

In the Spotlight

A new WPSU-TV series explores the musical talents at Penn State

On a television studio stage Emily Knox Peterson, wearing a showy red dress, flashed a large smile as she belted out “Cabaret.”

Peterson, a Penn State senior at the time, sang in front of an audience that included Cary Libkin, head of the musical theatre degree program, seated in the glow of tea lights. Later, on WPSU-TV, central Pennsylvania residents will be able to enjoy the Broadway-like act from the comfort of their couches.

The performance is part of the first program in the new series “Music from Penn State,” created by WPSU-TV in collaboration with Penn State’s Schools of Music and Theatre. The series showcases various musical groups and performers from those schools—both students and faculty, including the world-renowned Castalia Trio.

The first program in the series is scheduled to air in October and focuses on Penn State musical theatre students, who perform in front of a live audience in WPSU-TV’s studio—gaining valuable on-camera experience. The production is interspersed with interviews with faculty and students, who offer their personal insights.

The second program in the series features the Castalia Trio, composed of Penn State music faculty members James Lyon, Kim Cook and Marylene Dosse, who have performed nationally and internationally. WPSU-TV taped an evening performance—hosted by Penn State President Graham Spanier—of the trio playing the violin, cello and piano at the Schreyer House.



Whitney Vaas

Seated from left to right are Castalia Trio members James Lyon, Marylene Dosse and Kim Cook, with Penn State President Graham Spanier.

“Behind the musicians was a gorgeous backdrop of floor-to-ceiling windows looking out on the garden,” said Sue Haug, director of the School of Music. “The production was a wonderful event, an evening of beautiful music. So many people will hear the high quality of music performance that is happening at Penn State when this production is broadcast.” The packaged event includes interviews with the trio.

Ted Krichels, associate vice president for Outreach and general

manager of Penn State Public Broadcasting, applauded the Schools of Music and Theatre.

“This collaboration offers an amazing professional learning experience to the students at those schools, as well as an opportunity for the more than 500,000 homes in WPSU-TV’s viewing area to enjoy both student and faculty performances.” The series will include two additional programs. Visit www.wpsu.org/television/programs.html for more information. ♥

Who to Contact

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Who Freed the Slaves?

Although the Emancipation Proclamation did not immediately free a single slave, it marked the beginning of the end of slavery in the United States. Abraham Lincoln issued the proclamation on Jan. 1, 1863, as the nation entered its third year of Civil War.

One of the remaining signed copies of the proclamation is now on loan to Penn State, thanks to the efforts of Penn State alumnus Albert L. Lord, the George and Ann Richards Civil War Era Center, the University Libraries, and Special Collections. The public can view it in the Special Collections Library.

The rare document will be the centerpiece next April of a public symposium—an expansion of the Civil War Era Center’s Brose Distinguished Lecture Series. Renowned scholars from around the world will “push us in new directions in our thinking about emancipation,” Dr. William Blair, director of the center, said. Symposium talks will be published in a book in advance of the 2009 bicentennial of Lincoln’s birth.

In addition, 32 schoolteachers from around the country studied emancipation during Penn State’s



Fred Weber—Campus Photography

Schoolteachers examine a copy of the Emancipation Proclamation on loan to Penn State.

summer institute, “The Untold Story of Slavery in Our Nation’s Capital.” The institute was part of the UNESCO Transatlantic Slave Trade Education Project, which “links teachers in the Atlantic world together to help them develop better ways to teach about the transatlantic slave trade and its legacy, including freedom struggles, in their classrooms in the hope of achieving understanding and reconciliation,” said Penn State History Professor Dr. Nan Woodruff, national coordinator for the effort. ▀

A Link to the Past

Berks Countians may not know that 19th-century residents assisted fugitive slaves through the Underground Railroad system, or that the local industrial union council was one of only nine nationwide to establish an antidiscrimination committee in 1947. However, thanks to the work of 17 Penn State Berks students, these little-known facts and more are compiled in the first-ever book about the history of African Americans in Berks County.

The Reading, Pa., branch of the NAACP initiated the project and invited Penn State Berks to help. Members of the Reading branch hope the book “opens the eyes of the African American community—inspiring, educating and developing the minds of young people.”

Penn State Berks project leader Dr. Laurie Grobman, associate professor of English, and a team of faculty members incorporated the project into their courses, enabling history and American studies students to research and write about what they learned in talking with residents and local historians. Information sciences and technology students created a Web site, and a marketing student developed the promotional plan.

The book “Woven with Words: A Collection of African American History in Berks County, Pennsylvania” will be unveiled and sold on Nov. 11 at the NAACP Freedom Fund banquet, with proceeds benefiting the Central Pennsylvania African American Museum. Afterward, free copies will be distributed to schools, libraries and historical institutions. ▀



Children of Berks County can learn about local African American history with a new book.