

FROM THE ARCHIVES

In researching departmental papers and budgets from the past seventy years, one can learn a great deal about the music department's history. The first records of the music department were found from 1908, two years after the founding of Western Kentucky State Normal School. There were two grand pianos, three upright pianos, and an orchestra consisting of 6-8 instruments. Faculty members were W. A. White, Mary Potter, Irene Russell, W. L. Gebhardt and Pauline Drake. In 1909, the curriculum was broadened to include public school music certification courses. In 1911, Franz Strahm, a composer, pianist, violinist and choral director, organized the Oratorio Society, which performed such pieces as Hadyn's *Creation*, Molique's *Abraham*, Costa's *Eli*, Sullivan's *Light of the World*, Planquette's *Chimes of Normandy*, and Spohr's *The Last Judgment*.

The Oratorio Society sponsored a Music Festival one year that drew "three to five hundred Ward-Belmont girls, . . . a large number of the most prominent musicians of Nashville and Louisville, . . . and Frieda Hempel, absolutely recognized as the world's greatest coloratura soprano."

Many of the buildings and titles we musicians use on a daily basis were some of the founders and visionaries of the university:

Henry Hardin Cherry, WKU President 1906-1937

Cherry Hall

Captain C. J. Vanmeter, Chancellor Emeritus of Western KY State Normal School

Van Meter Auditorium

J. Whit Potter, member of the Board of Regents, 1906-1922

Potter Hall

Pleasant J. Potter, established Potter College for Young Ladies in 1890

Potter College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

Ivan F. Wilson

Ivan Wilson Fine Arts Center

Paul Garrett, WKU President 1937-1955

Garrett Auditorium

E. A. Diddle, WKU basketball coach 1922-1964

Diddle Arena

In the beginning, there were a few students taking public school music, with one teacher. In the beginning, there was no real chorus or band. In the beginning the school made an effort to have an orchestra that boasted 6-8 players. In the beginning, the applied music department had a teacher of piano and violin and a total equipment of two old grand pianos and three uprights.

The number of faculty varied greatly, with only 2 listed in 1911-12. In 1914, a course of study in guitar and mandolin was added (along with 4 new faculty). In 1920-21, there were two courses of study offered: Public School Music and the Conservatory of Music. There were 11 courses required for the Public School Music study and 8 courses required for the Conservatory of Music study. These courses included music theory, history, harmony, sight-singing, violin voice and organ. New courses offered in 1924 included composition, orchestration, conducting, methods, appreciation and solfeggio. All of the music students met once a week for the study of some large choral work that was presented at the annual May Music Festival.

In 1939-40, the curriculum was divided into Public School Music, Music Education, Theory, Music for General Culture and Applied Music. On January 18, 1848, Claude Rose started the first Music Educators Club at Western. In 1960, Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia was formed, and in 1961, Delta Omicron was formed.

From *The Western Newsician, Christmas 1964 (Vol. IX, No. 1)*, these memories are offered. The WKU student enrollment was over 6,800, of whom there were approximately 100 music majors, and three new faculty were welcomed (Virgil Hale, Edward Pease, Betty Pease). The Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia presented "Spotlights On the Hill," a music variety show with an all male cast. The Marching Band of nearly 100 enjoyed a successful season, including Band Day with a thrilling massed band performance. Other music faculty members were Claude Rose, Ohm Pauli, Gertrude Bale, James Godfrey, Howard Carpenter, Ed Knob, Edward Thaden, Bennie Beach, and Tom Stone.

In the years 1949 and 1950, Thursdays were days of particular excitement in the Western Kentucky University Department of Music. On those days, one of America's greatest and best known composers made the drive to Bowling Green from Nashville where he was serving on the faculty of Peabody College. He spent each Thursday teaching WKU students the art of composition. His students never knew that he was born in Oklahoma of Scotch-Irish parents, was raised on a farm in the San Gabriel Valley of California, played clarinet in the high school band, was employed as a farm worker and truck driver, or that he was a close friend of folk singers Burl Ives and Woody Guthrie, as well as the American poet, Carl Sandburg. Included among his symphonic works are two that bear the sign of his brief stay in this region: *Kentucky Spring*, a tone poem premiered by the Louisville Orchestra (1949), and *Cumberland Concerto* (1952).

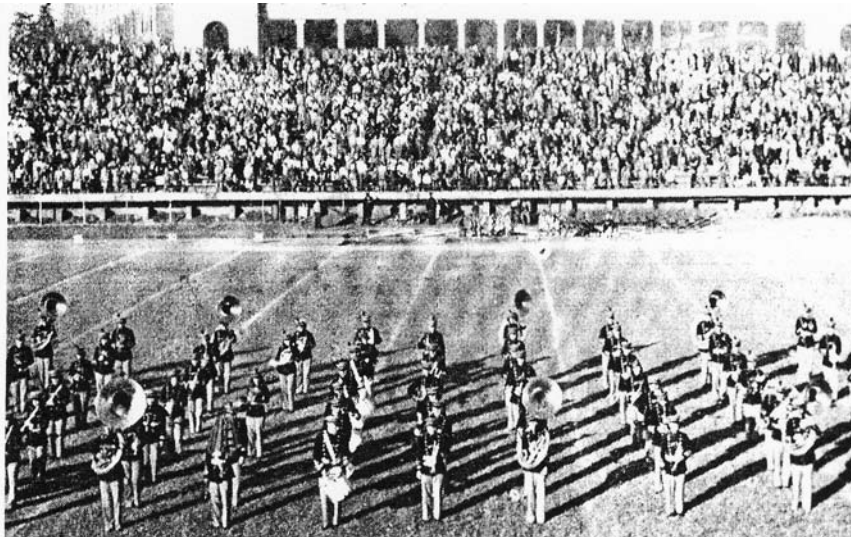
An unusual jazz band, Gemini, was started in 1965 when several female music majors approach David Livingston and asked about starting an all-girl stage band. They were sponsored for many years after that by the USO Shows and the National Music Council, touring to the Caribbean and in the European theatre. Some memorable performances in 1975 took this ensemble to an outdoor performance in Berlin, to a ballpark in Sweibucken, Germany, to OUTPOST ALPHA on East Germany border, and to military bases in Puerto Rico, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, Bahama Islands, West Indies, and the Canal Zone. Featuring jazz, popular and the big band era sounds, these ensemble members were enthusiastic ambassadors of goodwill and of Western Kentucky University.

	<u>Department Leadership</u>	<u>Terminal Degree</u>
1908	W. A. White, Dean, School of Music	
1910	Franz Strahm, Dean	Royal Conservatory of Music (Germany)
1935	West Richards, Department Head	Ph. D., Trinity College
1937	John Vincent, Head	A.M., George Peabody College
1946	R. R. Willman, Head	Ph.D., Columbia Teachers College
1947	Weldon Hart, Head	Ph.D., Eastman School of Music
1950	Hugh Gunderson, Head	M.A., University of Iowa
1958	Thomas Stone, Head	Ph.D., Florida State University
1965	Howard Carpenter, Head	Ph.D., University of Rochester
1975	Wayne Hobbs, Head	Ph.D., Tulane University
1987	David Lee, Interim Head	Ph.D., Ohio State University
1989	Charles Smith, Head	D.M.A., George Peabody College
1991	John Duff, Head	Ph.D., Michigan State University
2000	Joseph Stites, Interim Head	M.S., University of Illinois
2001	Mitzi Groom, Head	Ph.D., Florida State University

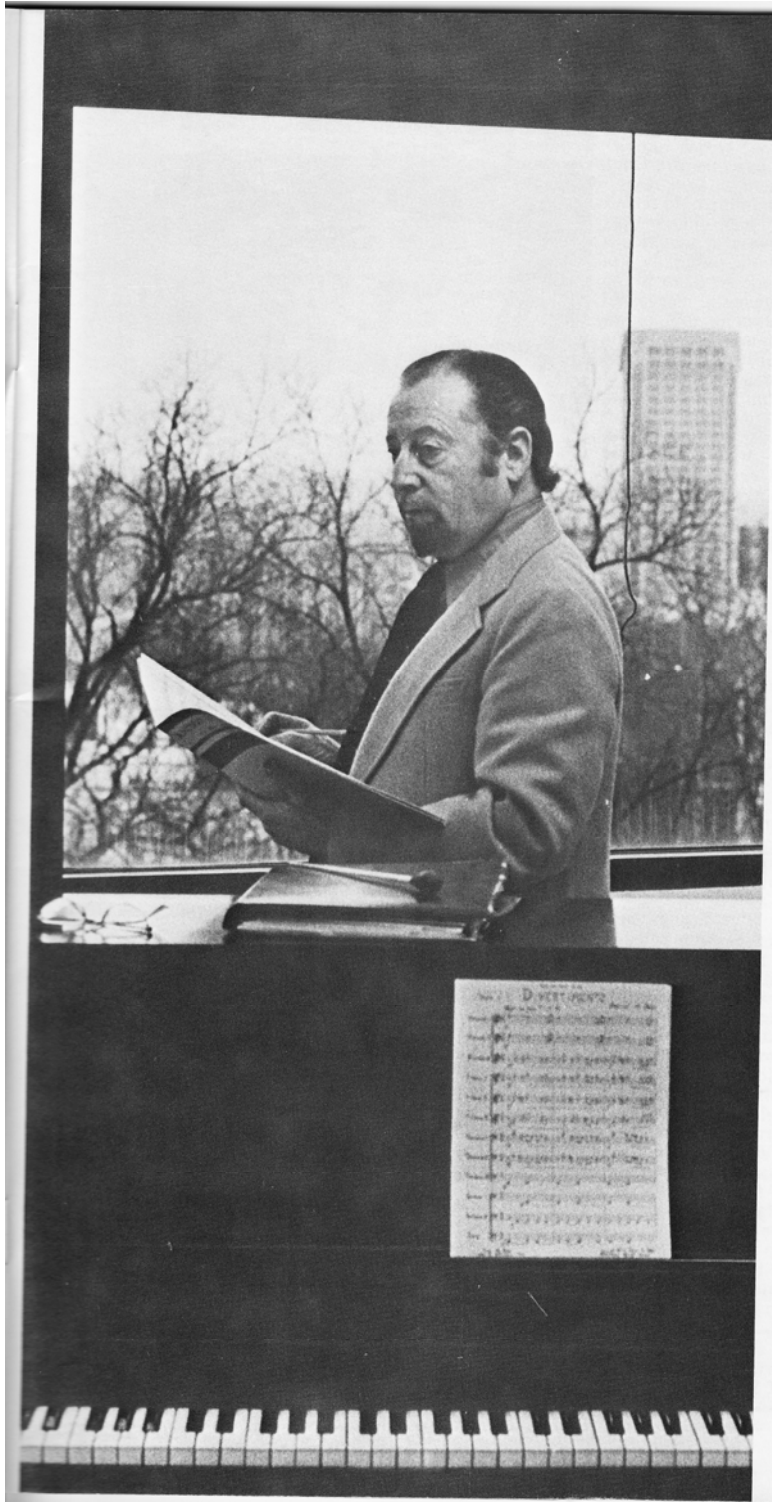
WALL OF FAME

Congratulations are in order for the WALL OF FAME recipients. Since 1997, the Music Department has sponsored a special concert to honor alumni and former faculty members during the annual Homecoming Concert. Correspondingly, a framed picture with a biography has been hung on the WALL OF FAME for each recipient, located on the third floor of the Ivan Wilson Fine Arts Center. Since its inception, the following honorees have been inducted into the WALL OF FAME:

1997	Larnelle Harris	'69 alum
	Edward Pease	WKU faculty
1998	David "Doc" Livingston	'51 alum/WKU faculty
	Nelle Gooch Travelstead	'32 alum/WKU faculty
	Ohm Pauli	WKU faculty
1999	Howard Carpenter	WKU faculty
	Howard "Zeke" Nicar, Jr.	'55 alum
	Amy Tate Williams	'85 alum
2000	Kent Campbell	WKU faculty
	Timothy Simpson	'84 alum
	Charles Ball	'54 alum
2001	Bennie Beach	WKU faculty
2002	Beegie Adair	'58 alum
	Mike Longo	'59 alum
2003	Hazel Carver	'38 & '62 alum
	Joe Allen	'60 & '66 alum
2004	Greg Colson	'50 alum
2005	Franz Strahm	WKU Dept. Head
	Sheila Harris Jackson	'78 alum
2006	Claude Rose	WKU faculty
	Doug Van Fleet	'63 alum



The Western Band takes charge of things at halftime during a Hilltopper Football contest – 1942-43



MUSIC MAN BENNIE BEACH

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The Music Man – BENNIE BEACH

The Maestro Returns to Carnegie Hall

By DEBBIE DICKEY

The maestro returned to Carnegie Hall Feb. 15 to hear another of his compositions featured in concert, a world premiere. It was the second time Prof. Bennie Proctor Beach has heard one of his works played at the famed New York City palace of music, the first time being in 1966.

Delta State University has named Beach its first distinguished music alumnus. His music also was featured at a special concert played before the Kentucky Music Teachers Association (KMTA) this spring at the Executive Inn West.

Beach also has received notification from KMTA that he is the organization's 1976 commissioned Kentucky composer. "This honor is coming to you because of your continued contributions to our programs," wrote Frederick A. Mueller of Morehead, the KMTA theory-composition chairman, "and because of your excellence and continued professional growth."

In a lifetime of music—from high school jazz band days in Mississippi to the Big Band era to the nation's concert halls—Beach, an associate professor of music at Western, has worked and lived with many of America's music greats.

He played with the Glenn Miller Band during World War II; an across-the-hall neighbor was a man by the name of Henry Mancini. Don't leave out the King of Country, Roy Acuff, and The Guitar Man, Chet Atkins. A music professor for 23 years, Beach even bears some personal and personality resemblance to two musicians of note: he wears a Mitch Miller beard and exudes Doc Severinsen charm.

Devotion to his calling has paid off handsomely for this trumpeter from Mississippi. Music and Bennie Beach were made for each other. Beach's father was a vocalist, his mother played the piano. His sister was a professional arranger.

"Music has always been a part of my life," he said during a recent interview. And so it happened that Bennie Beach of Cleveland, Miss., got his first trumpet at age 7, setting his feet firmly on Music Road.

High school days in Mississippi were music-oriented and his jazz band played for dances and proms. Summer vacations took him to New Orleans and Memphis . . . wherever the talented schoolboy was offered a job.

To his knowledge, he was the only senior high student to present a recital in his home town. In his "spare time" he performed with the Delta State University Dance Band and continued with them until his college graduation.

Priding himself with that musical accomplishment, he smiled and added another, "I was the only high school student who got away with dating the college girls!"

With a degree and professional experience tucked under his belt, he traded in a dinner jacket for Air Corps fatigues during World War II. Military travels

included concert schedules and after-hour dates with a singer named Pearl Hitch, who later became Mrs. Bennie Beach. Mrs. Beach now teaches at Western's Jones-Jagers Laboratory School.

After the service he gave high school band directing a try but soon moved to Nashville where both new career opportunities and a son were born.

He mixed academics and entertainment in Music City, USA, earning two graduate degrees from George Peabody College and the respect of jazz and country performers. He takes pride in being a former student of Roy Harris, "America's first great symphonist," he adds.

The phrase being in the right place at the right time applied to Beach and his start at Western in 1953.

"I was sitting in the Music Department office when the call came from Bowling Green concerning the availability of a teaching position at Western," he recalled. "I have just the man for you," his professor told the caller and Bennie Beach headed for Bowling Green that Saturday for an interview with President Paul Garrett and various members of Western's Music Department. "I liked Western and I liked the people, and I've been here ever since," he said.

Opportunities for other jobs have popped up frequently during the past 23 years, but Beach prefers the Kentucky Bluegrass.

Bennie Jr. ('76) entered his father's office during the interview—a bearded young pottery artist who shares his father's looks and love for music. "I'm dad's drummer, but I could never compete with him," he said with a laugh, adding that having a built-in music teacher for a father was "pretty neat."

Playing with his own combo since he was 12, the younger Beach speaks with respect and admiration of his father's works. "Dad taught me to make some contribution to life and be happy with it," he said.

They discussed singer/arranger Anita Kerr who once played piano for Beach; rock stars Seals and Crofts who are close family friends; the influence Elvis Presley, the Beatles and Rolling Stones have had on today's music—topics which spoke of a refreshing father-son relationship.

Outside the classroom, Bennie Beach is an avid sportsman who enjoys hunting, fishing and golfing and mod-Beach ('74) is a dental hygienist).

He enjoys his music and loves being with people. He's been successful in his profession, successful in his career. "I have a lovely family and good friends, what else could a man ask for?" (Daughter-in-law Betty Rose Beach ('74) is a dental hygienist.)

Stage light, concerts, famous friends, grade books, students who have been successful in their post-graduate endeavors and a nine-iron—all part of life for a Western music professor who, in the ocean of music, is a pretty big "beach."