



Music Beat

UPEI Department of Music
Newsletter

FALL 2021

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New Performing Arts Centre

During the Fall of 2019 UPEI President Alaa Abd-El-Aziz announced that a new Performing Arts Centre (PAC) would be built on our campus. The Department of Music had long advocated for a new performance space to showcase its large ensembles and provide means for elaborate productions. This new build is part of the twin tower complex currently under construction on University Avenue. Scheduled to be completed for September



of 2023 the PAC will have seating for 406 patrons, a rehearsal hall, dressing rooms, storage space, and a climate-controlled room to store pianos. The Rehearsal Hall will also serve as a dance studio as it will have a sprung floor, and, together with the Theatre, will be wired from the control booth to enable sound recording.



Photo Above: Clarinet professor Karem Simon wearing his tuxedo, with hard hat and steel-toe rubber boots, rehearsing in the PAC in anticipation of a Fall 2023 performance.

Photo Left: Dr. Karem Simon with Dr. Greg Doran of the Theatre Arts Department, at the construction site. See Page 3 for artist rendition of the new PAC from view of the stage, as well as view from the back.

Renovations to the Dr. Steel Recital Hall

In addition to the new PAC our Dr. Steel Recital Hall will have a major upgrade. Included in this renovation will be new seats, flooring, lighting, and window treatments. The control room and washrooms will be renewed, too.

The announcement of an upgrade of the Dr. Steel Recital Hall, together with construction of the new Performing Arts Centre, represent pivotal enhancements to UPEI's infrastructure. These will not only heighten interest at UPEI, but will enable community organizations, inclusive of schools, to have a forum to showcase their work. These improvements will be integral in providing those in the PEI Arts Scene with an additional venue to develop, create, imagine, and bring to fruition their visions. Information regarding UPEI's current fundraising campaign may be found at <https://performingarts.upei.ca/> and <https://www.upei.ca/communications/news/2021/08/upei-launches-3-million-campaign-support-performing-arts>



Artist's rendition of Steel Recital Hall renovations, Side View



Artist's rendition of the new Performing Arts Centre, Stage View



Artist's rendition of the new Performing Arts Centre, Back View



Artist's rendition of Steel Recital Hall renovations, Back View



Tenure Track Positions Filled in Brass and Piano

With the retirements of long serving and beloved faculty members Frances Gray (2014) and Gregory Irvine (2019) term contracts had been used to replace them in recent years. Tenure track positions were established for the Brass and Piano positions to begin on July 1, 2022. This past October was very busy as candidates short-listed for these positions performed and taught. As a result, Dr. Dale Sorensen was offered the Brass position and Dr. Magdalena von Eccher was offered the Piano position. Both scholars are very familiar to the UPEI community as they have been instructing at UPEI since 2019. The future is very bright for our department with these new hires, who have already had a significant positive impact on our program.



New Pianos

In July, we took delivery of two new pianos: a Yamaha C7X, which has become our principal performance instrument; and, a Yamaha, C3X, which is housed in our piano studio. Both represent a significant investment to our collection of instruments and our commitment to piano majors. We are very grateful to those who have contributed to UPEI's current fund-raising campaign for the performing arts, as this revenue was the primary source in making these acquisitions possible.

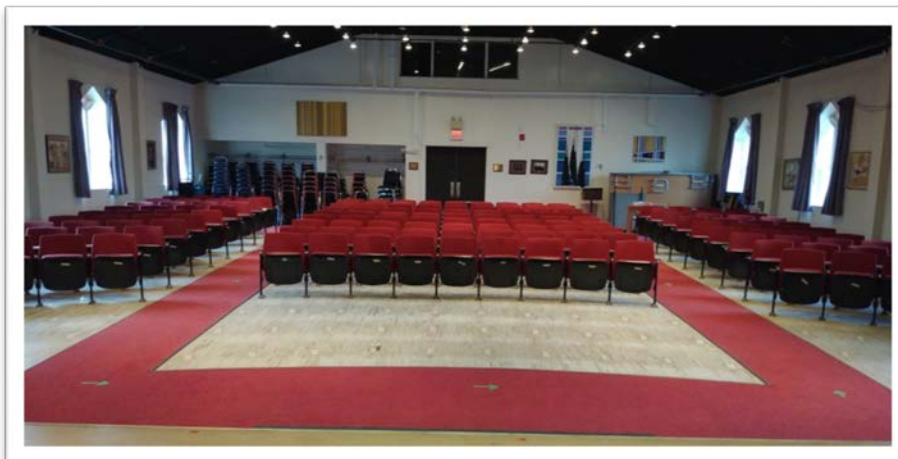


Delivery of Instruction in the Age of Covid-19

This pandemic has presented challenges for us all, including UPEI and our Department of Music. In March of 2019 all classes at UPEI went virtual. For the remainder of that year there were no public performances and faculty and students collaborated as best they could to satisfactorily complete the academic year.

During 2020/21 most courses at UPEI delivered instruction virtually. However, music was one of very few disciplines on our campus approved to offer in person classes. These were limited to all our performance components – applied music, aural skills, techniques courses. Our academic courses, inclusive of history and theory, were delivered on-line. Our ensembles continued to function, but on a reduced basis, as distancing protocols for playing wind instruments and singing limited the scope of rehearsals. Our Friday afternoon student recitals and junior/senior recitals occurred, but with reduced public access. Most events were live-streamed, and we are grateful to Dr. Dale Sorensen, who managed to successfully render these events for us.

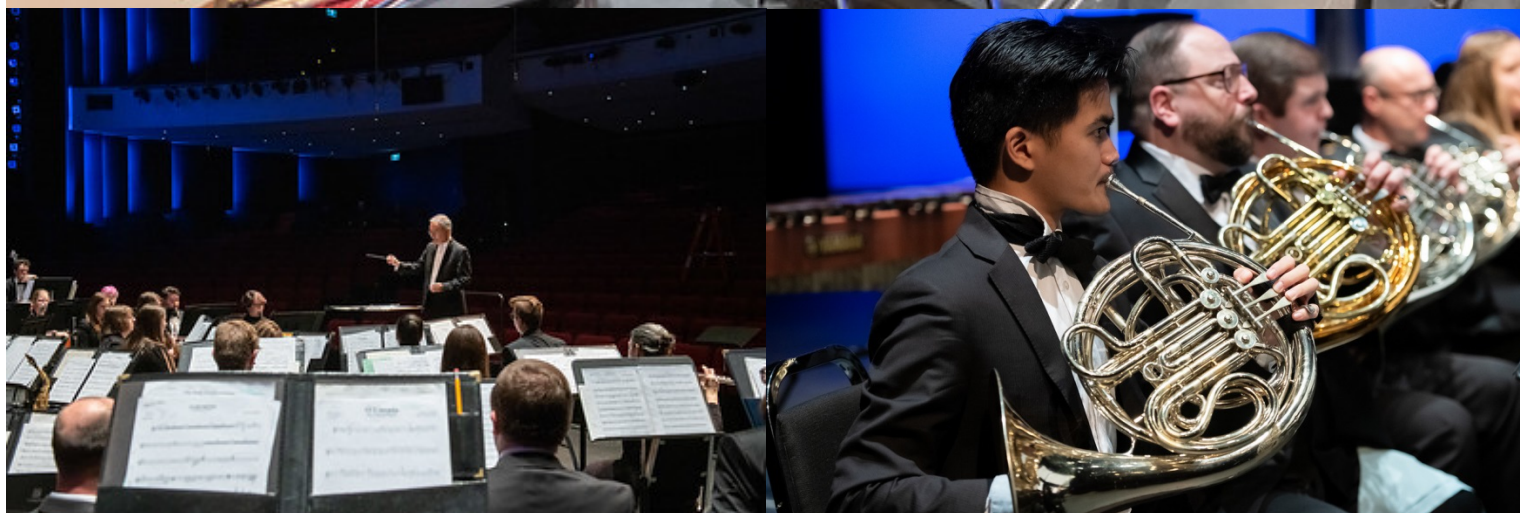
For 2021/22 all but our theory courses are meeting in-person. The first three rows of fixed seats were removed from the Dr. Steel Recital Hall to enable classes and rehearsals to proceed with appropriate distancing. Ensemble rehearsals have returned with renewed vigor, and we are looking forward to their recitals at the conclusion of the Fall semester.



Wind Symphony CD Collection

In June 2019, Dr. Karem Simon was appointed Department of Music Chair and, accordingly, was relieved of his duties as conductor of the Wind Symphony. He had served in that position for twenty-five years. During his tenure with the WS, that ensemble produced twenty-two annual CDs. All of these have been archived at <https://upeiwindsymphony.bandcamp.com/>

We are appreciative of 2019 music graduate Henry Orford, who made this happen. [Dr. Dale Sorensen has succeeded Dr. Simon as conductor.]



String Orchestra

With the arrival of a group of professional string players to PEI in recent years and the formation of the string quintet, *Atlantic String Machine*, interest in string playing has stepped-up. For 2021/22 UPEI was projected to have eight string majors and minors, so having a relevant vehicle for these students to develop their professional ensemble skills seemed to be an appropriate measure. Cellist Natalie Williams-Calhoun has been engaged to conduct our String Orchestra and has been successful in supplementing our core group with community musicians such that there are twenty-nine string players involved. Rehearsals have been proceeding very well and we look forward to this ensemble's inaugural performance on Saturday, November 27.



International Students

Throughout the past decade, UPEI has seen a significant growth in its international student population, adding immeasurably to the cosmopolitan culture of our campus. Among the countries represented this year by students in music are Nigeria, the United States, Bahamas, Oman, Vietnam, Belarus, China, and Honduras.



Recruiting

The establishment of zoom meetings for prospective students has been successful in informing students about the UPEI music experience and the process of auditioning. The schedule of these sessions may be found at <https://www.upei.ca/programs/bachelor-music>

We are always indebted to our alumni and supporters for encouraging students to check us out.

