

All eyes on: Andrew Robson

BY DAVID HUTCHINSON
Staff Reporter

In sophomore Andrew Robson's hands a foot of cold metal becomes the key to his future. Andrew is a flutist, and has been since he was 9 years old when he picked out a flute in a music shop in Ovedio, Fla. He practices three to four hours each day to perfect his pieces of music.

Undeterred by the limited job market for orchestra members, Andrew has studied at Truman State to help reach his goal of earning a living as a professional musician. Although only a sophomore, Andrew has been pursuing this dream by performing with outstanding orchestras and focusing on his musical pursuits.

Andrew initially wanted to play the piccolo, his father Jeffery Robson said. Jeffery said Andrew was drawn to the childlike size of the piccolo, but because there was no one from whom he could take lessons, Andrew chose the flute. Andrew began taking lessons with a local community flutist using the Suzuki method, Andrew said. The Suzuki method focuses on teaching students to play an instrument by ear before learning to read music.

"You learn to talk before you learn how to read, so it's more like getting used to playing and listening, then adding the complicated stuff later," he said.

During his junior year of high school, he published an article in "The Flutist Quarterly," the flagship publication of the National Flute Association about his discovery of an original score by York Bowen. Andrew also played with the St. Louis Symphony Youth Orchestra, which runs like the adult orchestra and exposes students to the atmosphere of professional music.

"Making that orchestra was a pivotal moment for me because I got to play with an outstanding orchestra every week," Andrew said.



Rose Sparks/Index
Sophomore Andrew Robson plays music Tuesday in Ophelia Parrish. Robson was a member of the St. Louis Youth Symphony and is principal flute in various musical ensembles at Truman State.

"And that's also how I got the connections to study with symphony members."

Flute professor Julianna Moore currently teaches Andrew. He first met Moore during December 2009 when he was a senior in high

school and auditioned for Truman's music department. Andrew has met weekly with Moore since his freshman year for individual lessons. Moore said she has been pleased with his work because he works diligently and

takes initiative to improve his experience. She also was impressed by Andrew's academic performance during Truman Week and later asked him to become a peer tutor for her incoming students.

"Usually I pick a really strong student in my freshman class that really excels to be a peer tutor," Moore said. "[Andrew] has done a great job with that."

Andrew said he decided to try his hand at conducting to improve his musical experience. He gathered a medley of talented Truman flute players to make a group and a piece with the Truman flute choir. Andrew also conducted a piece for the brass concert March 19, even though he specializes in woodwinds.

Andrew practices with a plan — before he picks up his flute he has a goal in mind to improve his performance. As a freshman during November 2010, he was one of four winners of Truman's Gold Medal Concerto competition. Andrew competed in the lower division against other freshman and sophomores and bested his peers with a concertino by Cecile Chaminade. As one of the winners, Andrew was a featured soloist with the Truman Orchestra during the February 2011 Gold Medal Concert.

When Andrew returns to St. Louis he studies with Mark Sparks, whom he met during his time with the Youth Symphony. Sparks has been the principal flutist of the St. Louis Symphony since 2000 and is considered one of the top 10 principal flutists in the nation by Windplayer Magazine.

Andrew's father Jeffery said he and his wife are proud of their son and are happy to see him rewarded for doing what he loves.

"We always knew he'd do well, but he's done much better than we thought," Jeffery said.

Jeffery said Andrew's first concert will be a large accomplishment for Andrew and he is excited to share it with his son.

Student attempts to make mark by directing

Former Truman student directs community production

BY SCOTT HENSON
Staff Reporter

Before former Truman State student Justin Wright moves from Kirksville, Mo. to Columbia, Mo. this summer, he wants to leave one last mark on the town by doing something he wasn't able to during college: directing a full-length theatrical production.

"The Butler Did It," the show Wright is directing, will be performed May 19 - 20 at Willard Elementary School. It is sponsored by the Curtain Call Theatre Company, a Kirksville organization that usually performs four shows a year and invites Kirksville residents and Truman students to audition. Through community theater, Wright and other residents have found opportunities to act, direct and bond with local thespians who share a common interest in performing.

Wright said theater always has been one of his passions. He began performing at age 8, in a church production of "Cinderella" and was in at least one show a year during high school. Directing a one act during his senior year was not only one of his most cherished high school experiences, he said, but one that led him to pursue directing as a career.

"Freshman year, when I got to Truman, I still had that director's passion in me," he said. "And so I took it upon myself to direct a one act show. ... I was hoping to get into [the Play Direction class] my senior year, but I never made it that far."

Wright left Truman during

Spring 2010, his junior year, because the amount of theater in which he was involved, including a play with Curtain Call, an independent play and a one act, took a heavy toll on his grades. For the year-and-a-half that followed, he said he didn't have much to occupy his time aside from his job at Walmart. Out of boredom and a lack of theater in his life, he decided to seek out a creative outlet with his old passion.

"I was pretty much just working," he said. "It was getting exhausting, and I wasn't doing anything active, so I did a few plays just because I had the time to do them through community theater."

That summer he simultaneously was cast in Curtain Call's "Cheaper by the Dozen" and Kirksville Parks and Recreation's "I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change." As Wright continued to become involved with the company, he decided to submit his own proposal to direct "The Butler Did It," which its board of directors approved during December 2011. Rehearsals for the show began late February.

He said the main difference he's observed between Truman's theatrical offerings and Curtain Call's is the organization's lack of faculty and student support groups, which, at Truman, often provide student directors with lighting operators, costumers and set designers. In "The Butler Did It," many of the show's cast members also are performing these behind-the-scenes roles.

"I think the cast bonds a lot more because there's a lot more on everyone's shoulders," Wright said. "There's a lot more overlap in the community theater because you just don't have as many people at your disposal, so you have to use them ef-

ficiently."

One of his performers, senior Bradley Bartlett, is a theater minor at Truman. Originally from Crawford, Mo., Bartlett said he wanted to be involved with Truman's theater productions because his hometown didn't offer many acting opportunities. Now that he's completed his theater coursework and works at Hastings 15 hours a week he said it can be difficult for him to find time to be involved with Truman's productions. Since being cast in community theater productions, he said he's found its three-rehearsals-a-week schedule much more manageable than the 17-hour-a-week rehearsal regimens of many Truman productions.

Bartlett said community theater also has allowed him to interact with Kirksville residents outside Truman. He said these people range from high school students to adults who are raising children.

"I've noticed a different background of experiences," he said. "Typically people in the theater department are just going to school for theater or they have some interest in being involved in it maybe professionally, whereas these are people who are doing different jobs in the community and they're just taking this on as a side hobby."

Curtain Call President Dan McGurk is a reference librarian at Pickler Memorial Library. He joined Curtain Call during 2004 after he moved to Kirksville. He said working with Curtain Call not only has offered him a creative outlet and close friendships with fellow cast members throughout the years — it's also given him brief



Lindsey Gillam/Index
Above, Justin Wright directs Curtain Call Theatre Company's "The Butler Did It" during a rehearsal at 7 p.m. Tuesday in Christ Family Church. Below, cast members rehearse a scene.



moments of local celebrity status.

"It's kind of nice to go out any place and just have people walk by you and say 'Good job in the show the other night,' even people you don't even know," he said.

Wright said "The Butler Did It" will give him more directing experience to include on his résumé before he leaves Kirksville to study film at Missouri State University. Aside from professional experience, he said he also will

take his fellow performers' common excitement for the craft with him when he leaves.

"[Community theater] is not necessarily for people that want to go into this as a profession," he said. "It's just people that love doing it, so you get a lot more of that raw passion ... knowing that you're not going to be paid to do something and still loving doing it anyway — there's something to be said for that."



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