This issue of Opus highlights the activities of our Steel Band and our select choir, I Cantori. It also focuses special attention on Gene and Betty Soper, longtime supporters of the Department of Music who have enabled many of our music students to complete their education.

Within the past year, we have welcomed new adjunct faculty to the department, including Wafia Kinne, piano; Alicia Stilson, flute; and Michael LeFevre, guitar, who will perform a recital on Feb. 26. We are also pleased that Rhonda Lineberger, an experienced and gifted music teacher from Milton-Freewater, Ore., is sharing her expertise in elementary school music with our students.

Summer 2011 provided stimulating festival experiences for our faculty: Brandon Beck attended the Pan Ramajay Steel Drum Festival in Denver, Colo.; Leonard Richter taught at the International Institute for Young Musicians at the University of Kansas School of Music; and Lyn Ritz performed in the 36th Annual Classical Music Festival in Eisenstadt, Austria. Also in summer 2011, June graduate Matthew Palumbo enjoyed attending the Valencia International Piano Academy in Valencia, Spain, and the Bowdoin International Music Festival in Brunswick, Maine, where he also had the opportunity to perform in the Gamper Festival of Contemporary Music.

We have enjoyed exciting performance successes already this year. I Cantori, for example, joined the Walla Walla Symphony and the Mid-Columbia Mastersingers in a performance of Handel’s Messiah in the University Church in December. We hope you can come to one of our upcoming concerts. We invite you to consult the calendar highlights on the back page of this Opus issue or you can visit our website at music.wallawalla.edu for our complete calendar of events.

With a history of touring that started in 1929, Walla Walla University’s select choir is chosen through audition each year from the school’s 1800-member student body.

Renamed I Cantori (Italian: “the singers”) in 1979, the ensemble of about 45 members has traveled extensively in the Pacific Northwest and western United States and has also appeared in Canada, Russia, and Romania.

Last year, en route to the San Francisco area, they sang at Adventist academies and churches along the I-5 corridor from Portland, Ore., to Sacramento, Calif. A highlight of the trip was the opportunity to perform at Oakland’s magnificent new architectural wonder, the Cathedral of Christ the Light.

On the WWU campus, I Cantori regularly performs for the 2,000-member Walla Walla University Church in addition to performing a major concert each quarter. During fall quarter 2011, the choir undertook two major performances. In addition to the annual WWU Christmas Concert, I Cantori performed George Frideric Handel’s acclaimed oratorio, Messiah, with Maestro Yaacov Bergman, the Mid-Columbia Mastersingers, and the Walla Walla Symphony in December.

In March, the two choirs of WWU, University Singers and I Cantori, will present a Choral Vespers concert in the University Church. The concert will be co-directed by Kraig Scott and his conducting friend and mentor, Jonathan Reed of Michigan State University.
In February, *I Cantori* went on their first tour of the 2011–2012 academic year. The performance itinerary included Yakima Adventist Christian School, Chehalis Seventh-day Adventist Church, Auburn Adventist Academy, Pacific Lutheran University, Puget Sound Adventist Academy, Forest Park Seventh-day Adventist Church, Kirkland Seventh-day Adventist Church, St. James Cathedral, and Skagit Adventist Academy. In April, the choir returns to the Seattle area to perform at Auburn City Church and St. Mark’s Episcopal Cathedral.

Meanwhile, the choir is actively preparing for their next international tour scheduled for June 2013. Tours, both domestic and international, are made possible by the gracious support of WWU and generous donors. We invite you to become a supporter of *I Cantori* and the WWU Choral Program.

**Congratulations, graduates!**

*Jered Kostenko*, a 2006 graduate with degrees in theology and physical education, returned to Walla Walla University two years ago to complete a major in music. He is now pursuing a master’s degree in piano performance with an emphasis in composition at Washington State University in Pullman, Wash., where he lives with his wife and two young boys.

*Albert Thompson* initially graduated in 1974 with a bachelor’s degree in religion and a minor in music, completing pre-med requirements that took him on to medical school. Six years ago he decided to return to WWU and finish a major in music. While maintaining his medical practice in Lincoln City, Ore., he resumed his music studies and made over 40 trips to the WWU campus to study piano with Leonard Richter and finish his other music requirements.

*Matthew Palumbo* received his bachelor of music degree in piano performance and is currently a double masters student in piano performance and musicology at the Peabody Institute of Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Md.

*Samuel Derting* completed a bachelor of music degree in voice performance. This year he is serving as a mentor to freshmen at WWU while his wife completes her degree at WWU.

Also pictured are three of the music faculty: Leonard Richter (second from left), Karin Thompson, and Kraig Scott (far right).
FOLLOW “HELLO WALK” past the Walla Walla University Fine Arts Center at noon on Thursdays, and you’re in for a treat. You’ll hear lively melodies from inside, where a group of dedicated musicians make music that will lighten your step and transport you some 4,000 miles away to the sands and surf of the Caribbean.

They’re playing steel drums, which are said to have been first used in Trinidad and Tobago in the 1930s, and are wildly popular in the Caribbean and gaining popularity worldwide. Walla Walla University is the only Adventist college or university in the North American Division to have a steel band, and nearly a decade after it started it has wound its way into our campus culture.

A WILD IDEA FOR WALLA WALLA

Professor Brandon Beck’s answer to a simple question in 2000 set the formation of the Steel Band in motion. “When I was hired they asked if there was anything I wanted to do that was different than what I normally did as a music professor. I answered, ‘Yes, I’d like to start a steel band.’”

**WWU is the only Adventist college or university in North America to have a steel band.**

The idea was quickly endorsed by the university, and by the next school year, donors had contributed over $35,000. Beck ordered seven steel drum instruments from Mannette Steel Drums, Ltd.

The Steel Band officially started practicing in October 2002. “I found my first band members by asking musicians in the wind symphony, people who already had musical backgrounds. I needed good musicians who could read music and had an interest in learning.” Their first performance was at the university’s annual Christmas concert, and the band was an overwhelming success.

“We played ‘What Child is This’ and ‘God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen,’ and it went over surprisingly well,” Beck says. “The music was pretty challenging for a first-ever performance. We’d requested that people hold their applause until the end of all of the performances, but after our performance there was immediate applause. People told me they came back for the second concert that night to hear the drums again.”

Aside from concerts in the Pacific Northwest, the band has taken four major tours since it started (California in 2004, Florida/Tennessee in 2006, Bermuda in 2007, and the Southeast/Ohio in 2011). Beck enjoys the opportunity to perform for audiences who are sometimes skeptical about how a steel band from rural Washington State will sound. “At the close of the concerts we’ve won them over,” he says.

Nine people play in the band, which plays music ranging from calypso/soca...
to samba and bossa nova. Beck says one favorite is a rendition of the hymn “How Great Thou Art,” which he commissioned for the group and includes traditional, reggae, and calypso styles of music in the one piece.

Aside from being entertaining, the band serves a strategic function for Beck and the Department of Music. “It keeps percussionists busy and involved in more than just orchestra or band,” he says, “and it offers something unique for our students.”

Beck is thankful for the opportunity to pursue one of his interests, and points out the irony of promoting the university’s steel band given our location. “Where do you go that you can find good Caribbean music but in the wheat fields of Washington state?” he smiles.

“I didn’t even imagine Walla Walla University had the Steel Band until Professor Beck invited me to play,” says Devon Hunt, senior music major. He jumped at the opportunity to learn a unique style of music, but says his musical background in piano, percussion, flute, and voice still didn’t prepare him for the learning curve on the steel drums.

“I started my freshman year on the double second drums. It was challenging because there are two drums, and there isn’t any apparent organizational pattern to where the notes are on the drums. It was difficult to pick up,” he says. “Things finally clicked when we were playing this samba tune called ‘Black Orpheus.’ The notes were simple enough that I could get it, and that was the first piece I soloed on with the double second drums.”

Hunt now plays the lead drum, which has a 2-1/2 octave range. That means he plays most of the band’s melodies, which are usually written for the lead drum. He thoroughly enjoys it, and he’s not alone.

“‘Audiences love the steel drums. It’s something people don’t often get to hear live, and everywhere we go people say they love the sound,’” he says. “‘It makes people think of the sun and surf, and that easy, joyful island culture.’ He adds that band members can see the audience having fun with the music, but the audience can also watch the band members having fun while they play the music. “This is a less formal, very accessible kind of band for people,” he says.

Participating in the university’s Steel Band is a valuable opportunity he wouldn’t have had on his own due to the cost of the instruments, Hunt says. After he graduates, he hopes to help youth learn more about steel drums, maybe starting a band at the high school level.

But for now, he and his fellow band members will continue to drum out tunes that broaden their musical horizons and bring a little extra sunshine to our corner of the world.

**UNIQUE EXPERIENCE**

Ensemble Festivals and Tours

Mark your calendars now for the WWU Honor Band Festival, Jan. 23-26, 2013. Past years have included high school students from the Northwest as well as California, Colorado, and Ohio. Auditions will take place in October and November. For more information, contact Brandon.Beck@wallawalla.edu or call (509) 527-2565.

The Choir and Orchestra Festival took place this January and will happen again in 2014. It rotates with the Honor Band Festival, so that each festival takes place every other year.

Our WWU large ensembles are expanding their touring range to include regular tours abroad. Get in touch with us for more information!
I T’S A SUNNY AFTERNOON, and light pours into Gene and Betty Soper’s living room. Outside on the patio perches a peacock, one of two that inexplicably chose to live at “Camelot,” the name Gene and Betty affectionately call their home. Photos and mementos dot the room, evidence of the couple’s Walla Walla roots. But on this afternoon they’re reflecting on more recent friendships developed through their support of student musicians at Walla Walla University.

As longtime owners of Soper’s Leather Goods in downtown Walla Walla, Gene and Betty have been active in the community. When Gene’s love of music led him to accept an invitation to join the Walla Walla Symphony’s Board of Directors in 1995, he met fellow board member Dan Shultz, who at that time was chair of the Department of Music at Walla Walla College.

“We hit it off very well,” Gene recalls. “I eventually became president of the board, and I could see what a big role Walla Walla University played in our organization. Their students played in our orchestra, and many from the university attended and supported our performances. So I asked Dan how we could contribute to their program.”

Shultz suggested a scholarship, and a rewarding friendship was born. Tyler Abbott, a string bass player, received the Soper’s first scholarship award, explains Shultz, and it has since been awarded to 15 other Walla Walla University students from all performance areas. “The Sopers get acquainted with the recipients, taking them out to dinner or attending their performances,” says Shultz. “They like to think of them as...
‘their students.’ For several students the scholarship is a critical boost, a needed encouragement.”

Gene and Betty admit their support for Walla Walla University students is unusual. Neither attended the university, nor did their family members. “Dan Shultz likes to say our connection is ‘ecumenical’ because I’m Presbyterian and Betty is Catholic and we’re helping Adventist students,” Gene laughs. “But we like seeing what they accomplish.” And students, like Jeremy Irland, thrive on their support.

“Through a series of strange events, my original music emphasis, classical guitar, was something I couldn’t finish. I broke my right hand badly, so I took up voice as a means of finishing my music education degree,” Irland explains. “The support of the Sopers was invaluable to me. “You could always count on seeing either Betty or Gene at I Cantori rehearsals. They would come to our concerts. I even remember them attending my very first Walla Walla Symphony solo performance—after the show they both gave me a huge hug. That they were willing to invest time into my future gave me confidence and strength. I am thankful to them for the opportunities I’ve had in my life, and I believe that their involvement has meant more to students than the Sopers will ever realize.”

The Sopers say they’re proud of students like Irland. “We see Jeremy in concert and we say, ‘Boy, when he sings, we sure listen!’” Betty laughs. “We’re impressed with how far students come to attend the university, and we enjoy getting out to their performances as much as we can.”

The returns are worth it, Gene insists. Not only does he enjoy a yearly I Cantori performance at his church, he also feels a sense of accomplishment from investing in students.

“If you support students for a while, you’ll experience an inner warmth that you never knew existed,” he says. “We’re not done yet. We’ll keep building the scholarship, and it will hopefully affect generations to come.”

“Boy, when he sings, we sure listen!”

“The support of the Sopers was invaluable to me,” says Jeremy Irland, now a voice teacher and performer.

Thank you for your support!

Our students greatly appreciate the camaraderie and support from Walla Walla University’s Department of Music alumni and friends!

- If you live locally, consider attending our concerts and recitals. You’ll find an updated calendar at music.wallawalla.edu.
- Be sure to let us know of any internships or job opportunities appropriate for our graduates. You can call our office at (509) 527-2561.
- And, consider helping us fund new equipment or establishing a scholarship. Simply contact Breanna Bork in the Office of University Advancement at (800) 377-2586 or breanna.bork@wallawalla.edu.

Thanks to our generous donors, the following scholarships were awarded in April 2011:

- John J. Hafner $400
- H. Lloyd Leno Memorial $700
- Orland Ogden Memorial $2,000
- Blythe Owen $1,450
- Kenneth Schmidt $1,000
- Gene and Betty Soper $2,000
- Glenn Spring $450
- Clarence O. Trubey Memorial $1,066
- Stanley E. Walker Memorial $1,025
- Noel Jabagat
- Cambria Mensink
- Andrea Stanley
- Sara Mayne
- Aric Vyhmeister
- Stefanie Crumpacker-Flerchinger
- Nolan Kinne
- Lance Downing
- Brittni Bryan
Calendar Highlights 2012

YOU'RE INVITED TO JOIN US!

Feb. 15-20: I Cantori Northwest Tour
Sat., Feb. 25, 7:30 pm: Young Artists Night
Showcase of WWU Student Musicians
Melvin K. West Fine Arts Auditorium

Sun., Feb. 26, 4:00 pm: Faculty Guitar Recital
Michael LeFevre, guitar
Melvin K. West Fine Arts Auditorium

Sat., March 3, 5:00 pm: Choral Vespers
Kraig Scott, conductor
University Church

Tues., March 6, 7:30 pm: WWU Symphony Orchestra Concert
Brandon Beck, conductor
University Church

Tues., March 27, 7:30 pm: Faculty Cello Recital
Benjamin Gish, cello, and Cynthia Huard, guest pianist
Melvin K. West Fine Arts Auditorium

Sun., April 15, 7:30 pm: Guest Lecture Recital
Steven Rodgers, voice, and Lindsey Henriksen, piano
Melvin K. West Fine Arts Auditorium

April 20-22: I Cantori to Seattle
Fri., April 27, 8:00 pm: Homecoming Weekend Vespers
PRISM Concert
Presented by the Department of Music
University Church

Sat., April 28, 4:30 pm: Alleluias and Meditations
Sacred Concert
Presented by the Department of Music
University Church

Sat., May 5, 7:00 pm: Chamber Series Organ Recital
Mel Butler, organ
University Church

Sat., May 19, 5:00 pm: Spring Choral Concert
Kraig Scott, conductor
University Church

Please consult our website for updates and additional events at music.wallawalla.edu. You will find the Evensong schedule, Piano Vespers dates, and additional performances on the calendar, plus the tour schedules for 2012. You can also find more photographs and updated information about the Walla Walla University Department of Music.