

Burke Singers still 'outstanding' after 15 years

The Burke Singers of Winston-Salem State celebrated 15 years of legacy highlighted by a concert April 17 in the Anderson Center.



JAYE COLE
REPORTER

The Burke Singers gave an outstanding performance, continuing in the tradition that began in 1995.

Signature selections such as "I Got Shoes" and "No More Auction Block" were performed.

The group, formed by D'Walla Simmons-Burke, reunited in celebration as the singers of the past connected with the current group.

The original members were Sonya Melton-Mickles, Temeka McCain, Cassandra McCloud-Durant and Calsine Pitt.

The vision of the group was to add variety, emotion and a sense of political awareness to the choral program.

The Burke Singers musical selections range from Negro spirituals to original songs written and arranged by members of the group.

Although times have changed and society has evolved, the ensemble has continued to remain relevant with their message through song.

Rolyndria Anderson, a sophomore music education major from Lanham, Md. attributes their success to the variety of talent that each member brings to the group.

"It's kind of inevitable because with the people that come through, our sounds change," Anderson said.

"We might learn a song from Sweet Honey in the Rock [an African American female a cappella ensemble], but we make our own arrangements

by putting in our own melodies, our own embellishments."

Aside from fine tuning their vocal skills, the women also spent time enjoying the moment and reminiscing on their college years.

Idra Green, a Greenville native, is a WSSU alum and sang with the group from 2003-2006.

She recalls fond memories of not only performing with her "sisters" but bonding with her peers as well.

"Building a sisterhood with the girls...not only did we practice in class, we get together outside of class to get to know each other and better understand each other, building a strong bridge," Green said.

For many, the reunion is bigger than reuniting with old friends.

It represents a benchmark in African-American music.

Not only have the Burke Singers set the standard in music excellence, they are also viewed as torch bearers of Civil Rights history in this area.

Michael Cain, a WSSU retiree who worked in administration, has been a long time fan of the vocal ensemble.

"You can't help but feel differently when you hear them sing, especially the songs they're singing, especially a song like 'A Change Is Gonna Come'; I heard them sing that recently. I think it's one of those things that is needed," Cain said.

Melton-Mickles, one of the original four, said she is happy about the legacy that has lived on since the group's inception. "I think it's great that they're still singing these songs and learning about history at the same time," Mickles said.

Gay-Straight Student Alliance sponsors concert to recognize gay musicians, bring awareness to WSSU

Jarrett Dawkins
REPORTER

The sound of music was in the air because of the concert performance of "Queer Compositions" at Winston-Salem State to celebrate all gay musicians April 21.

The Gay-Straight Student Alliance arranged a concert to recognize gay musicians in the music industry and to bring awareness to WSSU students and the community that gay people have made a mark in the music business and are proud of their achievements worldwide.

WSSU adjunct professors Ronnal Ford and LaTika Douthit of the Fine Arts Department in collaboration with the Gay-Straight Student Alliance conceived the idea for the concert. There are more than 100 G.S.S.A. members attending WSSU.

"We hope to increase awareness of the incredible contributions homosexual and bisexual composers have made to the cultural development of this country," said Howard McQuirter a senior majoring in psychology.

"We also have many talented LGBT [Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender] musicians in the area and this concert is one way to support them and their craft while acknowledging the contributions LGBT musicians made during the twentieth century," and McQuirter, from Fayetteville, is vice president of G.S.S.A.

"We are also pleased to have the participation of performers from the UNC School of the Arts,

UNC Greensboro, and NC A&T."

McQuirter said that members from gay and lesbian organizations attended the concert.

The artists who performed were Thomas Swenson, pianist; Ronnal Ford clarinetist and oboist; LaTika Douthit, flutist; Dennis Malloy, violist; Darell Hunt, vocalist; Rashod Wells, dancer; and Ray Ebert, pianist.

There were no heterosexual performers at the concert.

"Hopefully in the future we will have both hetero and homosexual musicians performing, but for our first we concert we wanted it to just be homosexuals," Ford said.

"This event is meant to celebrate the music and musicianship of gay and lesbian composers and musicians," McQuirter said. Therefore, all of the performed works will be composed, arranged, and performed by gay and lesbian musicians."

McQuirter said that donations aren't being accepted for the concert, but donations can be made to the G.S.S.A. to assist with future programming such as this.

Both Ford and McQuirter said they believe there will be more concerts showing honor to gay musicians.

"Concerts such as this will definitely appear in the future from us, even if they are not annual. Hopefully this concert will be very well accepted and supported by the community, thus giving the organization and performers more opportunities to put on future events such as this," McQuirter said.

Coming in fall 2010 new biology course for nonscience majors

Ebony Pullen
CONTRIBUTOR

Fall 2010 an alternative biology course for nonscience majors will be offered by the Life Science Department.

The new course, BIO 1340, will fulfill the general biology requirement for undergraduate students and discuss the relationship between basic biological principles of human health and disease.

This will be done by applying the scientific method to the diagnosis and treatment of diseases such as cancer and obesity.

"When students are more interested in topics they tend to do better," Dr. Daniel Williams said.

The purpose of the course is to provide an alternative for students who failed BIO 1301.

Drs. David Kump and Williams, assistant professors of biology, helped establish the new course.

"We are not lowering standards but giving students top-

ics they're more interested in," Kump said.

Kump said he believes the reason that grades were poor in BIO 1301 is associated with students' low attendance.

If a student failed BIO 1301, the new course will not replace the failing grade on the student's transcript.

Also this course does not fulfill prerequisite requirements for BIO 2311 or BIO 1331.

"Healthcare professions should not register for BIO 1340," Dr. Williams said.

"This is considered a general interest course and not a prerequisite course."

Dr. Donna Pierre, chair of life science, said "The Department of Life Sciences is excited about offering additional general education biology courses.

"It is our hope that students will be interested in the Human Biology and Disease course. We believe that interest leads to success."

