

NKU's Chamber Choir Returns from International Competition with Silver
Posted 11.19.08

HIGHLAND HEIGHTS, KY – The Department of Music was electrified with the spirit of internationalism this week as the NKU Chamber Choir under the direction of Dr. Randy Pennington returned from their tour of South Korea. Also arriving was the silver medal (2nd place) and \$3,000 cash prize awarded for their outstanding performance in the International Choral Festival & Competition that took place on November 12-15th in the Korean city of Busan. All together, forty choirs competed, traveling from various parts of the world to compete in this 3-day choral event. Among the nations represented were Nigeria, Malaysia, Russia, China, and the Philippines.

Even more memorable than the thrill of victory, however, will be the international experience that NKU students shared together. Dr. Randy Pennington, Director of Choral Activities led the ensemble on their whirlwind tour of the South Korean city of 3.5 million. "The choir attended concerts by groups of all different nationalities; they sampled all the different types of food, made great friends with other choirs (especially Russia and the Philippines), and overall represented themselves very well. They were great ambassadors for our Department, the University, and the United States."

The choir performed in a stiff competition judged by seven leading choral directors from across the world. In their division they placed second – receiving the silver medal. The choir from Malaysia that beat them in their division won the festival Grand Prix award. They were outstanding! NKU's Chamber Choir, the only American ensemble to compete still felt triumphant. "Our cultural experiences as a group were amazing but only fell short to our musical binding as an ensemble" remarked junior voice major Michael Weigand.

"They treated us like real celebrities," commented Dr. Pennington. "Everywhere we went we were met by excited Koreans and students from other countries – asking for pictures – wanting to meet us. It was an overwhelming experience."

The Chamber Choir performed a number of concerts during their Korean tour including an appearance on Korean television on the very first day of the tour when the ensemble performed at the Busan City Hall. MBC (the Korean national television network) decided to follow up with a documentary of the choir that they will broadcast at a later date throughout the country. They followed the choir for a couple days and filmed the Chamber Choir's performance in the final Gala Concert before an audience of over 1000 people.

"I was very proud of how our kids rose to the occasion," commented Pennington. "The choir was the last group to perform on the Gala Concert – and after a well received performance we tried to walk off the stage only to be encouraged by the audience with shouts of 'one more song' to do an encore piece." Courtney Lutz, a NKU senior majoring in voice recalls the event adding, "I don't think that any of us knew what to expect or how prepared we really were, but when it was time we gave it our all and came out on top."

Back in the States, Dr. Kurt Sander, Chair of the Music Department, was thrilled to learn of the success of the trip. "This is precisely why NKU's internationalization effort is so vital to the college experience. Through this Korean tour we have witnessed firsthand the kind of life-changing experiences that global exposure can provide. Imagine people from all over the world gathering together to share their love for choral music through conversation and performance. These memories will stay with [the students] forever. I can't imagine a better selling point for internationalism than what we have seen here this semester."

The choir will use their award money to fund a compact disc of the tour compositions. Sander continued, "Randy has done an amazing job preparing these kids and demanding their best for this trip. I'm thankful that we can now preserve some of their work and some of their memories in a CD recording."

NKU Vocal Jazz Ensemble to Appear in Concert with Nick Lachey's "Team Cincinnati"
Posted 08.18.08

If you live in the Cincinnati area and you enjoy the arts, particularly a cappella vocal arts, then this is something you will want to get on your calendar now just to reserve the date – **“Voices Only... No Strings Attached”** at the Aronoff Center’s Procter and Gamble Hall the evening of Wednesday, October 15, 2008. Enjoy the Arts (ETA) is the group that organizes and administers the Fine Arts Fund Sampler Weekend each year. That weekend of arts activities is pretty well known. Less well known is the fall event the ETA sponsors called "20 Days and 20 Nights" where the ETA promotes collaboration among local arts groups and encourages a variety of local arts activities/concerts for the public to participate in. This year, on the final night of Cincinnati's seventh annual "20 Days and 20 Night of Arts and Culture" festival, the NKU Vocal Jazz Ensemble will be featured in 20/20's signature event – an all a cappella concert of unaccompanied singing showcasing five diverse vocal arts groups:

Northern Kentucky University Vocal Jazz Ensemble (Jazz)
Christ Church Cathedral "Faburden" Chamber Choir (Classical and Sacred)
Northern Kentucky Brotherhood Singers (Gospel and R&B)
Southern Gateway Chorus (Patriotic and Broadway)
Team Cincinnati (winners of NBC's Clash of the Choirs with their presentation of "*Flight of the Bumble Bee*")

Although October is a number of months off but calendars fill up quickly. Tickets, which will be on sale in early September, are expected to be in the very reasonable \$10, \$15, and \$20 range. If you enjoy great vocal music you will not want to miss the opportunity to get good seats for this event through the Aronoff ticket office as soon as tickets are available.

NKU Chamber Choir to Compete in International Choral Competition

Posted 08.18.08

The NKU Chamber Choir, through a rigorous audition process, has been accepted to perform in the 2008 Busan International Choral Competition and Festival in Busan, South Korea. The Competition will be held November 11 – 16, 2008. The ensemble, under the direction of Dr. Randy Pennington, will compete against 19 choirs from Russia, the Philippines, Indonesia, Hong Kong, China, Korea, Malaysia, Singapore and Bulgaria. They are the only choir from the United States selected to participate. In addition to competing in the event the choir will be featured in the Festival Gala Concert and present a series of concerts in Korea as a part of their tour. Regional concerts by the choir featuring the tour program will be presented Sunday, October 26 at 7:00 pm at St. John’s United Church of Christ, Newport, KY; Sunday, November 2 at 3:00 pm at St. Paul’s Episcopal Church, Newport, KY and Sunday, November 9 at 3:00 pm at Mt Washington Presbyterian Church in Cincinnati, OH. All concerts are free and open to the public. Donations will be accepted at the door to assist with tour expenses.

Four NKU Faculty Command International Spotlight in Beijing at the Summer Olympics

Posted 08.08.08

NKU was well represented in Beijing by four faculty members who performed with the Cincinnati Pops Orchestra under the direction of Erich Kunzel at the 2008 Summer Olympics Opening Weekend ceremonies. The only international orchestra invited to perform as a part of the opening weekend festival, the Cincinnati Pops presented a successful concert at the brand new National Centre for the Performing Arts on August 9th to a sold out audience. A second concert on the Olympic Green at the Olympic Grounds on August 10th unfortunately had to be cancelled due to an intense thunderstorm that put both the musicians and audience in danger. The NKU faculty traveling to Beijing consists of three Cincinnati Pops Orchestra members, Ronald Auffman (clarinet), Richard Jensen (percussion), Owen Lee (double bass) and extra percussionist, Scott Lang, an NKU Lecturer.

North American Premiere of Thomas Larcher's "Mandares" April 8 in Greaves

Posted 03.26.08

The North American premiere of "*Mandares*" by Austrian composer Thomas Larcher, will be performed in Greaves Concert Hall at NKU by the renowned Artemis String Quartet of Berlin at 8:00 P.M. on Tuesday, April 8, 2008.

The concert repeats at 8 P.M. Friday, April 11, in Corbett Auditorium at CCM.

The commission for this work was initiated by a grant from the Mayerson Student Philanthropy Foundation at NKU. Co-commissioners are Chamber Music Cincinnati and the Salzburg Music Festival.

Also on the program are Beethoven's String Quartet Op 18 No. 4 and Tchaikovsky's Quartet No. 2 in F Major, Op. 22.

Pennington Elected to KMEA State Office

Posted 02.27.08

Dr. Randy Pennington, Director of Choral Studies, has just been elected as the University/ College State Chair of the Kentucky Music Educators Association. He also continues as a member of the executive board of the Kentucky Choral Directors Association as Chair of the state Student Activity area.

Vocal Jazz Ensemble Outreach Concerts

Posted 02.27.08

The NKU Vocal Jazz Ensemble will be featured in concert at two prominent venues in March 2008. On March 4 the ensemble will appear in a concert at Eastern Kentucky University with The EKU Jazz Band, The concert is in Gifford Theatre on ECU's campus at 8:00 pm. Tuesday March 25th the Vocal Jazz ensemble appears at The Blue Wisp in downtown Cincinnati. The show starts at 7:30 pm and there is a 10.00 cover charge at the door. Come and support the group at these two events.