The Heart of the Cathedral

We’ve come to the end of another semester and the end of the year. Finals are approaching, the first snow has fallen and Candlelight is coming soon. The tradition of the Candlelight service has been longstanding and has remained extremely popular with students, faculty and the surrounding community of Northwest Arkansas.

One of the most beautiful and unique facets of the service is the integration of the pipe organ.

The current organ here on campus was not the first, however. The first organ to make an appearance at John Brown was around 1960. Before it came to JBU, the organ was at a church in Brooklyn, New York and then rebuilt before being sold to the school. According to Dr. Wubbena, “Dr. Mabel Oiesen, head of the Music Department and a legendary figure in the history of JBU, founder of the Cathedral Choir, among other things, was the driving force behind its acquisition. I believe she paid for much of it as a memorial to her mother.” In 1978 the organ was removed to make room for the new risers being constructed on the stage. A year later the instrument was sold to be used as parts and the Cathedral was left without an organ.

The Music Department had been given an organ in 1976 that was too small for the Cathedral “but it was deemed better than no organ” so the little instrument was called up to the big leagues of the Cathedral. It was in use until 1991 and then put into storage while the Cathedral was being renovated. After the renovation was complete a new organ was brought in and the small organ was retired to the Jones Recital Hall where it resides today.

The current organ in the Cathedral was purchased from Presbyterian Church here in Siloam and used as their practice instrument. They first sold it to a church in Alaska but after it was dismantled, crated and ready to be sent, they realized it would cost more to ship it than what they originally sold it for! To save their bank, the church quickly terminated the sale with the Alaskan church and sold it to JBU instead.

The Music Department has worked hard to ensure that an organ is available here on campus and it’s at Candlelight where that hard work really pays off. The Candlelight service has a place in the hearts of many of the music professors and their stories reflect this. When asked what his favorite memory of Candlelight was Mr. Whitmore replied with, “In the 1960s, candles at the Candlelight Carol Service were lit by faculty kids (boys). I probably did this 3-4 times. I remember being struck by the majestic sound of the organ during our late afternoon rehearsals, especially at the end of the refrain of O Come, All Ye Faithful: ‘O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord!’ The organist must have ‘pulled out all the stops’ at that point.”

Dr. Wubbena told a story of a potentially embarrassing beginning to the Candlelight service, “It was just a few years ago that the organ was unplugged when I sat down to play my part of the prelude on the first night of Candlelight – some well-meaning person had said, ‘What’s this extension cord doing plugged in here? We don’t need that!’ Everyone could see that I tried to play (the spotlight had already been turned on) and watch as I got up, went over to investigate and returned (I’m quite certain that the spotlight did not follow me!), and then played once the reservoir of air-under-pressure was sufficient. Be assured that I always check it out when I set up…”

The JBU community owes a lot to the dedication that the Music Department puts into the procuring of the organs for the campus. It allows us be a part of a diminishing art and also helps make the Candlelight service a truly special event.
As I sat in this memorable yuletide season, with all these facts crowding for a place in my mind and heart, there came high over all the question, “If the facts were known, how much of the real Christ spirit of humility, and sacrifice, and suffering and love, would be found, if all the Christmas programs stages around the world— if the whole program could be whipped into immediate judgment with God to separate and segregate the genuine and the true from this world ocean of spectacular display and pretense, and parade?”

God pity us, shocking hypocrisy and appalling blasphemy, I fear, would often be found in the center of things!

We have lost the Christmas Christ, and turned millions of groping, heart-hungry men and women, who, like the wise men, long to follow the star to the cradle manger, and the Bethlehem Hills, and the wondering shepherds; and we have lost that Christ in an unscriptural, impossible, premature, man-made program of a reign of righteousness, and a world of peace, and a dispensation of good-will read out of an angel’s song that was a prophecy for the ages to come, and not a fact to be immediately realized. […]

At Easter-time, the world puts on a spectacular show, as the world puts on a spectacular show at Christmas time! At Easter-time some people stay up all night, and journey to some mountain top where often national characters, known for their immoralties, stand before vast audiences to sing resurrection songs, or deliver resurrection orations, with the result that millions of our American youth have come to feel there is nothing there but show! God help us get back to the simplicities of the swaddling clothes, and the babe in the manger, and the empty tomb with the grave-clothes lying by.” Excerpt from “On Earth Peace- But When?”

Lips have always been sadly unappreciated. If you feel you have a pair of lips that have never received the recognition they deserve, your chance to be discovered is approaching fast. The “Best Lips Contest” is only one of the varied activities that have been scheduled for TWIRP week sponsored by SGA. [...] All week long in the cafeteria entries for the “Best Lips Contest” will be accepted. Entries are made by applying lipstick (supplied by SGA at the back table) and pressing a lip print on a folded napkin. Both girls and guys are encouraged to participate.

Sunday night there will be a FREDI (Fellowship Really Edifies Doesn’t It) sponsored by CAUSE. It will feature games, singing and sharing in the Activities building. Comedian Les Reed from Tulsa will be Monday Night’s special feature. Tickets are free. The concert will be in the Cathedral at 7:30 PM. SGA has rented TJ’s from 9-12 PM (when they are usually closed) and will hold a pizza party exclusively for JBU students. The pizza will cost the same as usual. The movie “The Incredible Mr. Limpet” with Don Knotts will be shown Tuesday night at 7:30. Tickets will be 75 cents per person and $1 per couple. [...] Thursday evening in the cafeteria at 5 will be the “Backwards Dinner.” All clothes must be work backward and the meal will be served beginning with desert. Immediately following the dinner the Senior Talent Show is scheduled. Seniors are planning to re-perform many of the acts they put on when they were freshmen here. There will be a woman’s basketball game against the UofA at Moticello in the gym Friday night at 7. Winners of the “Best Lips Contest” will be announced at half time. A skating party is scheduled at “The Skate Place” in Fayetteville from 12-2 AM Saturday morning. Tickets are $1.50. David Meece will be appearing in concert Saturday night at 8 in the Cathedral. […] The concert promises to be an uplifting, fun time. Tickets are $3.50 per person and $6 per couple. Prices for the “Best lips Contest will be 2 free tickets to the concert.

The Department of Broadcasting produced a one-hour television special that was broadcast on the Siloam Springs cable system. Titled “Christmas with Charles Dickens.” It featured Tom Roberts, an assistant professor of broadcasting at JBU, as Dickens, and also featured Mr. Robert’s own children as the Dickens children.

The creation of an Intercultural Studies degree was announced at JBU. Dave Sanford described the new major as being designed to give students a greater awareness of the world around them and help them integrate relationally and socially with members of other cultures, ethnic groups and nations.

Insights

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