

VIRTUAL VIRTUOSOS

CONSERVATORY WEBCASTS ATTRACT A WORLDWIDE AUDIENCE

By Sheree Rogers



Right: Larry Darling (left) recording technology engineer, and Brian Pertl, dean of the conservatory, during a recording session

Opposite: Rick Bjella conducts Lawrence musicians and singers during the Kaleidoscope concert.



When **Brian Pertl '86** returned to Lawrence in September 2008 as the new dean of the Conservatory of Music, there was never a question that greater emphasis on technology would follow. Having spent the previous 14 years as an executive at Microsoft, the World Wide Web had been Pertl's ballpark and Lawrence conservatory students and faculty were his new team.

Scarcely two months later, plans for webcasting conservatory performances via Lawrence's internet radio station, WLFM, were in place, and on November 15 the beta-test of a Lawrence Symphony Orchestra webcast streamed to a select group of 50 LSO fans. One week later, with the live webcast of the Wind Ensemble and Symphonic Band concert, the conservatory's audience grew from the 1,148 seats in Memorial Chapel to a worldwide audience that is rapidly expanding.

"Our global WLFM broadcasts have a huge benefit for prospective students, alumni, and parents, Pertl said. "Now a high school cellist from Seattle who knows of Lawrence but is wondering about the quality of our orchestra can tune in and be amazed. Similarly, an alumnus who sang in Concert Choir but has had no ability to keep up with the ensemble, can pull up a virtual seat in the chapel and reconnect with professor Bjella and the choir."

"Amazed" describes the reaction from prospective students and alumni alike. The sound quality of the webcasts has been extraordinary thanks, in part, to **Larry Darling '76**, recording technology engineer. "When Brian suggested that we webcast major ensemble concerts I was a bit skeptical because I was afraid the audio quality would be substandard. I was happily proved wrong on our first beta test and have been enthusiastically behind the idea ever since," Darling said.

Our son is a student in the conservatory, and called today to let us know that the concert would be streamed. We live in California so are only able to get to one concert per year and we really miss hearing him play. The sound quality was wonderful and we enjoyed every minute of it.

— Nina and Richard Mancina, Sacramento, Calif., parents of Peter Nicholas Mancina '11

Darling and **Alvina Tan '06**, assistant director of recording, produce a 30-minute preconcert program, synchronizing the timing with the beginning of the live concert webcast. Tan does preconcert music research, selection, script writing, and acts as the second engineer during the concerts. Darling hosts the programs, interviewing faculty guests. "We try to make it professional and informative, but the main objective is to bring more people into our chapel performances," Darling said.

Predictably, the concert webcasts are only the first step for the technology-oriented dean. "Our dream is to create a second WLFM stream that is dedicated to music and life in the conservatory," Pertl said.

"Besides playing pieces from our vast archives of recordings, we could have music-related lectures and discussions, interviews with faculty and students, or even call-in shows. The possibilities are endless. We don't have the funding or manpower yet to make this a reality, but we are committed to aiming high!"

To receive e-mail notices about upcoming webcast performances, send an e-mail to recording@lawrence.edu and ask to be added to the list of subscribers. ■

LAWRENCE CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC WEBCAST SCHEDULE

Please visit www.lawrence.edu and click on "Conservatory of Music" to learn more about the concert programs and instructions for tuning in to the webcasts.

Sat., April 18, 8 p.m.*
Symphony Orchestra, Viking Chorale, Cantala, and Concert Choir

Fri., April 24, 8 p.m.
Wind Ensemble

Fri., May 15, 8 p.m.
Symphony Orchestra

Fri., May 22, 8 p.m.
Wind Ensemble

Sat., May 23, 8 p.m.
Lawrence University Jazz Ensemble, Jazz Band, and Jazz Workshop

Fri., May 29, 8 p.m.
Viking Chorale, Cantala, and Concert Choir

Sat. May 30, 8 p.m.
Symphonic Band

Sun., May 31, 3 p.m.
Percussion Ensemble

Fri., June 5, 8 p.m.
Symphony Orchestra

*All times are Central Daylight Time.