

Guest Column: KUAT-FM an Important Part of UA Community

KUAT-FM/Arizona Public Media
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You may not know it, but University of Arizona School of Music faculty, students and guest artists have been performing, not just in Crowder and Holsclaw halls, but in your homes and cars.

But it's not as crowded as you might think.

Their regular concerts are being broadcast in KUAT-FM's Community Concert Series, which airs Sundays at 3 p.m. and is repeated Thursdays at 9 p.m. on KUAT-FM, 90.5 and 89.7, and online at www.kuatfm.org [1].

The series draws on performances from all over Tucson, but by far the bulk of the material originates at the School of Music. The Faculty Artist Series is a steady source of broadcast recitals. Violist Hong-Mei Xiao and pianist Paula Fan were featured this past weekend (and will be on again tomorrow night), with trombonist Moiss Paiewonsky and several others to come.

Students are well-represented as soloists and chamber artists, and as members of the school's major ensembles. The four finalists in last year's Green Valley Piano Competition  Jonathan Gross, Ji-Young Kim, Young-Ji Kim and Ae Ja Oh  were featured in a May broadcast. This coming May, listeners can check out the annual student chamber music showcase, which will have occurred just a few weeks before.

Air time also regularly goes to the Arizona Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Thomas Cockrell and the UA Wind Ensemble, under the direction of Gregg Hanson. Massed UA voices from the Arizona Choir, Symphonic Choir and University Community Chorus are also featured regularly, in programs ranging from early Latin American and Spanish music to rarely encountered contemporary pieces.

The concerts are recorded either by School of Music personnel or by KUAT's Jim Blackwood. Once the artists approve the material for broadcast, it falls into the hands of yours truly, who writes and records the narration, then leaves it to Blackwood to piece everything together. Fresh Community Concert Series programs are produced from January into July, while the late summer brings repeat broadcasts. The series goes on hiatus during the fall quarter and returns at the first of the calendar year.

The School of Music's participation in the Community Concert Series is important to us at KUAT-FM/Arizona Public Media for several reasons. It showcases artists who aren't the "usual suspects" found on the commercial recordings that constitute much of the station's playlist, and it often presents interesting music that is not held in the KUAT CD library (two key words: tuba recital).

Without intending to slight any of the other faculty artists in the series, let me cite just one concert that splendidly illustrates most of these points. In April 2008, we aired the recital that introduced a new addition to the piano faculty, John Milbauer. Not only was this broadcast a chance for many southern Arizona listeners to "meet" a musician they had probably not heard in concert, but it presented selections that they never hear in our daytime CD-based programming. The recital included some familiar items by Claude Debussy and Franz Schubert, but it also featured a superbly played survey of 20th-century keyboard music  works by Arnold Schoenberg, John Cage, John Adams, George Crumb and Mario Davidovsky. Conservative listeners might hesitate to attend a concert with such a lineup, but when it sneaks up on them via the airwaves they can hear, without risk or prejudice, fresh music that they might otherwise avoid. One friend of mine  who is by no means a specialist in 20th-century styles  has repeatedly told me how "bowled over" he was by the Milbauer concert.

Through the Community Concert Series, the School of Music and KUAT/Arizona Public Media are partners in an endeavor that brings UA performing arts to the widest possible audience. Beyond that, the collaboration cements our bonds as members of the University community, and it allows us to present, to a wide audience, performances that many people might not otherwise hear.

James Reel, KUAT-FM's weekday morning announcer, is the arts editor of the Tucson Weekly and contributing editor to "Strings" magazine, while writing for various other publications. In 2002, through the efforts of the UA School of Music, he received the University's Bear Down Award for service to the UA. Reel can be contacted at jreel@azpublicmedia.org [2].

Upcoming KUAT Community Concert dates

- Feb 26: Hong-Mei Xiao, viola, and Paula Fan, piano
- March 1 and 5: Arizona Symphonic Choir, conducted by Elizabeth Schauer
- March 8 and 12: Moiss Paiewonsky, trombone, and associate artists

- March 15 and 19: Arizona Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Thomas Cockrell
- March 22 and 26: UA Collegium Musicum, conducted by Bradley Miller, with Stephen Keyl on organ
- March 29 and April 2: University Wind Ensemble, conducted by Gregg Hanson
- April 5 and 9: University Community Chorus, conducted by Elizabeth Schauer

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Links

[1] <http://www.kuatfm.org> [2] <mailto:jreel@azpublicmedia.org>