

# A bright note from humble beginnings

By Chris Streppa

UNCA's Music Director Joyce Dorr grimaces when she recalls a conversation she overheard last November during the College Night Program for area high school students.

A prospective student asked about the music department on campus. "We don't have much of a program here," a UNCA student answered.

The response stunned Dorr. She remembers all the hard work it took to create a vital, successful program in only six years.

Dorr moved from New Jersey to North Carolina in 1978. "I came because my husband [Dr. Laurence Dorr, vice chancellor for academic affairs] came here," she says, "and I was unemployed for a year."

But it was not a year without music. Dorr continued to teach and play piano and organ. The highlight of that year was her organ recital in New York City's St. Patrick's Cathedral.

She went to work for UNCA the following year. Her job was to build a comprehensive music program on the foundation set up by Dr. Frank Edwinn, associate professor of music.

"We began by designing and offering courses and ensembles to students," she says, "and the response was fantastic!" (There were 27 music majors in 1982; this year there are 64.)

The flourishing program needed room to grow and, two years ago, Dorr moved from "temporary quarters" in the Owen Art/Management Building into the old cafeteria in the cavernous basement of the Lipinsky Building.

"At first," she says, "it was just me and the roaches." Dorr's office was the former salad bar and, she explains, "it was infested." She shudders as she recalls the bugs that dropped from the ceiling onto her desk while electricians worked on the wiring overhead.

Insects were the least of her problems. "I had to figure out how to turn an old food service area into a musical facility," says Dorr.

maintenance crews, temporary walls went up to convert the private dining room and snack bar into classrooms.

The refrigerator room became an electronic music studio.

The former kitchen now serves as classroom and Kitchen Concert Hall combined. A framed poster of assorted instruments wolfing down banana splits at a luncheonette counter hangs by the entrance. Inside, colorful strips of carpet dangle from wooden tracks nailed to the walls. They serve as "acoustics."

"Practically everything is on loan or donated," says Dorr; from \$500 worth of carpeting to the \$30,000 organ. "I had to spend a lot of time being nice to people and telling them my problems."

But some problems persist in spite of all the hard work. Many rooms suffer from too much noise or not enough heat.

The recording studio, with \$800 worth of acoustical foam, still feels cold and damp.

They punched a hole in one wall of the electronic music lab (which smells strongly of stale grease and onions) to let in some heat. "Unfortunately," says Dorr, "now the noise comes through too."

Noise is also a problem in the four practice rooms. They aren't sound-proof, which makes it difficult for students to concentrate.

"They hate the acoustical inadequacies," says Dr. Wayne Kirby, assistant professor of music. "It drives students crazy because they can't practice.

One simply threw up his hands and rented a studio downtown."

Kirby, an educator whose credits also include composing, arranging, performing and audio engineering, joined the staff in 1983.

"Somebody told me there was a job here that fit the description of what I was looking for," says Kirby.

The work is demanding but department members pull together, improvising whenever possible and ignoring the insoluble problems.

Together they have created a program that meets the academic needs of students who are interested in fields as diverse as concert performing and music engineering technology.

The department now offers two bachelor of science degrees and three bachelor of arts degrees.

More than 40 courses cover topics that range from "microcomputers in music and sound" to "voice production."

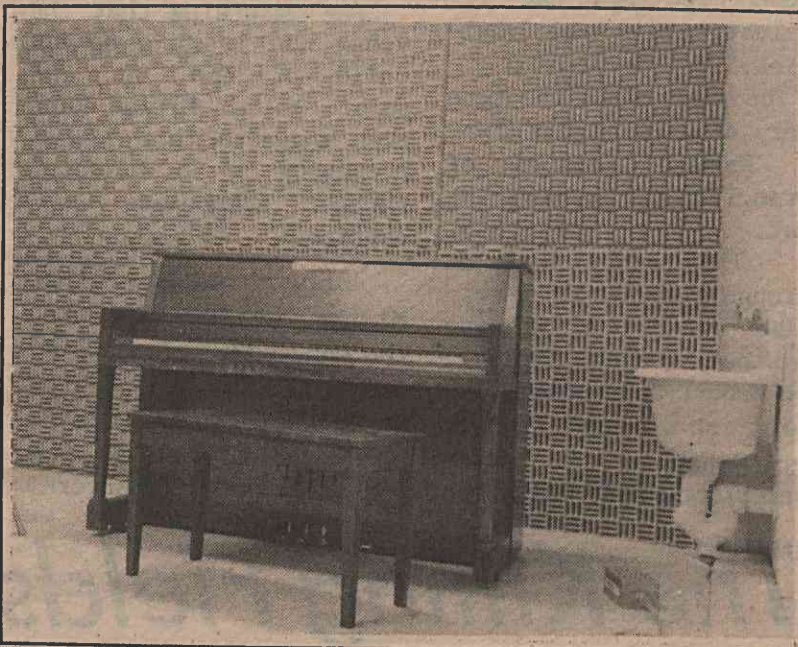
An adjunct staff of 32 professionals backs up the three permanent faculty members; Dorr, Kirby, and Edwinn. (Edwinn divides his time between music and humanities classes.)

The department is currently interviewing candidates to fill a fourth position next fall.

Kirby adds that UNCA is "one of the first schools in the United States to use digital recording in a teaching program." The equipment, though not plentiful, is very sophisticated. And, says Kirby, "we get a lot of mileage out of each piece."



DR. JOYCE DORR AND DR. WAYNE KIRBY discuss the blueprint of their future "home."  
Staff photo by Sylvia Hawkins



A KITCHEN RELIC mocks sophisticated acoustical foam in the recording studio.  
Staff photo by Sylvia Hawkins

There are several departmental performing groups that afford music students the opportunity to play or sing for an audience.

It has also instituted several community events.

The Holiday Concert has been a tradition for six years. Last Christmas, UNCA performers moved the concert to the Thomas Wolfe Auditorium to accommodate the standing-room-only crowds.

As many as 400 people a week attended last year's Summer Sings, where they enjoyed good music and picnics on the quad.

The upcoming renovation of the Lipinsky Building will mean permanent, more comfortable quarters for the Music Department. Rooms will have adequate light, heat and acoustics for the first time.

Dr. Tom Cochran, assistant vice chancellor for academic affairs, says the

renovations are due to begin in fall 1985. The goal is to have the building ready for use in fall 1986.

This means the Music Department will be "homeless" for awhile.

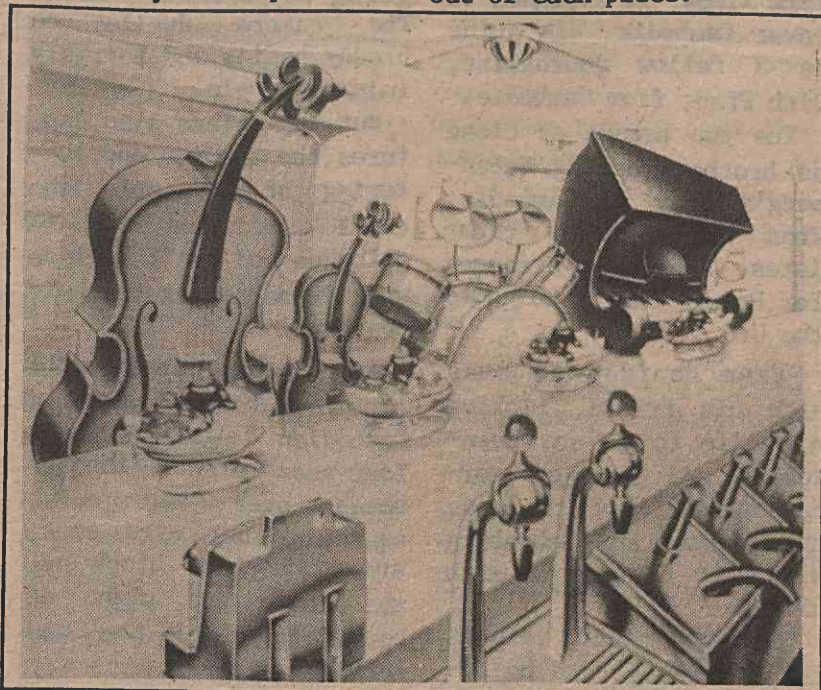
"The architect advised us to vacate the building while we renovate," says Cochran. He explains it would take too much time and money to build, wire, and plumb around an entire department.

"One option," he says, "is to see if we can locate some space as close to campus as possible to rent; maybe a house or an apartment."

"We hope to continue some semblance of operation."

The temporary relocation will certainly make that difficult for faculty and students alike.

But this department has an edge. They've tackled hardships before, and triumphed.



"SODA JERKS": poster by Roger Huysen  
Staff photo by Sylvia Hawkins