

# Performing Ensembles

'A performing ensemble is more than just a machine that pumps out music on command. It is a living force,' states Bill Scharff, University Chorale President.

For the musician seeking to become part of that 'force', PLU offers a wide variety of music groups ranging from vocal to instrumental.

Probably the most well-known of these groups is the nationally acclaimed Choir of the West. The 53 members are selected after rigorous auditions in the fall, then in the winter and spring tour the nation's concert halls.

Choir of the West was formed fifty years ago when 42 PLU singers were sent on an 8,000 mile tour sponsored by Tacoma civic groups to promote the city. In the Midwest, they were given the nickname 'Choir of the West'. The name has since become a label for musical excellence; a tradition that was upheld during the 81-82 spring tour of Washington, Oregon and California.

University Chorale, the second major choir on the PLU campus, also spent the spring touring the Northwest, and as far east as Big Sky Country.

'This year's concert centered around the many aspects of the church year and the gifts that God has given us,' said Scharff. 'The wonderful scenery we saw along the way gave extra meaning to the music.'

Other vocal groups include the Concert Choir, the Vocal Jazz Ensemble and the Opera Workshop. In January, the Opera Workshop staged a humorous, and popular, version of the 'Merry Wives of Windsor' by Otto Nicolai. To answer the demand for tickets, the Workshop staged extra performances.

Of the three instrumental groups on campus, the University Symphony Orchestra is made up of both music faculty and students. Dr. Jerry Kracht has been conductor for 14 years. As part of a new outreach program, the orchestra

has begun to take its campus series program to the neighboring community for repeat performances. During November, a concert featuring Bruce Grainger, faculty member and Seattle Symphony bassoonist, was sponsored by the music department and presented at the Auburn High School Performing Arts Center.

The other major instrumental groups include the University Symphonic band and the Instrumental Jazz Ensemble. Combining both instrumental and vocal talents is the Contemporary Direction Ensemble, directed by Dave Robbins. The Emphasis of the CDE is the performance of complex, modern music.

by Rosemary Jones

1. The university Chorale performs.
2. A saxophone solo during a Red Square performance.
3. The University Symphony is composed of both students and faculty.
4. The trumpets in the Jazz Ensemble.



# Christmas Creates Unity

Diversity seems to be the major characteristic of PLU's music program. But every Christmas, unity becomes the theme as three major PLU musical ensembles join to present a program that goes far beyond simple carolling.

During December, the Choir of the West, University Chorale and members of the University Symphony Orchestra come together to present a Christmas festival concert called 'In Excelsis Gloria: Music in Celebration of the Nativity.'

This year, the program was held in Olson Auditorium for the first time. The size of both the choirs and the audience necessitated the move from the traditional Eastvold building. Several times during the concert both choirs and the orchestra appeared on stage together, an impossible feat on the smaller Eastvold stage.

Olson Auditorium was filled for all three Tacoma concerts, serving as testimony to the reputation for excellence that PLU has earned for its Christmas concerts.

The first half featured a prelude by the University Brass Ensemble, traditional carols, and processional. The processional gave a feeling of light and color to the concert as the choir members carried candles and banners to the stage. Throughout the first half of the concert, the two choirs flowed on and off the stage, at times surrounding the audience on three sides.

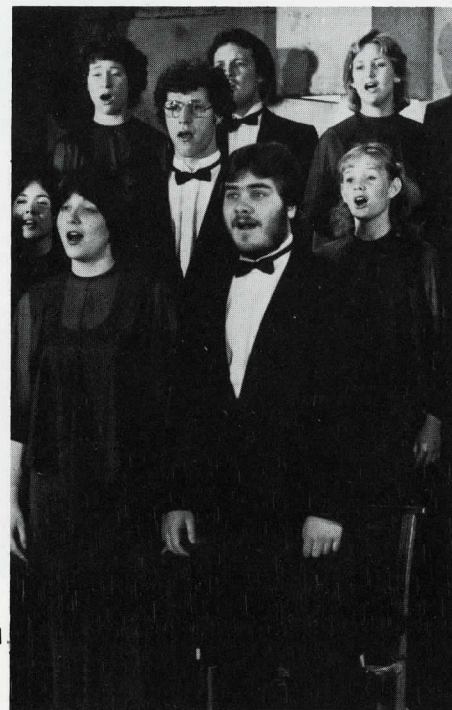
Edward Harmic directed the Choir of the West, and Richard Nace directed the University Chorale during this part of the concert.

The second half of the concert was devoted to Arthur Honegger's 'A Christmas Cantata.' The cantata was composed in 1953 and

featured a blend of Honegger's original compositions mixed with familiar Christmas melodies.

The cantata began with a restrained melody, played on the organ. The organ then began the theme of man's suffering and his rejoicing at the birth of Christ. This section was mainly composed of a mixture of Latin hymns and traditional carols. A final triumphant 'Amen' was sung by the choir, then the organ, played by Joe Petit, returned to its somber theme to emphasize the sense of mystery surrounding Christ's coming.

In addition to the three campus concerts, the Christmas Festival was performed in Seattle, Portland and Spokane. The Spokane concert marked the debut of the PLU Christmas program in that city.





2.



1. The Choir of the West.
2. This percussionist intently follows the music.
3. The Choir of the West, University Chorale and University Symphony all appeared on Olson's stage during the Christmas concert.

Music, musicians...if you search for definitions in the dictionary, you will probably find something like "Music: the science or art of incorporating intelligible combinations of tones into a composition having structure and continuity" and "Musician: one skilled in music."

If you were to ask the average person on the street the same question, you would get a less technical but similar answer. This person would probably add, "Well, you know those music types; they're a bit different."

You might even get to hear how they would like to smash the kid-next-door's drum, and if they hear the guy in the next apartment pound on his piano one more time...

Proud parents will quickly point out the accomplishments of their aspiring musicians. And then you can hear a recital of little Johnny banging out "America" or Jannie sing "Mary Had a Little Lamb."

How well I remember being threatened, begged and pleaded with to play just one more piece for Grandma.

How we all hated playing those darn scales, arpeggios--and who did this guy Bach think he was anyway? Please, Mom, don't drag me off to another lesson, please!

Somehow, the musician lives through all this, and, after a while, even enjoys it. Finally we reach college thinking we must know all there is about music that there can be.

O, woe, little freshman, you have just signed your life away to four more years of scales, arpeggios, lessons and all that goes with it. Plus they add things like theory, ear training and pedagogy--what the heck is pedagogy anyway?

Why does the musician go through all this? Why work for something that doesn't tangibly exist? Something we can't pick up and touch?

I don't think that question can be fully answered, but, for me, it is the joy, the emotions and ideas which are so well expressed through music. No great monument or building can make a statement as profound or as delicate as a song. I can't imagine a world without music. Our very act of speech is music. Like the poster says: "Music is the flower of feeling."

by Bill Scharff,  
University Chorale President