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WKU's fine art performances in 2020 cover

gamut

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Hugh Poland and Leah Johnson perform in a past production of “Tartuffe” at Western Kentucky University.

PHOTO COURTESY OF WKU

From classical ballet and contemporary Broadway to Vienna’s most famous waltz, Western Kentucky University’s fine arts program will be sure to dazzle crowds in the new year.

With countless specialties among numerous dance, theater and music majors, every student has a unique connection to and love for the arts, according to David Young, who heads WKU’s Department of Theater and Dance.

“When you talk to them, everyone will have a story about how the arts has made a profound impact on their lives,” Young said. “They understand the power of the arts, and they desperately want to share that with people.”

From the dance community, there are sure to be plenty of unique performances among the myriad choreographed pieces to be showcased in February.

Students will twirl and stomp during the “Kick the Clock Dance Festival” on Feb. 1, and later the young dancers will perform self-choreographed pieces selected by faculty and supported with costumes and lighting for “The Dance Project” from Feb. 14 through Feb. 16.

With props and a pulse-quickenning deadline, theater students will execute 10-minute plays on Feb. 22 for “Plays in a Day.”

“Students get together, and in 24 hours they create and perform brand new works,” Young said, based on prompts prepared by faculty.

Later in the spring, audiences will be transported back to the 1920s with snazzy dancing and uplifting beats during the Tony-winning Broadway hit, “The Drowsy Chaperone,” on March 27-29.

“It’s really delightful and very fun. I think anyone would like it,” Young said.

During the “New Works Festival,” there will be a workshop production of “Memeical: The Meme Musical,” by Jarred Corona. The “musical about dank memes” is recommended for mature audiences. The festival runs from April 16 to April 19.

The WKU Dance Company will perform pieces choreographed by faculty and guest artists in ballet, jazz, modern, and tap styles for an all-ages audience during the “Evening of Dance” from May 1 through May 4.

On the strictly musical side, students will perform a series of water-themed orchestra works like Johann Strauss' "The Blue Danube" waltz – a popular, but musically challenging piece – for "Across the Waters" on Feb. 28.

"It's a classical symphony concert," said Dr. Brian St. John, WKU professor and symphony conductor.

For student musicians, similar to theater and dance students, the curriculum includes learning the process of rehearsing, performing and learning how to present effective concerts--because the students are pre-professional, according to St. John.

"The chief objective to play great music, and bring great music to the region," he said.

Every symphony member understands what it takes to master an instrument, and joining other musicians for the first time can be an exciting experience. "All the different families of instruments are represented, that's what makes a symphony so unique," St. John said.

Toward the end of the school year, the WKU symphony will collaborate with the WKU Chorale for a finale-style performance on May 8, and the dance department will put on an informal showcase for new choreography and works-in-progress also on May 8 for "Last Chance to Dance."

In a given year, there are 70 to 80 individual performances between about two dozen different shows, according to Young.

“We believe in doing a lot of work. We want students to have a lot of practical work” to fill out resumes, said Young, whose senior classes help students understand portfolios, resumes, agents, headshots and all of the other pieces unique to their chosen professions.

After graduating, students join regional theaters, dance companies or symphonies, move to New York, Los Angeles or Chicago, enroll in graduate school, work in arts administration or even switch fields entirely and enroll in medical school.

“But in every case, we want them to get that first connection,” Young said.

It’s easy to undervalue the arts, but Young believes the benefits extend beyond entertainment to help generate economic activity, attract business and enhance life.

“At its heart, it’s good for you. It makes us all better human beings,” Young said.

For more details and tickets, visit wku.showare.com.

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