

Maestros make music, math mesh

by Kristen Manders - Thursday, October 28, 2010

<http://www.uwosh.edu/today/6705/maestros-make-music-math-mesh/>

Pushing buttons on a calculator and pressing the keys of a piano seem to have little in common, but these mathematicians and musicians will tell you otherwise.

The University of Wisconsin Oshkosh's resident chamber ensemble, Infusion, will host its first interdisciplinary concert to explain why the music you like to hear is pleasing to the ear.

Members of the Oshkosh and campus communities are invited to learn how math and music are related at 7:30 p.m. Nov. 4 in the Arts and Communication Center's Music Hall, 926 Woodland Ave. Tickets cost \$8 for general admission, \$5 for senior citizens and non-UW Oshkosh students, \$3 children for 12 and younger, and free for UW Oshkosh students with a Titan I.D.

John Koker, dean of the College of Letters and Science and mathematics professor at UW Oshkosh, will add a new dimension to Infusion's performance. Although it may seem like there is no connection between math and music, there is a relationship that Koker would like to bring to light.

"Over the years in higher education, I have known many students who have double majored in math and music," Koker said. "This is not a coincidence."

Emily Helvering, lecturer for the music department, knew that Koker's dynamic speaking style and familiarity with Infusion would engage the audience while he lectured between each piece on the program. Helvering approached Koker with the idea of having a mathematician reveal some of the science behind the compositions.

Koker's explanations and Infusion's performances will focus on pieces composed by Anton Reicha, Johann Sebastian Bach and Ludwig van Beethoven.

"Reicha was a mathematician, and many of Bach's works display mathematical properties," Helvering said. "The Beethoven piece is not specifically mathematical, but math can be used to explain some of the reasons why the music works."

Added Koker, "Some mathematical concepts can be employed to analyze, compose and create music. Also, there are some mathematical reasons as to why some sounds are pleasing while others are less pleasing to the ear."

Discussing topics from the two departments will give students and other audience members a unique perspective in to what affect various majors can have. Koker will encourage students and faculty to participate in events that broaden understanding of educational programs offered at UW Oshkosh.

"As dean of the college, I plan to promote more interdisciplinary activities such as this one," Koker said.

“It’s a wonderful opportunity for students and others to see connections among our programs and areas of study.”

Infusion was formed in 2006 and consists of faculty members from UW Oshkosh’s music department and guest musicians who perform throughout northeastern Wisconsin.

Featured musicians for the Nov. 4 performance include UWO faculty members Klara Fenyö Bahcall, violin; Kay Gainacopulos, clarinet; Andre Gaskins, cello; Eli Kalman, piano; Linda Pereksta, flute; and Carol Rosing, bassoon.

- For more information about this event, visit www.uwosh.edu/infusion.