immerse oneself in some of the greatest music ever written by the greatest composers who ever lived"* — Sam McClure, University Orchestra conductor

# All Eyes On: Sam McClure

**University Orchestra conductor leads student musicians during each strong performance**

BY JENNIFER LEWIS  
Staff Reporter

Behind every great group of concert musicians is a great conductor. The conductor must decide how each piece should be played to achieve the correct balance of auditory excitement and technical challenge and must decide how fast, slow, loud or quiet each phase should be performed.

The conductor must coax every dramatic crescendo from musicians and urge them through every breathless accelerando. The Truman State University Symphony Orchestra, as a very talented group of student musicians, requires an equally talented conductor. This role is filled by Sam McClure.

Not only is McClure a conductor, he also is a talented violinist and violist who gives studio lessons to music majors and teaches a graduate-level conducting course. He has taught at the college level for 20 years, 12 of which he has spent at Truman.

McClure has been playing violin since he was 8 or 9 years old, but it was not until he decided to pursue a doctorate of musical arts in orchestral conducting while teaching at another university that he began to focus his career on standing before an orchestra instead of sitting within it. He said he was drawn to conducting because it provides an opportunity to interact more closely with the works of amazing composers.

"Conducting is an opportunity not only to

be an educator, but also to immerse oneself in some of the greatest music ever written by the greatest composers who ever lived," McClure said. "Whether we're looking at composers as far back as Bach to the present, the greatest composers throughout history wrote some of their greatest pieces for symphony orchestra, so it's something that has attracted musicians for hundreds of years, to be involved with pursuing a greater depth of knowledge in this literature that is among the greatest works of art ever produced."

McClure said that when he came to visit Truman for the first time, he was struck by the potential of Truman's Symphony Orchestra to do great things, which is part of the reason he decided to apply for employment at Truman. He said Truman is his favorite of the three universities where he has taught because of the students, faculty and overall environment.

"One thing I think really sets Truman apart is that there aren't many schools who are as highly selective as we are, where the students and the faculty are so supportive of one another and there isn't any sort of negative competitiveness," McClure said. "It makes the teaching and the conducting of the orchestra extremely rewarding and fulfilling."

Despite the time-consuming challenges of conducting, McClure still maintains his skill on his instruments. McClure said he still is active as a performing violinist and violist. Last October, McClure played two concerts in Italy and also was featured in a faculty recital at Truman in December.

Music department colleague Brian Kubin, who specializes in bass and cello, said McClure is acknowledged for greatly improving the Symphony Orchestra during his



Amy Vicars/Index

**Sam McClure is a violinist and violist, and he gives studio lessons to music majors. He began playing violin as a kid and now conducts the University Orchestra.**

years at Truman.

"I know the orchestra has gotten a lot stronger since he's been here," Kubin said. "It's not just the size — it's also the quality of the students we're getting, which allows us to do a more exciting repertoire. The orchestra was invited to go down to the Missouri Music Educators Association convention this last year, and while that's a credit to all the teachers in the department, he's the conductor. He's the one that puts it all together."

First year graduate student Nicole Moore is well acquainted with McClure because she not only works for him as part of her graduate student responsibilities, but she also attended Truman as an undergraduate and is

currently on her 10th consecutive semester of private violin lessons with McClure. Moore said she respects McClure's knowledge of the subjects he teaches — not only the technical skills of the violin and viola but also an intimate understanding of the music he asks his students to perform.

"It kind of blows my mind how much he knows about everything we're playing," Moore said. "No matter what piece I'm working on in any given semester, he can play the hardest spots for me and he can tell me the history of the piece and the history of the composer. He's just one of the most intelligent people I know in terms of music and knowing the nuances of the repertoire."



Photo illustration by Brian O'Shaughnessy. Design by Antonette Bedesie/ Index

**Truman employees work behind the scenes to keep the campus clean**

BY STACIE SAGASER  
for the Index

It's 5 a.m. on a cold February day, and Cheryl Miller is making her rounds as Truman's forewoman of academic housekeeping. Raymond Phipps took his first steam pressure reading of the day in the boiler plant and Luke Mudd and his crew have been clearing snow from campus walkways and parking lots for the last hour.

What do a housekeeper, a plant operator and a grounds keeper have in common? They take serious pride in their work for the University. While the jobs of Miller, Phipps and Mudd might go unnoticed by students, the University wouldn't be the same without the services they provide.

Miller began working for the University 23 years ago after coming to Kirksville in search of a better economic climate.

"My husband and I both worked at John Deere in Iowa, where we both were laid off," Miller said. "So we came to Missouri with our 4-month-old boy and 5-year-old girl hoping to find work."

During Miller's first years at Truman, she was assigned to lead a group of 25 student workers in the housekeeping department. Miller said some of her favorite memories at Truman are drawn from this time.

One of Miller's favorite memories from this time included a student worker who always teased her by calling her "Sarge."

"I definitely wasn't a so-called 'sarge,' so it was funny that he always called me that," Miller said.

Miller said she got a wedding invitation in the mail from the same student after he graduated.

"I was so surprised," Miller said. "I didn't think that anyone would give me a second thought."

Miller also worked with some students from Taiwan. Miller said that one time the students came to her home and made her family a Taiwanese dinner, and shortly after, the students adopted her family.

"My son was five at that time, and my daughter was eight, and they loved to come out and play with the kids because they were away from their families," Miller said.

Miller was hired as a supervisor for academic housekeeping in 2000 and recently began working a split shift from 4:30 to 8:30 a.m. and 2 to 6 p.m.

When Miller goes home after her first shift, she said she takes care of her mother, who has lived with her for the past 18 years, and eats breakfast with her husband, who works a night job.

Like Miller, Phipps said he also enjoys his work at the University at the boiler plant, where steam produces heating and cooling for most of the University buildings.

Phipps has worked at the plant for 12 years, and no one knows the University's boilers like Phipps and his crew.

"We've got a good crew," Phipps said. "We consider ourselves a team,

and everyone works together."

Phipps, 67, said he's not yet considering retirement.

"Not if I don't have to," Phipps said. "If I retire I would have a lot of 'Honey do's' to do. I'd like to avoid those."

Phipps said that, aside from working, woodworking is his biggest passion. An example of his work can be seen inside the Newman Center.

"After the Newman Center burned down [in 2008], they lost everything," Phipps said. "So, I built them a crucifix."

Father Bill Kottenstette said he didn't know Phipps until Phipps approached him after the fire.

"Raymond came to me and said he'd like to do something to help," said Kottenstette.

Kottenstette said that Phipps spent a lot of time working on the crucifix and spent \$200 in materials.

"Lovingly he made this and donated it to us," Kottenstette said. "He is a wonderful person."

Truman's grounds supervisor Luke Mudd also takes great pride in his job.

"I like seeing when the job's done well and the crew's done a good job," Mudd said. "I feel a certain sense of pride and reward for having such a good crew and mak-

ing the campus look nice."

Mudd and his crew have been especially busy battling the winter weather this season.

Mudd said he and his crew receive calls during all hours of the day when winter weather strikes. He said battling Kirksville's snowstorm in mid-February was a struggle.

"We fought the initial storm for four or five hours when it started, but then it got to snowing so hard that it became a waste of manpower and materials," Mudd said.

Mudd said his crew can make the most progress after the storm dies down, so they came back into work about 3 a.m. that Monday to clear sidewalks and parking lots.

Mudd said he and his crew are ready for spring.

"This winter just seems to drag on," Mudd said. "It seems like once we get done battling one snowstorm, it reloads in the next day or two, and we get another two to three inches."

In the spring, Mudd and his crew will be planting vegetation. Mudd said he enjoys making the campus look nice.

"A lot of the students take into consideration the way the grounds look, and we're glad that we can make it look aesthetically pleasing to them," Mudd said.

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