



Manchester ‘Steps’ into Black History Month at ‘Step Afrika’ VIA

Ashley Pierce
Staff Writer

In celebration of Black History Month, Manchester University welcomed professional dance company Step Afrika for an immersive and energetic celebration of the history of African dance.

Founded in 1994, Step Afrika specializes in stepping, a polyrhythmic dancing style featuring a unique blend of both modern and traditional African dance historically performed by African American fraternities and sororities. Being the first dance company to specialize in stepping, Step Afrika is also recognized as one of the top 10 African American dance companies in the United States. The group has performed in over 60 countries and was a headliner of former president Barack Obama’s Black History Month Reception, as well as being a part of the White House’s first Juneteenth Celebration. There are currently 17 active members of Step Afrika, 9 of whom performed at the VIA. All members are college graduates, many of whom attended Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).

Step Afrika visits numerous colleges and universities every year, including Manchester University itself in the past. Manchester was Step Afrika’s seventh stop out of 17 on their “Step Afrika! 101” tour, where the group performed at various colleges across the nation before thousands of students.

On the morning of Feb. 5, 2024, students, faculty,

staff and members of the public entered Cordier Auditorium to experience a VIA unlike any other.

Step Afrika began with a classic stepping routine, performed by seven members, dressed in matching black sweater vests. A consistent theme in their numbers was the absence of background music; the group used their bodies to create percussion, as well as playing off the audience to keep rhythm.

After the opening dance, Step Afrika engaged in friendly rivalry as they competed in a step show: men versus women. After a quick wardrobe change, each side color coordinated to represent their team—the men dressed in red-and-black shirts while the women wore metallic blue tank tops. Using applause as a gauge, each team took their shot at winning over the audience’s favor. After each winning one round, the two teams ultimately combined to highlight their collective abilities and synergy.

After the dance-off, a member of Step Afrika, Jordan Spry, turned to the audience for volunteers to learn their own stepping routine. Eleven students decided to participate and took to the stage. With the help of Spry, the students learned coming to attention, marching, and other essential movements.

“It was a wonderful experience,” said Ja’Sean Fuqua, one of the student volunteers. “I really like all forms of dance, so I took the chance to experience it.”

Jaden Chin Hong also participated. “It was really new



GUMBOOT STYLE In colorful garb, members of the Step Afrika dance company perform a traditional gumboot dance. The jumpsuits, bandannas and boots represent the history behind the dance. Photo by Megan Pierce.

and nerve-wracking for me,” he said. “But to be given the opportunity to learn the dance and to perform on the stage was a huge honor and so much fun.”

While stepping is an art form that takes much dedication to master, the students’ courage and open-mindedness to learn something new led to an admirable performance, especially to be done before their peers and professors.

Following their crash course in stepping, the student volunteers were joined by members of Step Afrika for a freestyle dance number. Dancing to DJ Maphorisa’s “Naja,” the performers each highlighted their moves with brief solos.

Then, dressed in a colorful jumpsuit and rubber boots, Spry came onto the stage to provide background for their next style of dance, gumboot dance.

“This dance was created by the miners who worked down in the mines of South

Africa,” he explained. Since the working conditions were often dangerous, the miners wore tall rubber boots not only to protect themselves but also as a means of relaying information to each other.

“Because they traveled from all different regions across this huge continent of Africa, they spoke many different languages,” Spry explained. “And that made it very difficult for them to communicate.” Through slapping the sides of their boots in various rhythms, the miners created their own language.

Acknowledging the origins of the gumboot dance, the members of Step Afrika performed in miners’ outfits complete with bandanas and rubber boots. While dancing, they integrated a skit, adding humor as well as historical context.

Leading right into the final section, Step Afrika gave the stage to member Jerod Coleman, who performed a solo showcasing another style of African American dancing known as strolling. Popularized by fraternities and sororities in the mid-20th century, it was a common dance for college students to perform at school functions, events and parties. “They would incorporate popular dance moves within it,” Coleman explained. “Now we had the idea that we’d finish strong and showcase them as we go.”

Portraying their own take on strolling, each member performed contemporary dance moves accompanied by a melody of rap music. To wrap up the show, Step Afrika finished strong with one last

stepping routine. The audience was completely engrossed in the energy being put out by the group, clapping along to the beat, and engaging in call-and-response with the members. They cheered as Spry introduced each member of Step Afrika before being introduced himself by fellow group member Nepri James.

At the conclusion of the VIA, members of the audience share their reactions. “I thought it was really good,” said Mackenzie Jarvis. “I went last year, and they didn’t have as many people up on stage. I thought they had a lot more people who participated.”

Rachel Fedor agreed with Jarvis regarding the increase in participation when compared to Step Afrika’s visit to Manchester the year prior. She also added that the part of the show she enjoyed the most was the gumboot dancing.

Ja’Sean Fuqua’s favorite part was seeing their strong group dynamic. “I feel like the sense of togetherness was the best part for me,” he said.

When compared to the traditional VIA, which typically involves a lecture, Jarvis noted how the more performative ones can be quite engaging. “I like the VIAs where you learn things, but the interactive and fun ones are more exciting to me,” she says. “They make me want to get out of bed to go to them.”



STEP UP Manchester students learn a stepping routine by Jason Spry during the VIA. To further share the art of stepping, Student Involvement, in collaboration with Step Afrika, offered a 45-minute learning course for students, faculty and staff to learn more about the dance at 3 p.m. the same day in the Intercultural Center. Photo by Megan Pierce.



Campus Rock Brings Awareness, Unity

IN THIS TOGETHER The campus rock outside of the Cunningham Academic Center is constantly bringing awareness to special events on campus. This month’s awareness focuses on Black History Month. The rock, embellished with the handprints of students, faculty and staff, all in the pan-African colors of red, yellow and green, also displayed positive adjectives. “I like how this year the Black History Month Rock is a lot more detailed to show the depth of what this month means to the Black students on campus,” Lilyana Joyner said. “Seeing it so detailed really makes me appreciate the awareness that it’s bringing. It kind of represents how Black students have to stick together on a campus that is predominately White. It also just shows that we’re a safe place on this campus.” Photo by Caleb Peschke.





SPARTAN SPORTS



Indoor Track and Field ‘In This Together’

Carmen Reno
Co-Editor

Manchester University’s indoor track and field team is reaching new heights, lengths, and times, breaking records in the climax of their season while continuing to balance work, school and life.

When faced with adversity, this team focuses on pushing through. Each athlete has different workloads and stressors within their lives that they must work through on top of their races and events.

Thrower Charlotte Wilson broke down how the most recent competitions have been going: “Morale was super high last week,” she said. “We had three records broken between Friday and Saturday. We’re hopefully looking good.”

And indeed, they are. Wilson also noted that the team is 6th in conference for the men; the men’s distance team is 5th in the nation. Two

athletes nationally ranked: Enrique Salazar (runner) is 6th and Carley Camp (thrower) is 8th. While seeing the amazing results this team has produced, having a balance between all parts of their lives must be difficult.

Kyle Newcomb pondered that question. “I’m starting to pole vault this semester—I used to just distance run—so now practices are all over the place,” he said. “Trying to balance that is a little difficult but I’ll get through it.”

He went on to say, “I try to do homework between classes, and then definitely the most time I do it is late at night.”

One of the reasons for this late-night study time is described by Wilson. “We’re committed to the sport,” she said. “It depends on which event you do, but a lot of us don’t get a break.

“A lot of our practices are between two and four hours,” she continued. “A lot of

us go seven days a week. Lifts are Sunday through Thursday, crew meets are Friday and track meets are Saturday, so we don’t take breaks. We’re committed 100 percent.”

So, with this commitment to the sport, some of the members were able to give advice on how they find balance.

First year Audrey Spencer said: “As for homework and stuff, the big thing is to have a set time during the day. Just be like. ‘this is when I do homework’; ‘this is when I do practice’; ‘this is when I eat.’”

Captain Tristen Bronaugh has a particularly challenging schedule. “For me, I work and I’m full time, so there’s not really a lot of free time,” he said. “So it’s just like accepting that. And getting that little time you can hang with your friends or call your significant other is really important.”

Ali Paul was the most detailed in how she worked to find her balance, as she juggled

choir, opera, school and track and field.

“It was really difficult, honestly,” she said. “But we made time for it. Sometimes I had to do practice on a different scheduled day because opera interfered. We got through it, though, and that’s all that matters.”

She continued: “I think it’s really important to find a little chunk of time for yourself. Whether that’s doing your nails, taking skin care for 20 minutes—I try to keep my nails maintained, so that’s my time—to maybe even taking a little bit of extra time in the shower in the morning to relax and de-stress.”

Wilson also reflected on how she keeps track of everything. “I keep a very tight schedule of my life,” she said. “I have every second of my day planned out on paper and my phone so that at any point in time I know where I’m supposed to be at what point, when, and what I’m supposed

to be doing. If I didn’t, I don’t think I’d know where to be at all. It helps to be that planned and scheduled out.”

While a lot of these athletes spend much of their time preplanned, there are still moments where some crunch time is necessary.

“A lot of the guys definitely do homework on the way back [from meets],” Newcomb said.

So do the women. “Typically, I did homework on the bus rides,” Paul said. “We had about three hours from here to the meets so I had a pretty good chunk of time to get whatever essay I had done.” And they support each other. “We’re all in this together,” Wilson said. In fact, these student athletes can be great examples for any student who wants to find more balance in all aspects of their life.

Men’s Basketball Team Defeats Franklin, Secures Spot in HCAC Semi Finals

Abby Oliver
Staff Writer

The Spartan crowd cheered thunderously on Sunday, February 18, as the Manchester University men’s basketball team defeated the Franklin Grizzlies with a score of 76-73 in Stauffer-Wolfe Arena. The Spartans and the Grizzlies fought back and forth for the lead until finally the Spartans earned their spot in the Heartland Collegiate Athletic Conference (HCAC) semifinal round.

Head Men’s Basketball Coach Nate Conley cited Sunday’s game as an honor. “Making the HCAC tournament is a very rewarding opportunity for our team and our program,” Conley said. “Only 6 of the top 10 make the tournament and to host a home conference game is a great feeling and opportunity for our basketball team and campus.”

Fans across the stadium, the Manchester University Cheerleaders and the Gold &

Black Attack Pep Band rallied together to energize the Spartans. The stadium was silent during the Spartans’ free throw attempts and uproarious when a Spartan landed a three-pointer.

“The game was electric and exciting from start to end,” said sophomore Anthony Richardson, a student in pep band.

Zach Sawyer, a senior sports management major, has played basketball since he was in 4th grade. He has been recognized as an HCAC “Player of the Year” in men’s basketball for this year. Not surprisingly, he was also one of the leaders in points scored for the Spartans, netting 17 points in the game. “I’m the point guard, so Coach and the team rely on me to have the ball a lot and to be able to make plays,” Sawyer said. “I get a lot of help from my teammates, so they make it pretty easy.”

Logan Willoughby, a junior exercise science major, was another high-scoring Spartan with 17 points. Although

he was out due to health concerns for some time this season, he has had a slam dunk of a return. “I was a little rusty at first, but I knew with the work I put in that I would get my rhythm back,” he said.

First-year finance major Blake Shewmaker has made quite an impression in his brief time as a Spartan. He scored 12 points in Sunday’s game. “It feels awesome to play in the HCAC tournament this year,” Shewmaker said. “It has definitely been an adjustment from high school but a good one nevertheless.”

For Mitch Mendenhall, senior business management major and sales and entrepreneurship minor, the team’s success wouldn’t be possible without their positive team dynamic. “I think our off-the-court relationships have helped us succeed on the court,” he said. “We have three teammates that have a house together off-campus and we have the guys come over for team dinner all the time. I think the community and the culture that we’ve

built off the court has helped us a lot.”

Sawyer agrees. “I view the people I play with as my friends and we just get to play basketball together,” he said. “It’s not really like they’re my teammates or classmates. It just seems like we’re all hanging out together every day and we get to have fun, too.”

The men’s basketball team hosted and competed in the HCAC tournament last year but lost in the semifinals to Rose-Hulman. This year, the Spartans are determined to take down the Anderson University Ravens in the semifinals and go all the way to the finals.

“We got a sour taste in our mouths this time last year because we didn’t get to meet our goal of winning the conference tournament since it was hosted at Manchester,” Sawyer said. “Now we get a chance to play our rival at Anderson. We’re really excited and I think we’ll be ready to go on Friday.” In last year’s tournament, the Spartans were the number one seed in the rankings. Men-

denhall believes that this year, competing as the fourth seed will be a great experience. “I think being the underdog this year instead of being the one seed like last year is going to be fun,” he said. “To go into that environment at Anderson, I think we’re going to have a great game.”

Coach Conley expressed his pride for his team and noted that they are ready to win the semifinal game. “We are a team that plays very hard, a team that plays together, and a team that cares about each other and winning,” he said. “Anderson is loaded with talent and depth and won the regular season HCAC championship for a reason—but we believe if we play our brand of basketball and compete at our highest level, we can make some noise in the HCAC Tournament and beyond.”

Women’s Wrestling Hits the Mat at Manchester

Dante Chaney
Staff Writer

There have been many first for Manchester University over the course of this past school year: a new school president, a new football coach, as well as a promoted women’s soccer coach. Continuing with the theme of firsts, Manchester’s women’s wrestling team will be competing for the first time next school year. This is an exciting new team that will bring in more athletes next year, having quite a few commits already. And there are two women already on campus who will be competing next year for the team.

Selene Jimenez and Ryker Cooley are going to wrestle next year. These two women have been practicing with the team, just getting prepared for next year. They have completely different backgrounds when it comes to their wrestling ex-

perience. Jimenez has never wrestled before and this year will be her first year doing so; Cooley has been wrestling since her senior year of high school. Even with two different backgrounds it’s easy to tell that they love wrestling equally the same. Jimenez is a first-generation college student from Chicago. She is a double major in peace studies and criminology. Cooley is a first year and she also is a criminology major. She grew up near the Lafayette area of Indiana.

When you are the first to do something, it is a pretty big accomplishment. Whether it be riding a bike, tying your shoe for the first time, or being the first Black president, it is a good thing to be first in something. Jimenez and Cooley both have their feelings about being on the inaugural women’s wrestling team.

“I wanted to join to

make history,” Jimenez said.

Cooley said: “It hasn’t set in for me and it probably won’t until we begin next year.”

What they said is quite understandable due to the nature of starting a new team. Jimenez is excited to make history and compete and you got to love that as a fan. Embracing the challenges that come with being the first to something is really bold and brave. With an answer like that you know that she will be loving every moment of it.

Cooley will enjoy being the first, but more so when it comes closer for her to start wrestling other women next year. When that first wrestling match comes, she is going to be ready for whatever comes her way.

When starting new things there are often challenges that arise in the midst of new beginnings. One chal-

lenge Jimenez and Cooley have had to handle is that due to the women’s program being new there are obviously not a lot of women wrestlers. Because of this, Jimenez and Cooley have been wrestling each other all the time or they would have to wrestle the male team.

These different things present unique challenges that each of them spoke about. “The hardest thing that I had to encounter was wrestling the boys,” Jimenez said. “They sometimes don’t realize the power that they have.” Which is understandable due to the fact that they are probably not used to wrestling women and vice versa.

Cooley spoke to the fact of wrestling the same person every day. “The toughest thing to do is wrestle the same person because you learn all their moves,” she said. This makes sense if you think about it. It’s

like in the NFL: you play your divisional opponent multiple times a year and these games are usually closer in score because you face them multiple times a year.

With that being said, imagine facing the same person multiple times a week. You are going to be well adapted to what they are trying to do. These challenges seem like nothing to these two warriors, though. It did not seem like these obstacles faze them one bit.

These women are about to set off on a journey of lifetime, and they can always say that they were a part of the first women’s wrestling team in Manchester University’s existence.



What RAs and Desk Workers Do in the Quiet of the Night

Carmen Reno
Co-Editor

Residential Life works very hard to make sure students are taken care of, and to do that they hire some extremely hard-working Resident Assistants (RAs) to help residents during the hours many are beginning to wind down for a night of sleep.

Res-Life hires Residential Assistants (to help with the day-to-day running of dorm life, and they hire desk workers to cover the late-night 11p.m. to 3 a.m. shift to help the RAs. Both are able to assist with lock outs from the building and the dorm, can give out games and kitchen utensils, as well as just be present and talk to students when needed.

No matter the number of hours worked, the RAs very quickly learn who everyone is.

East Hall RA Caleb Peschke, who's been an RA since the beginning of the school year, says, "You get to know everyone within your building. Communicating with them, making sure they know who you are, even if you aren't they're RA."

There are many rea-

sons that someone could become a desk worker. Some people may like the relaxed atmosphere.

Kennedy Wills, an East Hall desk worker says, "There isn't much activity other than if a couple friend groups want to hang out in the lobby. Otherwise, it's just people walking back and forth going to their rooms."

She continues: "There was one time when this one guy just broke a window and five seconds later some other guy came downstairs, and we went up and there was a hole in the window." Otherwise, Wills' nights have been uninteresting. New Oakwood Hall desk worker Nicholas Martinez describes what a regular night looks like to him. "It's kind of quiet," he says. "I've had to log in a few guests but there's been no lock outs and no calls."

A guest is anyone in the building that is not a resident of that building. That includes students and non-students alike that are being let into the building by a resident.

Sometimes, working at the desk can be a bit boring, and some find it harder to stay awake than others.

"You find ways to keep

yourself awake," Wills says, "Sometimes time passes faster than other nights."

"I make sure that I have friends there to keep me company," she continues. "Like, people who live in the building. I'll go, 'River, I'm here; come down!' and she's like, 'Absolutely.'"

There are so many things a desk worker can do to keep themselves awake.

"I sometimes may do my homework, but most of the time I'm listening to music on my laptop," Martinez says. "If that gets stale, I have my switch lite and I play games. I also have some books for leisurely reading. I have a lot to keep me entertained."

He also has another strategy: "Consume caffeine, or a few hours before your shift just take a nap that way it's harder to fall asleep." Being a desk worker seems to be more mental than physical work. And yet, this work can be very rewarding.

RA Peschke talked extensively about his busy schedule and how "being resourceful with your time" is one of the most important pieces to working in Res-Life. Peschke's classes on most days go from

8 a.m. to 3 p.m., and after he would have E-Sports practice, RA duty, homework and food taking up the rest of his afternoon and evenings.

Even with such a busy schedule, he still enjoys working at the desk because he loves seeing people smile.

"I like being able to see the residents who are athletes come in from after practice because they're all having fun," Peschke says.

"They're joking, and they had just been out either

on the field, in the gym, and they're dog-tired, but they're happy because one, they're back home, but they're also like, 'I can hang out with my friends and it is not a high-stress, high-risk area.'"

Res Life takes pride in helping others to feel at home on campus. So next time you walk into your hall and see either an RA or a desk worker, go say hello. They would love to chat and hear about your day.



DYNAMIC DUO Working the night shift is what friends Kennedy Wills and RA Caleb Peschke are ready for. They have had many quiet nights where they just chilled and chatted about their day. "The working staff for Res Life—both the residential assistants and the desk workers after 11 p.m.—have a really great bond between each other because they're happy to see each other and they may stay up and talk to each other so that they aren't by themselves. In addition, it's a great family bond and work that you have there," Peschke says. Photo by Carmen Reno.

From Chicago to Campus: News from Braxton Stewart

Katie Wayte Interns at Chicago Center

FEB 12, 2024

Salutations Campus, Manchester University majors from social work through English have a variety of opportunities for students to complete internship requirements. Senior Katie Wayte, a social work major, recently arrived in Chicago to complete her internship requirements at The Chicago Center for Urban Life and Culture. The Chicago Center allows students to experience the city throughout the semester in which students explore the city throughout the semester.

"My experience in the city has been captivating," Wayte said. "I've gotten to visit so many different museums, as well as explore public art. I've been able to experience the culture and pride rooted in the city and it's been so fun."

The Chicago Center is open to students from a variety of different majors. Students are placed across different areas in Chicago depending on their internship requirements. Wayte is placed at a non-profit organization called Holsten Human Capital Development. "Here we assist the community with the things they need to promote their own self-sufficiency," Wayte said. "What I enjoy most about my placement is getting to connect with the residents. I spend most of my week at a site in Chinatown serving the seniors there, and I love it. They tell you all kinds of stories while equally wanting to hear my own stories."

By her own account, Wayte is thriving. "It has been nothing short of exciting," she said. "Not only have I been able

to experience new things in the city but also I've been able to revisit some of my favorite spots from past trips to Chicago. Getting to experience city life and eat all the tasty food has made these last few weeks some of the most unforgettable."

Living in Chicago is also preparing her for her future career. "I think my favorite part of being a social work major is getting to be around other people who also want to use their skills to help promote self-sufficiency among different populations and communities," she said. "It's nice to be with people who also want to help people."

Wayte's time leading up to the Chicago Center was one of preparing to be on her own in a new city. "I spent time with family and friends mostly," she said "I always try to prioritize my time with my favorite people when it's getting close to me leaving."

Chicago is filled with art and is one of Wayte's favorite parts of the city. "My favorite part of the city has been the public art, it's everywhere in the city," she said. "I've seen murals made of acrylic paint, spray paint. The different murals are not only beautiful but they also tell a story, hold history within them. I think that's why it's been my favorite part."

During the first week students attend orientation where they experience the city and Hyde Park. "I would describe the orientation process as insightful and tiring," Wayte said. "Insightful because we got to spend a whole week going to different museums, visiting public art all over the city, and trying different foods. It was a really great way to get introduced into the place I'd be living for the next four months. However, it was tiring: the week was jam packed, so we were gone from dawn till dusk most

days."

During orientation students make goals for their time in Chicago. This can be anything involving their placement or within the city itself. "I'm hoping to make a difference through my work here," Wayte said. "I've been planning different programs and events for my residents, as well as spending time with them. My main goal is to leave this place in a better and happier standing than it was when I got here."

After the Chicago Center Wayte plans to work and enjoy life. "I see myself moving back out to the city and working in the city," she said. "I also see myself pursuing my Master's degree, but not just yet."

Braxton Stewart
Staff Writer

Chicago Center Students Attend "The Other Cinderella" and Other Theatric News

FEB 19, 2024

Salutations Campus, During orientation week The Chicago Center for Urban Life and Culture students watched a production of Jackie Taylor's "The Other Cinderella" at The Black Ensemble Theatre. The story is a modernized version of the classic story of Cinderella. Originally performed in 1976, the 2024 rendition was electrifying with its musical numbers. The opening song "Welcome to the Kingdom" introduced the cast of characters in the story from the king of the Kingdom of Other to the titular character herself, Cinderella.

The show brings to life a Cinderella for the modern audience. It begins with the announcement of who the king's pageboy is. Part of the subplot focuses on the Prince's relationship with the pageboy, who

is otherwise an outsider to the kingdom. The bond between the two is formed as the story progresses where the pageboy teaches the prince about certain things that he does at home. This was entertaining as two people from two completely different backgrounds had their own confusions about each other.

One of the biggest changes but yet still similar to the original story was the prince's attitude toward marriage. Like the original story the king is not pleased that his son is yet to marry so he sets up a ball for every eligible maiden. However, another twist added to the story is the prince is know to spend time with the duke's son. The show touches on LGBTQ issues, particularly homophobia, through the duke's son's song "The Woman

in Me."

The show updates every year with the mention of social media such as Facebook not being mentioned in the original production. There is also a focus on different civil issues with Cinderella and her family living in the projects. The show make entertaining references to how people may pronounce the names of stores like Target. The reference has its own spin given the popularity of the store.

The first appearance of the fairy godmother was enchanting with the reggae tone as she cast a spell onto the audience. The smells of perfume spread fruitfully to the audience. The music in that scene allowed a proper introduction of the Fairy Godmother in this version of the story. The costume design of the character allowed a somewhat frightening first look. The costume and make-up presented an almost voodoo-like version of what she is like compared to what is seen in other versions such

as "Roger and Hammerstein's Cinderella," which follows the traditional take on the story.

The Chicago Center students raved about the show. "It was a powerful and engaging display of Black culture that was paired with a timeless tale," said Jason Tannenbaum. "This juxtaposition was truly magical and the performance was an amazing experience." Some students even thought there would be a bigger twist with the ending where the Prince would either choose to get married to the Duke's son or the Pageboy. However, the ending went toward the more traditional ending to the story.

Theatrical productions have been a part of orientation since 1970 at the Chicago Center. Admissions officer Greer Anderson has seen several performances since they joined the staff. "I'd say a performance piece of some kind, most often theatrical, is one of the first things we budget for in O-Week!" they said. "It's a great way to get students out of

their comfort zones, introduce them to a part of the city they may not have found otherwise, and wind down an eventful week." Students travel across the city during a Chicago Transit Authority excursion where they witness many different places within the city and also get to know the area their internship placements are in.

Other theatrical performances happening in Chicago include "Dog Man the Musical" which is based off the Dave Pilkey chapter book of the same name. Advertisements of the show can be seen at different bus stops throughout the city. There are other great opportunities to watch theatrical performances in Chicago such as at the Court Theatre and many others.

Braxton Stewart
Staff Writer



Suad Gumus Named Director of Teacher Education

Lilyana Joyner
Staff Writer



Dr. Suad Gumus is Manchester’s new Director of Teacher Education, joining the Henney

Department of Education after the fall semester ended. “The transition has been as smooth as can be,” she said. “Since I came to MU mid-year, the transition had to be swift. Support from my dean and department colleagues has been immense.”

With great opportunities, though, comes great challenges, such as finding a place to live. “Housing was a challenge around here; I made a couple of trips up before my start but was not successful in securing housing,” Gumus said. “I eventually had to be quick and rented virtually without even getting to see it in person. Temporary housing accommodations by the University could have been helpful.”

Gumus has both long-

term goals and plans for this semester. “I want to create some special education clinicals to accompany the present clinical opportunities for which I have already initiated contact with the Wabash Miami Area Program for Exceptional Children Director and Indiana University’s Institute on Disability and Community,” she said. “I would like to achieve some field work this semester after March. Next, I want to complete the alignment/progression of the special ed classes, ensure high quality content, up to date books, and consistent, self-explanatory and rich in content Canvas shells. I would then want to revise and refine our assessment scheme for our upcoming CAEP self-study and visit: We have already

started by creating and adding an exit survey, documenting/reporting recruitment activities, restructuring the department meeting minutes format to enable us to track the decisions for continuous improvement.”

Indeed, assessment is an important part of Gumus’s position. “I started working with the institutional assessment coordinator to ensure we meet the institutional structural and reporting requirements,” she said. “I am to fully acclimate myself with all the aspects/responsibilities of my position and all responsibilities will be fully transferred to me (CAEP, IDOE, EdTPA, Licensing, T2T, Senior and Junior. By the end of this summer, I am hoping to

finish review and revision of all key assessments, start the validation process of the unstudied instruments.”

Clearly, Gumus is ready to work and has already taken important steps forward.

But faculty can also appreciate the university beyond their work. “I loved how the university admin were involved and welcoming (president, VPAA, deans, and all the support staff in their offices),” Gumus said. “Faculty across the university were equally welcoming and enthusiastic. My department chair and dean have been very supportive as well. Another favorite is our students: they are bright, engaged and professional.”

Tyler Stone Joins Football Coaching Team Full-time

Dante Chaney
Staff Writer



Coaching in college is a unique experience because it has some aspects of high school and professional football. It is like high school because students have to attend class and that a coach has only have them for four years. It is similar to professional football in that players can get endorsement deals.

One thing that makes college football unique is that

coaches recruit all the players that are on their team. Recruiting is a major part of building a successful football team in college. Having a great recruiting class can really set up a team for major success. The football team is currently recruiting right now. One coach on the staff has never recruited players before. That coach is Tyler Stone.

Coach Stone is the running backs coach at Manchester University. He graduated from Manchester last spring and has been an assistant coach since the start of the fall. Stone is also an Indiana native. He used to help out with his high school team during the summers while he was at Manchester. When he took the job at Manchester, he knew that it was going to be a unique experience due to recruiting. “It’s a little different from high school because you get to choose who you want on your team,” he said. Stone knows that there are differences to the two levels.

You won’t truly know how different the two are until you are in it. These experiences when it comes to recruiting will help Stone.

When people start new things it usually comes with some challenges. Coach Stone is no different when it comes to new struggles. With recruiting players, the first step is always getting them to apply. That sometimes can be a hassle. “The hardest part has been getting kids to apply,” he said. This is understandable because you are dealing with high school kids who have never been through a process like this before. This can also be stressful especially if there is a player that you really want.

Coaches want players to apply fast for multiple reasons. One reason is that you can get players accepted or denied faster. The quicker a student applies the faster a coach get their recruit a decision. Also if they get accepted or denied quicker, a coach

knows whether or not to continue recruiting them. Another reason that coaches want players to apply faster is that they can get their financial aid package faster. Once they have their financial aid package, it makes the recruit’s decision much easier. For those reasons coaches need to get their recruits applying quickly. Coach Stone understands this already, early on in his coaching career. This knowledge that he has for this is going to set him up in the long run. He also knows that he has to keep contacting kids in order for them to act on admissions sometimes. He has been figuring it out pretty well so far.

Recruiting can bring some fun to a coach’s life. There are different aspects to it that they can find enjoyable. Coach Stone actually has a wholesome reason for his favorite part of recruiting. “I like going back and recruiting my high school and the area I was from,” he said. “I want to give kids the same opportunity that I had.”

This is a great aspect of coaching in your home state. You get to go back and provide opportunities to the kids in your area. You provide kids an opportunity to improve their lives for the better. They get a chance to improve themselves for the long run in life. That is truly a good thing that Coach Stone is doing by recruiting in college.

Even though Coach Stone is brand new to a full-time coaching position at the college, it seems like he is picking up on the recruiting game fast. He knows the importance of getting kids applied to the school. He knows that you gotta keep asking kids if they have applied in order to get the ball rolling on the whole recruiting process. His favorite aspect of recruiting is very wholesome. Programs need more people like Coach Stone in coaching in order for their team to thrive.

Jennifer Barscz Named Director of Marketing and Communication

Lilyana Joyner
Staff Writer



Manchester’s Office of Marketing and Communications has a new director: Jennifer Barscz. And she’s prepared with goals and aspirations. “I look forward to bringing new ideas and reaching new audiences,” she said. “Manchester has a great story to tell, and we need to amplify it in new ways.”

Further, Barscz sees the challenges of marketing a university is a positive light. “It’s an awesome time to be involved in higher education and Manchester is positioned to make meaningful impact in the short and long term,” she said. “The challenge will be finding

the tools and messaging that will resonate with prospective families and continue to build connections with our alumni, donors and the community at large. I hope to redesign our digital assets and continue to re-invent our social media marketing to reach students where they are.”

She’s been busy getting to know the university since she joined toward the end of the fall semester. “My favorite things about Manchester are the campus communities, the culture and the willingness to adapt and evolve,” she said. “It’s rooted in history and legacy but

always forward-thinking. I haven’t found anyone who can put it into words (yet) but there is an energy and vibe that is exciting to be a part of.”

Barscz also keeps a balanced work-personal life. “As recent empty-nesters, my husband and I enjoy living a lake life,” she said. “I love to spoil my German Shepherd Dog and I am an avid reader. I like shopping at vintage and antique stores along with thrifting.”

Barscz also finds it valuable to connect with those around her and the life she lives in. “I don’t have students, but my advice to anyone is to

seek joy, laughter and fun every day,” she said. “Sometimes it’s difficult when life gets hard, but that’s when you need it the most. Dig deep. Take a break. Reach out. Fun is right around the corner—if you know where to look. If you have extra joy, give it away—you never know who might need the lift to their day.”



Photo by Chloe Leckrone.



Manchester says ‘Kon’ichiwa’ to Visitors from Japan

Ashley Pierce
Staff Writer

From Feb 8–12, five students of Hokusei Gakuen University in Japan visited the Manchester campus as part of the Bilateral Exchange Program between the two schools.

While on their three-month long spring break, senior Ayaka Fujiwara, junior Nanako Nakamura, senior Natsumi Tamate, senior Sachiho Iikawa, and junior Mone Sakata were accompanied by Professor Toru Kataoka of Hokusei Gakuen University on a trip to Manchester University.

On their final day in North Manchester, Kataoka gave a presentation about the history of the Manchester and Hokusei Gakuen exchange program and gave additional information to students who expressed interest in studying abroad in Japan.

The two schools have been in collaboration since 1988 when Dr. Allen Deter, former Manchester University president, was searching for a university in Japan to become sister schools with. This is when he met the former president of Hokusei Gakuen, Dr. Nobuo Dobashi, who studied peace studies. The two realized they had a connection through a mutual colleague, Dr. Phillip West, who was Deeter’s student and Dobashi’s friend from International Christian University in Tokyo.

Though this incidental connection certainly helped the relationship between the two schools, Kataoka ultimately believes that it was their shared appreciation of peace that brought the universities together. “The peace studies connection is what made this possible,” he says.

Along with Manchester, Hokusei Gakuen has partnered with 17 schools, including colleges and universities located in China, Switzerland,

South Korea, the United Kingdom and many more countries. Founded in 1965, their International Program continues to grow, as Hokusei Gakuen is working to expand the opportunity to schools in many more countries.

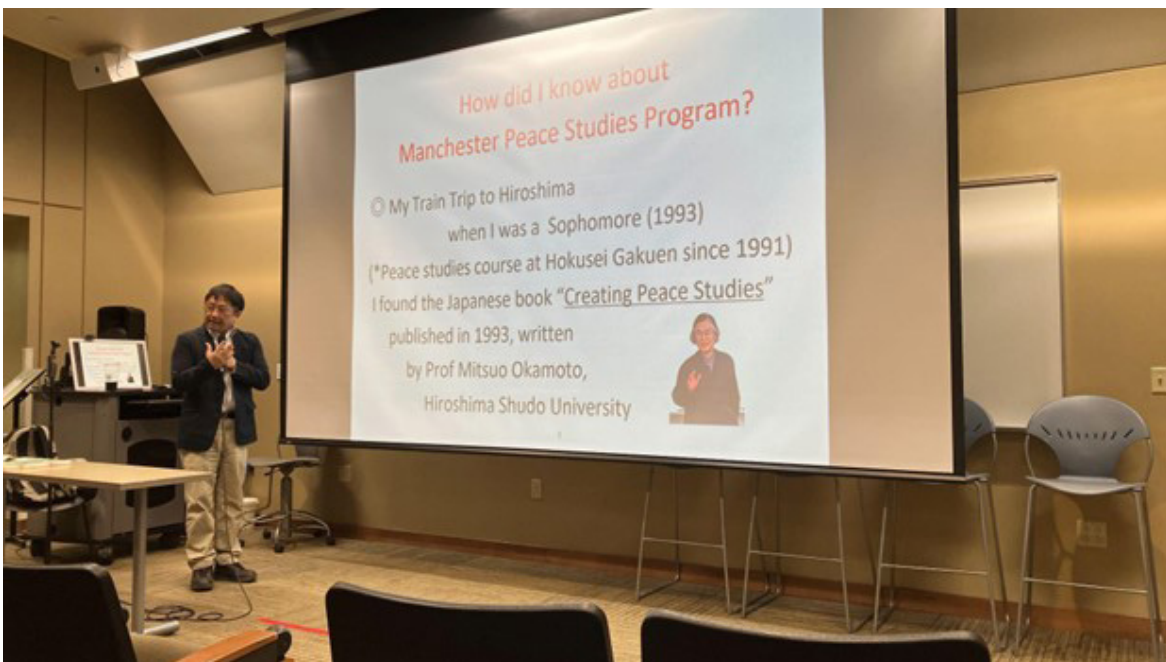
After detailing Hokusei Gakuen’s history with Manchester, Kataoka shared his own connection to the university. As a student of Hokusei Gakuen, Kataoka studied abroad at Manchester, from January to December 1995. Kataoka was inspired to travel to Manchester for its peace studies program. He still remembers the basement of Schwalm where he stayed and his work as a dishwasher at the Union (now renamed Haist Commons).

Kataoka’s trip to Manchester had a huge impact on him. “It changed my life,” he said.

Kataoka was inspired to continue his education in peace studies following his stay in Manchester. After graduating from Hokusei Gakuen, he attended the University of Bradford in the United Kingdom before returning to his alma mater as a professor. He is currently a department chair and professor of education and peace studies as well as working in the departments of psychology and applied communication. Kataoka now shares his life-changing experience with others by helping students find a way to go on their own adventure.

In the fall and spring semesters, two Manchester students are admitted into the Bilateral Exchange Program with Hokusei Gakuen, located in Sapporo, Hokkaido, Japan’s fourth largest city. The stays are three months each—lasting from September to December in the fall and April to July in the spring.

Any student is eligible to attend regardless of their mastery of Japanese. Hoku-



SHARING PEACE Professor Toru Kataoka gives a presentation on the Bilateral Exchange Program on Feb. 12. The program is open to two Manchester students in both the fall and spring semesters. Photo provided by Megan Pierce.



JUMP FOR JOY The students of Hokusei Gakuen University pose in front of Cordier Auditorium. The five visited the Manchester University campus during their spring break. Photo by Mone Sakata.

sei offers a variety of Japanese courses for students of all ability levels “We have six levels of classes,” explains Kataoka. “Level one is for beginners, and level six is the advanced class.” Daniel Barbre and Adrian Allen are Manchester students who studied abroad at Hokusei Gakuen during the Fall 2023 semester. They shared details about their time living in Japan. “We knew barely any Japanese, we could say, like, two phrases,” says Barbre. “But a lot of the international students already speak English. And if you take the intensive Japanese

course, it’s very easy to pick up on everything.”

“Now, we can hold a basic conversation for a solid 20 minutes or so,” adds Allen. Students will either stay in a student dormitory—called a kirari— or participate in a homestay, where they live with a Japanese host family. Courses consist of studies of Japanese language, economy and history, as well as major-related classes and electives. Credits earned abroad can be transferred to Manchester.

Dr. Pamela Haynes, assistant dean of Academic Affairs, addresses reservations students may have about studying abroad.

“A lot of times for students, the main concern is cost,” she says. “But right now, to go to Hokusei, you would be paying what you would here for tuition.”

Haynes explains that the living expenses are similar to those for Manchester. “Room and board is the same as it is for a double in Garver,” she says. “Anything you’re getting in aid and outside scholarships apply to that too.”

The only additional fees students will need to cover are plane tickets and any other amenities.

If more financial aid is needed, study away scholarships are also available to help alleviate some of the costs. Haynes plans to open applications by the end of February, and the winners will be chosen in April.

Following Kataoka’s presentation, the five students of Hokusei Gakuen shared their experiences traveling and staying in America.

Upon their arrival at Manchester, their first impressions were quite positive. “The culture here is so beautiful,” Fujiwara says. “Everyone is friendly.”

However, they did notice some differences in the way that people interact with each other, such as greetings. “In

Japan, when people meet, they hug,” Iikawa says. “But here they say ‘hi,’ no hug.”

Although the weather was quite chilly, the students had the chance to explore the campus as well as the town of North Manchester. With majors running from education to communication studies and psychology, the group worked on their projects while on their visit. In addition to rooming in Oakwood Hall, they observed Manchester University classes, visited the Manchester Elementary School, and enjoyed American cuisine. “Good food,” Fujiwara says. “Hamburgers, French fries, I loved it all.”

After her visit to American schools, Sakata points out the way classes are run differs from what she is used to. “The people here have opinions and share them,” she says. “In Japanese school, when you have an opinion, you don’t say it. It’s a different education system.”

On Feb. 13, the Hokusei Gakuen students and Kataoka left at 4 a.m. for their long journey back to Sapporo. After commuting to the Fort Wayne International Airport, the group took connecting flights to Atlanta, then Toronto and Tokyo before finally landing in Sapporo. “I’ll be watching a lot of videos on the way!” Sakata says. When asked about the possibility of returning to the United States, the group said they would, if ever given the chance. Fujiwara even expressed that she would come back to Manchester. “It’s so nice here,” she says. “Friendly people.”

This March, Fujiwara, Tamate and Iikawa will graduate while Nakamura and Sakata will return to classes at the end of Hokusei Gakuen’s spring break in April.



LOCAL SIGHT SEEING The students of Hokusei Gakuen University tour the town of North Manchester. Their visit to the United States, a part of their school’s International Education Program, lasted from Feb. 8–12. Photo by Mone Sakata.

Department of Music Presents ‘Spirits in the Material World,’ Showcases Two Operas

Abby Oliver
Staff Writer

The soft ambient light of Wine Recital Hall illuminated the auditorium as audience members waited expectantly. The lights dimmed, and a spotlight lit the stage to reveal . . . no one. Instead, a door in the wings of the auditorium smashed open and a man in purple screaming comically burst through, a giant green snake prop wrapped around his torso. Thus began a night of entertainment, mystery and excitement as two casts performed “Spirits in the Material World,” a showcase of two operas.

On Saturday, February 3, at 2 p.m. and 7 p.m., the Department of Music presented its annual opera workshop. Excerpts from “Die Zauberflöte” (The Magic Flute) by W. A. Mozart with a modern twist and “Frau Margot” by Thomas Pasatieri were performed by two casts of performers.

The opera workshop on campus is a 25-year tradition of excellence, hard work and quality entertainment. As an opportunity for vocal performance majors, students interested in opera and even non-students, the workshop engaged its performers and audience on Saturday through singing, story plot, humor and mystery.

Dr. Debra Lynn, Professor of Music, Director of Choral Organizations and director and founder of the opera workshop aims not only to put on a good show each year but also to reimagine the concept of opera with its audience members.

“There are so many negative stereotypes [with opera],” she said. “I want to break them down because opera is such a great art form. It includes so many visual elements and aural elements. Opera is alive and well.”

Indeed, the two casts brought their shows to life as audience members laughed at comedic storylines and applauded after spellbinding vocal performances.

“I really enjoyed the commitment both casts had to their roles,” said Carmen Reno, a student spectator. “When they start off the whole performance with a guy sprinting through the crowd while being chased by a snake, you know you’re in for a fun show.”

That first scene of a panic-crazed man running away from a comedically faux snake began the first show of the second performance that night, “Die Zauberflöte.” A modern

twist on the show transformed it into “Die ZauberBarbie.”

“The way that [‘Die Zauberflöte’] was originally written, it’s very patriarchal,” Lynn said, “but a lot of people rewrite the spoken dialogue because it’s not considered sacrosanct like the music.”

As a result, Lynn thought it would be comical to reimagine the opera with Barbie. “I thought it would be funny since there’s been all this stuff about Barbie, and [President Stacy Young] likes Barbie,” she said.

“Die ZauberBarbie” follows the story of a daughter, played by Felicity Bohman, who is caught between the feud of her divorced parents. The High Priest Sarastro, played by first-year Jaden Chin Hong, and The Queen of the Night, played by Angelina Funk, both come up with individual schemes to match their daughter with a rock star named Prince, played by Clayton Marcum.

This first opera follows a wacky storyline full of humor and rather unlikely characters that had the audience thunderously clapping by the end of it. While both shows maintained the utmost of quality, the second one, “Frau Margot,” took a darker and more mysterious turn than the comical “ZauberBarbie.”

“Frau Margot” captivates its audience through the investigation of the murder of Kara Sondstrom, played by Mackenzie Sheridan. A majority of the opera is a series of flashbacks leading up to her death, highlighted by the ever-increasing tension between her, her teacher’s widow Margot Künstler (the teacher of whom she had a love affair with), and her current love interest Ted Steinert, employed by Margot to finish her deceased husband’s unfinished opera.

Near the end of the performance, audience members were shocked when Margot finally threw down the death mask of her husband, causing shards of it to fly across the entirety of the stage. Phoebe Wagner played the part of Margot and described the experience.

“It was anxiety-inducing the first time I did that,” she said. “That was a very dramatic performance, and I was scared that plaster was going to fly all over.” She practiced throwing the mask down on the prop table with Lynn’s direction to ensure that no one could get hurt. Surprisingly, the act of throwing the mask down and breaking it was not in the original script.



CELEBRATE GOOD TIMES The cast of “Die ZauberBarbie” as well as pianist Emily France, intimacy/conflict consultant Kira Lace Hawkins and director Debra Lynn celebrate the last performance of their show by posing for a funny picture. They spent the month of January and hours upon hours of work perfecting their show. “I send them home with their music for the winter break,” Debra Lynn said. “When they come back in January, they are supposed to know their music. This year, everybody showed up prepared, which was great.” Photo by Abby Oliver.

DIE ZAUBERBARBIE CAST	
TAMINO/PRINCE.....	CLAYTON MARCUM
THREE LADIES:	
MIDGE.....	KYLA ANDREWS
SASHA.....	ALI PAUL
SKIPPER.....	RENAE WALKER-ZAMORA
PAPAGENO/ALLAN.....	GRANT EBERT
THE QUEEN OF THE NIGHT.....	ANGELINA FUNK
PAMINA/BARBIE.....	FELICITY BOHMAN
PRIEST #1.....	ERIC REICHENBACH
PRIEST #2.....	BRIAN KRUSCHWITZ
HIGH PRIEST, SARASTRO.....	JADEN CHIN HONG

FRAU MARGOT CAST	
INSPECTOR GERT OSTERLAND.....	JACOB SMITH-DERKSEN
TED STEINERT.....	BRAYDON HOGGATT
MARGOT KÜNSTLER.....	PHOEBE WAGNER
KARA SONDESTROM.....	MACKENZIE SHERIDAN
MAITRE D'.....	DANIEL CORNETT
WALTER ENGELMANN.....	BEN TIPTON
NURSE.....	KYLA ANDREWS

“There’s a mask written into Frau Margot, but the part about her breaking it is not in the script,” Lynn said. “The mask is a symbol of her relationship with her deceased husband, and he’s also a source of controversy.”

Lynn explained how when a famous composer died, a cast would be made of their face and a death mask would be made. Therefore since Ted Steinert was meant to have a likeness to the late Erich Künstler, Margot’s husband, a cast was made of Braydon Hoggatt’s face, the actor for Steinert. Kyla Andrews, an art major in the production, named made several casts of his face for Wagner to practice with and use in the final productions.

For Ben Tipton, a fifth-year senior, “Frau Margot” is the fourth opera workshop he has participated in. “Depending on the cast we have, we’re working with either a bunch of students that may or may not be music majors and also alumni and community members,” Tipton said. “It’s really cool to see people get involved with opera because not many people do.”

“Frau Margot” was sophomore accounting ma-

jor Jacob Smith Derksen’s first participation in the opera workshop. The connections he made with other students in the production were a highlight. “While it is a lot of work, it is so worth it in the end,” he said. “In our tech week, there were a lot of prop-related mistakes. We laughed when somebody couldn’t remember where to put the picture frame on the bookshelf.”

This is sophomore Braydon Hoggatt second season performing in the opera workshop. For him, it’s a great opportunity on the path to his dream.

“This is something that I’ve always dreamed about doing, but I never thought I would have an opportunity to,” Hoggatt said. “Manchester gave me the opportunity and I’ve been thrilled ever since. The first day I heard about it, I was so excited to try it and it’s been a blessing; I’ve loved it.”

Mackenzie Sheridan, a senior vocal performance major, agrees with Hoggatt’s sentiment. “I always have my best vocal growth and confidence in myself during the opera workshop,” she said. “It gives me a glimpse into what my life will look like after school, and

I’ve never felt more prepared. I’m eternally grateful to Debra Lynn and for all the opportunities she has given me. She solidified my love for opera and my drive to keep going in this field.”

Sheridan reiterated that the opera workshop is not limited to only music majors. “You don’t have to be a vocal performance or music major to participate,” Sheridan said. “I’ve had plenty of cast members that try it just for fun and end up loving it! I’ve had people say to me that they didn’t think they’d be able to do it, but they surprised themselves. It has brought in more people to the opera community, and that makes me really happy.” This year’s opera workshop was bittersweet for the performers and especially Dr. Debra Lynn. As Lynn will not be employed by Manchester University next year, this might mark the end of the grand tradition of the opera workshop.

“The show isn’t just for the audience; it’s for [the students performing],” Lynn said. “There are so many facets to theater, which is why so many people love it. There’s something for everybody. We have [the opera workshop] because it’s a time where people can come together from a lot of different interests in one joint effort to do something really special.”

The opera workshop was recorded and can be located on the Manchester University Facebook page.



GOOD-BYE KARA Characters Ted Steinert and Margot Künstler hold the ill-fated Kara Sondstrom as she lies and as Walter Engelmann calls for help. Ben Tipton (back), Braydon Hoggatt (left), Mackenzie Sheridan (laying down), and Phoebe Wagner (right) performed in the opera *Frau Margot* on Saturday, Feb. 3rd. “The cast was fantastic, and I couldn’t see anyone else playing these characters,” Sheridan said. Photo by Jake Svay, obtained from Debra Lynn.

DIRECTORS AND ASSISTANTS	
STAGE & MUSIC DIRECTOR.....	DEBRA LYNN
PIANIST.....	EMILY FRANCE
COSTUME ASSISTANCE.....	ANGELINA FUNK
SCRIPTED INTIMACY & PHYSICAL CONFLICT CONSULTANT KIRA LACE HAWKINS	
PROPERTIES ASSISTANCE MACKENZIE SHERIDAN ANGELINA FUNK	
LIGHTING OPERATOR BRAYDON HOGGATT, MOZART GRANT EBERT, PASATIERI	
SURTITLES OPERATOR JACOB SMITH DERKSEN, MOZART FELICITY BOHMAN, PASATIERI	



TRIUMPHANT VICTORY The Three Ladies Midge, Sasha and Skipper stand over the passed-out Tamino after defeating the snake that was terrorizing him. From left to right, Ali Paul, Clayton Marcum (on the ground), Kyla Andrews and Renae Walker-Zamora performed in *Die ZauberBarbie*, the first opera of the two performed in “Spirits in the Material World.” “We’ll just make it *Die ZauberBarbie*, [or] *The Magic Barbie*, so that everybody’s in pink and purple,” Debra Lynn said in regard to the modern twist on Mozart’s production. Photo by Jake Svay, obtained from Debra Lynn.