

Concert keeps Moog synthesizer active

By Brett Albers
STAFF WRITER



Wayne Kirby
Music Department Chair

Dr. Wayne Kirby presented "Moog Electronica," a demonstration of various equipment the late Robert Moog developed.

"When I planned to do this, Bob was sick," Kirby said. "I thought it was sort of a nice thing to do. We never expected him to die. He was diagnosed in April, I saw him in July, and by August he was dead."

Kirby, the music department chair, used Moog's last Theremin design, the Etherwave Pro, along with various analog synthesizers.

The Theremin was originally invented in the 1920s and the various synthesizers used in the demonstration are analog modules from the 1960s reintroduced into the marketplace recently.

The demonstration was planned before Moog passed away on Aug. 22 at the age of 71, according to Kirby.

The purpose of the Sept. 7 demonstration was to unveil new equipment that will be available for student use beginning in the spring semester.

"I started to acquire equipment now, so I can learn it well enough," Kirby said. "I'm planning to put together a Moog synthesizer room for next semester."

A Moog synthesizer studio will be available to advanced music students next semester. The classes offered will focus on classic electronic composition, according to Kirby.

"The classes are going to be on how to compose using classic electronic music components," Kirby said. "And since I am of that vintage, I can teach some stuff that a lot of people cannot teach."

The Theremin used in the demonstration works on radio technology and beat frequencies, according to Kirby.

"Basically, you cause a kind of interference with your hands," Kirby said. "There are two antennas; one to change pitch and one to change volume. There are also ways to change the wave form and tonal color."

The Theremin takes a lot of effort to master, and can be frustrating at first for many new musicians, according to Kirby.

"You have to practice every day to get it to play well," Kirby said. "It is almost too responsive and extremely difficult to play."

Kirby has extensive experience with Moog's equipment. The skills he has developed on the Theremin are a direct result of several years of practice, according to Kirby.

"I've been playing the Theremin for almost 20 years," Kirby said. "I've also been using analog gear, including the Moog equipment, for more than 25 years."

Moog's many instruments can be heard in many styles of music, ranging from pop and hip hop to progressive rock, funk, and even R & B.

"It is everywhere," Kirby said.



KIM BARTO - STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Wayne Kirby stands with a Theremin synthesizer, one of the many instruments that Robert Moog helped develop during his lifetime.

"It permeates almost all types of music."

One student saw the demonstration because they wanted to see the Theremin sound that they had heard on many records.

"I've heard it on records and always thought that it was really cool," said Ben Smith, freshman student. "I was excited to see someone actually play it."

Hearing the multitude of sounds that can be made with only one instrument was intriguing, according to Smith.

"It was cool to hear him talk about all the different effects," Smith said. "His performances were pretty impressive."

Another student was especially impressed with the performance component of the demonstration.

"I had seen a similar demonstration at Warren Wilson," said Nick Ladd, sophomore student. "I was

not really sure what to expect because at Warren Wilson they just let people play around with the Theremin."

But the demonstration at UNCA was more in-depth regarding the versatility of the Theremin, according to Ladd.

"I was really surprised when I got to go in there and learn about all the possibilities of the Theremin," Ladd said. "It was interesting to see how it interacted with all of Moog's other equipment."

Moog's contributions to contemporary music was reason enough to attend the demonstration, according to Ladd.

"I had heard how Moog had actually produced instruments for other contemporary bands, such as Radiohead," Ladd said. "It spurred my interest. It was the reason why I actually went."

Philosophy

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backgrounds."

Presenters use the lectures as a catalyst to provoke discussion from the audience members.

"We have a 30-minute presentation and about 20 minutes of questions directed to the presenter, and then the presenter sits down after about 20 minutes," Wilson said. "Then someone else gets up and moderates a discussion among the audience members."

The presenters are not allowed to speak during the audience discussion, according to Wilson.

"The purpose of the individual giving the address is to give some background and raise some concerns to provide essentially a catalyst and a focus to get people involved in the discussion," said William Sabo, professor of political science.

Sabo was the first presenter for this year's lecture series, which began Sept. 6.

"I discussed or examined the ideas and concerns that went into the framers trying to deal with religion and politics, and to raise some questions as to whether those ideas were still relevant today," Sabo said.

Fifty or more people were present at Sabo's lecture and most were active in the discussion.

A moderator at the lecture made certain that everyone in attendance had a chance to speak if they wanted to, according to Wilson.

"My interest is not to have any one person demonstrate to the other people in the group how dumb they are," Wilson said. "Philosophy is really about refining your own ideas, your own beliefs, not showing the other guy he is stupid."

"It is an attempt to bring philosophy outside of the university and to offer public programs in philosophy."

TERRY MUNROE
Freshman Student

Many UNCA philosophy professors encourage their students to participate in the lectures, but it is not a requirement, according to Wilson.

"I think it's really good for people of all backgrounds to come out and hear something interesting," Gardner said.

The philosophy lecture series program is unique, and UNCA has introduced it to many new people. Martha Nussbaum, from the American Philosophical Association, found the program intriguing when she visited the campus in May as a speaker at graduation, according to Wilson.

"She became really fascinated by it," Wilson said. "She's interested in maybe doing something at the American Philosophical Association on how to do these kind of public programs."

The first lecture of the series was very successful and is a prelude to the weeks to come, according to Wilson.

"It was a wonderful start," Wilson said. "It amazes me that afterwards, I had people coming up to me from the community saying so and so is a wonderful lecturer, and we're going to hear him or her even more. It is very good PR for the university. The university looks good to the public."

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