

A map with students

Faculty members reveal how cultural events calendar

Casey Brown
Senior Reporter

The cultural calendar. It's never a surprise when it shows up in students' campus boxes, a tangible reminder of a new semester in bloom. It is a map that guides students through four months' worth of speakers, musical artists and theatrical performances. Many quickly glance to find the big things — the commencement speaker, the fall musical — before discarding it in a desk drawer. It is only found again at the last minute, when students are scrambling to fulfill a cultural events requirement for class.

This pattern is familiar to many Elon University students, happening twice a year when a new calendar arrives with a slew of events in which to partake. But within those excerpts on various performers is a chance to expand one's horizons and experience something in a way that cannot be recreated. At least, that is the hope of the depart-

ments involved in the calendar-making process.

For the

faculty who work to create the calendar each year, it is already May 2013. They are constantly looking ahead toward the next calendar year, and they will have every show, speaker and performer lined up for the 2013–2014 academic year by the upcoming Winter Term at the latest.

Within the Lyceum committee, which plans the cultural events calendar, each department has one spokesperson to maintain a balance. For the Department of Performing Arts, that person is department chair Fred Rubeck, who describes his position as one of scheduling, budget requests and production planning. For Rubeck, a schedule for the performing arts works on a four-year plan, rather than one year at a time.

"We work in four-year cycles," he said. "Students should have different kinds of performances from different time periods. For example, students should experience Shakespeare twice."

Rubeck said he keeps an eye on his students, making sure they have the most diverse and fulfilling performing arts careers during their time at Elon. But he isn't the only faculty member on the committee with students' experiences on his mind.

Jeff Clark, executive director of cultural and special programs, said he also thinks of the students as he plans speaker series and



Members of the Elon Dance Company perform "Revealed in Flight Between Earth and Sky" during Fused Moves in May 2012.

events and looks for fresh entertainment to bring to campus. During the summer, he attends performing arts conventions, developing a list of 60 events that he presents before members of the Lyceum committee, who cut the number down to approximately 10 acts.

"We try to get artists who would be willing to do master classes or workshops for students," Clark said. "Also, we take advantage of block booking. We work with other schools in the state to get high-quality acts for a reduced price."

But student input also means a lot to the planning process. This year's fall commencement speaker, Maya Angelou, was the most popular name with students when it came to who should speak on campus, according to Clark. And for him, it's not about having a theme for the year. It's about variety and high quality.

Matt Buckmaster, chair of the Department of Music, said he does believe in bringing in artists who

can work one-on-one with arts students, but he also encourages students from outside the artistic community to take advantage of what Elon brings to campus.

"A big consideration for me is how beneficial the artist will be for students," Buckmaster said. "These artists are internationally renowned and students can see them for free."

Buckmaster said the Department of Music brings in about 80 acts in a given year, and he likes how he can use these events as a means of extending beyond the campus. Because music events are free to the entire community, Buckmaster reaches out to retirees and Burlington residents to come see the shows, forming a bond between Elon's campus and surrounding community.

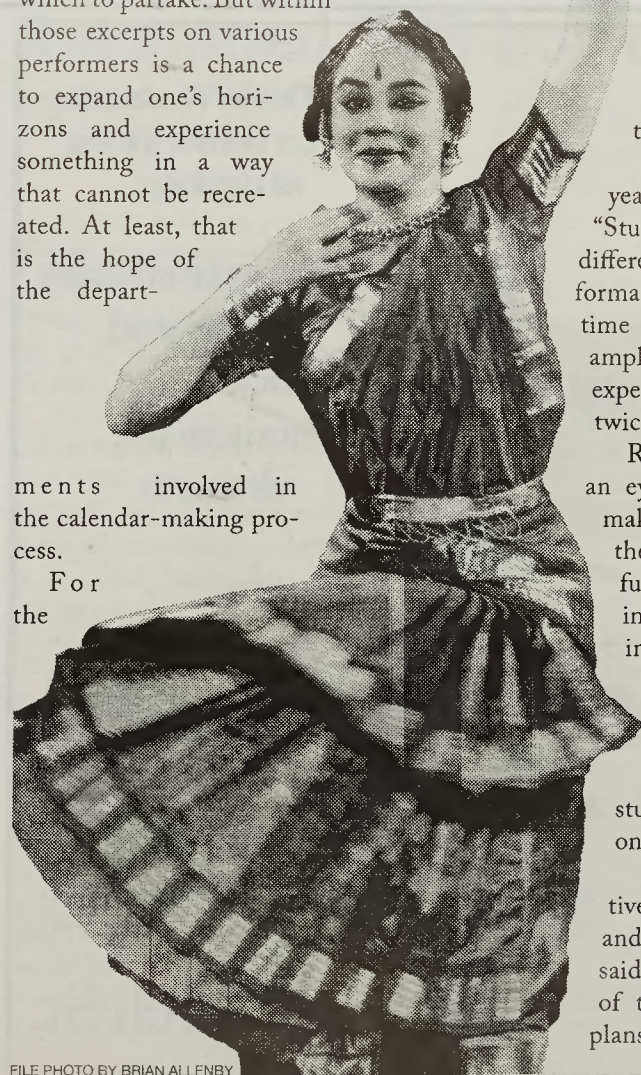
Rubeck, Clark, Buckmaster and their respective committees work in tandem to create the calendar, which is ultimately a balance between the three departments. The major obstacle they face is how to share the busy facilities — Yea-

ger Recital Hall, McCrary Theatre, McKinnon Hall and Whitley Auditorium, among others. Coordinating an event in one of these spaces goes beyond just hosting it. There needs to be time and space for production and rehearsal as well. For Rubeck, production is a heavily weighted consideration.

"It takes months of planning for a production," Rubeck said. "We have only one staff of designers doing all the shows. We have to have enough shop time. It's a very elaborate process."

Buckmaster said while the performing arts do require significant amounts of time to prepare for their shows, the Department of Music "fills in the gaps," bringing in guest artists almost every week. The departments bounce off each other, with some departments stepping in on the weeks that others need time off.

"It's like a house of cards," Rubeck said. "If something is off, we need to rebuild."



FILE PHOTO BY BRIAN ALLENBY