

Alliance Helps Kids Learn Musical Skills

By WARREN WILSON
Staff Writer

Charles Messick has wanted to be a professional singer since third grade. "I want to go to New York and sing on Broadway," he said. "It's going to take some time for that to happen."

Messick, an 18-year-old junior at Durham School of the Arts, moved a small step closer to that dream in January when he got the opportunity to take private voice lessons thanks to the Music Teachers' Alliance for Youth. The MTAY was founded by Alexis Cole, a Chapel Hill musician and teacher

as well as Messick's tutor, to offer free music lessons to underprivileged youth. Cole founded the program in September while working for the Volunteer Center of Greater Durham. A survey of needs showed that music teachers were in demand. "I said, 'I know a lot of musicians,'" she said. "I bet a lot of them would be interested in helping."

Although the organization's official nonprofit status is pending, Cole and five others are already teaching nine voice, piano and drum students. Students, who must qualify for free or reduced-price school lunches to participate, are selected by their school music teachers.

"Their school music teachers see that they have a real interest in music, and they tend to know if they're from less-privileged families," Cole said. "We call the families to see if they're interested and if they qualify."

Messick's family readily accepted the opportunity for private instruction.

"(My parents) said, 'Every chance you get, you better take it,'" he said. Messick is involved in his school chorus and musical productions but has never had

private lessons until now. "I think (my singing) has improved a lot," he said.

Students who want to play instruments face the added need for musical equipment that can cost hundreds or thousands of dollars. Local musician Scott Emmerman volunteered to help MTAY expand its offerings in this area.

Emmerman, vice president of sales and marketing at E-MU/ENSONIC, a California-based manufacturer of audio products, hopes to use his industry connections to get free instruments.

Emmerman said instrument acquisition has been moving slowly, but he remains enthusiastic about the program. "Instruments are not freely available," he said. "If (soliciting manufacturers) doesn't work we'll go to local music stores and ask if they'll be willing to contribute."

Emmerman got involved after hearing a local public radio feature about the organization. "Today, music is all around, on TV, on the radio, and the program can show (students) how they can be a part of it, even in a small way," he said.

Cole said the response from local schools has been lower than she expected, but "as long as I'm in the area, I'd like to keep doing this."

"Hopefully, it'll go on indefinitely," Messick said based on his experience, he thinks other students could gain a great deal from the program.

"I think it's giving people a chance to make them realize what they have."

Those interested in MTAY can reach Alexis Cole at 928-0924.

Farrelly Brothers Disappoint With Unfunny 'Say It Isn't So'

By JUSTIN WINTERS
Staff Writer

Who says comedy is easy? When you have the ability to make fun of stroke victims, homosexuals, incest, people with artificial limbs and cows, funny just comes naturally, right?

Wrong, and in the newest bummer produced, but not directed by those darn Farrelly Brothers, funny only comes few and far between.

Director J.B. Rogers, who has filled the role of assistant director for the brothers' past successes ("Dumb and Dumber" and "There's Something About Mary"), should have followed the other golden rule often learned during the childhood years: If you can't do something right, don't do it at all.

The setup had Springer promise. Boy meets girl, has sex with girl, finds out she's his sister. She flies the coop and finds another rich, nonrelative boyfriend, he gets branded the "sister banger," and then he finds out they weren't related at all.

"Say" has the look and many of the same actors of the other far more amusing Farrelly Brothers films, but its leads and propensity to sell a joke for way too long make watching the film a chore rather than a joy.

Chris Klein plays Gilly Noble, a char-

actor that seems to have worse luck than Joseph Forte during a tournament game. But while Forte has proven that he can play at his whim, Klein really doesn't seem like a funny guy. Wooden, yes, but funny, no. Common movie knowledge would require a mildly funny actress to lead Klein along by his nonfunny leash. Who else do they get but Heather "Really, I'm Smart in Real Life" Graham? Right.

A so-so cast can usually be bolstered by a hilarious script with memorable jokes (i.e. Klein's own "American Pie"), but Mr. Rogers couldn't even luck out in that department either. Every comedic moment is stretched to such gratuitous lengths that the punch line seems to come out of nowhere. It doesn't help that every possible minority is poked fun at in some way. Cow lovers beware.

But, hey, all was not wasted when you have Sally Field playing white trash with an overacting zeal. Most probably won't REALLY like her, but her inclusion itself does induce chuckles. The same goes for 7UP guy Orlando Jones, who plays a drifter who can't seem to hold on to his artificial limbs.

Rogers has room to celebrate though. "Say" seems to have notched him his next prime directing gig, "American Pie 2."

Hopefully, that venture will not be the pie in the face of good comedy that made "Say" so rotten.

The Arts & Entertainment Editor can be reached at artsdesk@unc.edu.



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