Heartpower Performances Principal Investigator Marian Liebowitz travels to Washington, D.C., March 4-11 to introduce five special appearances featuring the Bunnell Strings, SDSU’s sibling string quintet. At the invitation of the National Armed Services YMCA, the Bunnell Strings perform at the Angels of the Battlefield Gala, which celebrates the accomplishments of military medics and corpsmen. Dr. Liebowitz will discuss the Bunnells’ unique status as a sibling quintet from a Navy family in front of an audience of 600 military brass, including the Joint Chiefs of Staff. A similar appearance will be made at another prominent military event, the Navy Supply Corps Annual Ball, for an audience of 400 additional Navy officers and spouses.

While in Washington, Dr. Liebowitz and the Bunnells will also appear at the “Stages of Healing” concert series at Walter Reed Medical Center. While there, ideas about the use of music as a healing modality for veterans and military dependents will be exchanged. Regarding Heartpower Performances, Micah J. Sickel, M.D., Ph.D., Child Psychiatrist of the Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Service in the Department of Psychiatry at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center said, “Your (web)site looks excellent and the work you do is impressive. Something we can aspire to.”

Additional Heartpower appearances in the greater Washington, D.C., area include an assembly at Gunston Elementary School in an economically disadvantaged area of Fairfax County and a public concert on the St Philip’s Episcopal Church Series, just north of the capital in Annapolis, Maryland.

In January, Heartpower performers Todo Mundo were the first group to play in the new performance hall at Veterans Village San Diego. The jazz/reggae fusion band entertained an audience of approximately 30 enthusiastic veterans with its world-music selections, even inviting one of the center’s residents on stage to sing during its cover of Bob Marley’s “Stir It Up” (see photo). Todo Mundo is among more than two dozen acts that play Heartpower events.
Valentine’s Day is a holiday generally characterized by the indulgent celebration of romance and relationships in our lives. This year, however, as part of my SDSU Honor 275 Class, Volunteerism in the Arts, I spent Valentine’s night as part of Heartpower Performances Project Valentine, designed to bring joy to the homeless vets in rehab at Veterans Village San Diego.

Heartpower performer Alex Tibbitts showcased her talents in an inspirational harp recital for the veterans. The audience was quiet and attentive, keenly tuned in, and actively connecting with her story. Perhaps my favorite part of the concert was watching the mannerisms of the audience members as they listened. The veterans were individually engaged with the music, many swaying their heads and tapping their feet. Numerous people closed their eyes as they listened, connecting the emotion in the music with their hearts.

After the concert, while my classmates passed out heart-shaped cookies, I had the opportunity to further interact with two of the veterans. Both of them agreed that their favorite part of the concert was Mon Voyage. One of the men said that “it was great; to tell you the truth, it brought tears to my eyes.”

The Neave Trio is a piano trio with soul. Violinist Anna Williams, cellist Mikhail Vaselov, and pianist Toni James form the group, named for a heart-warming story about a friend in assisted living. This trio has a lot of love to give, and are doing so through Heartpower Performances and their musical residency with San Diego State University.

A long way from home, these three talented musicians have found a way to make San Diego their home. Originally from Boston, St. Petersburg, and Glasgow, respectively, Williams, Vaselov and James couldn’t have made a bigger change than moving to sunny southern California, but they are loving every minute of it. They’re fascinated with the music culture and are eager to be a part of it (in fact, they already are). After a busy first semester, the trio is excited for what 2013 will bring in terms of new projects and outreach.

Undoubtedly, something they all agree on is the effect music has on people. Through Heartpower performances, they feel they are making an impact on the lives of the people they play for. The Neave Trio’s members particularly enjoy the stories they are told after having played the strong, passionate music that their audiences enjoy. The personal connections they are able to create through outreach to the community are extremely fulfilling, and the three of them are receiving an amazing response from whomever they play for—something they don’t take for granted.

Under the careful guidance of Dr. Marian Liebowitz, the Neave Trio is learning all about how to handle the business side of its music, something its members feel is exceptionally unique about SDSU and all it has to offer on the road to a professional music career. Making the most of every second they have here, these three kind-hearted musicians are bringing music and soul to everyone they can.
A classical clarinetist, educator and executive director, Marian Liebowitz, DMA, is on a mission to bring emerging musicians to audiences worldwide.

Liebowitz founded and heads the San Diego State University Adams’ Project Performers Network, a booking agency for emerging musicians she created more than 20 years ago. In 2009, she also created the Heartpower Performances program in order to bring concerts and music classes to venues serving at-risk populations, such as homeless shelters, juvenile justice centers and Alzheimer’s care facilities. The Adams’ Project Performance Network and its programs are under the fiscal sponsorship of San Diego State University Research Foundation (SDSURF), where Liebowitz serves on the faculty.

When she learned about the Nonprofit Technology Network (NTEN) Technology Leadership Academy (TLA), Liebowitz hoped to gain an overview of the current role of technology – both to better prepare her students for careers as arts administrators and professional musicians, and to more efficiently market and manage her own organization and its programs.

Although Liebowitz uses technology every day in her multiple roles, she says she’s had a “longstanding fear of anything technological, that fear that if you touch the wrong button you’ll lose everything.”

When Liebowitz first founded the Adams’ Project Performance Network nearly two decades ago, the program booked about 20 events each year. Now it schedules between 300 and 400 annually, in California and beyond. Keeping track of event dates, venues and performers, as well as continually engaging new audiences, are ongoing, and high, priorities.

Liebowitz found the TLA session on social media particularly relevant, specifically material about how to identify different constituencies and choose the best channels and tools for communicating with them. She learned that she could keep the Adams’ Project and Heartpower program websites fresh and current by integrating social media feeds, particularly from Facebook. Prior to the TLA, “I didn’t know that was possible,” she said.

Although it’s difficult to quantify the impact of adding the feed, she knows it has had an effect. “We can’t say how many more people are attending concerts or how many more jobs we’re getting into the program as a result, but I do know – judging by the increasing number of Likes and seeing people at events who said they learned about it through Facebook – that it’s helping us create more of a following,” Liebowitz said.

And although the Adams’ Project doesn’t actively fundraise since it is under fiscal receivership, it does receive donations and grants. “When we get funding, we want to celebrate it, and Facebook seems to be the social media venue where the most people I know interact; almost all of our students are on it, and many of our supporters, too,” Liebowitz said.

As a result of the TLA, Liebowitz is looking into other cloud-based resources. The Adams’ Project uses a Google calendar to display upcoming concert dates and Google Docs to manage the booking process, but Liebowitz plans to follow up on information and resources provided during the TLA to select additional tools. She hopes to create a master calendar and have the ability to generate reminders to individual performers and ensemble members about their upcoming events. Otherwise, “it’s just massive to try to coordinate it all,” she said.

The TLA also led Liebowitz to revise the syllabus for a course that helps music students hone critical skills in community outreach and nonprofit management: Marketing in the 21st Century. With permission from NTEN, she added material from the Academy to the curriculum, including content about social media and defining – and differentiating among – an organization’s community, network and crowd.

In another course, a community outreach practicum that teaches student performers how to create compelling programming for at-risk audiences, Liebowitz restructured class assignments to include the option to develop a website or act as social media brand ambassador for Adams’ Project and Heartpower performances. Several students have since built websites for their ensembles, which have led to an increase in their followings and to some additional performances.

For Liebowitz, the greatest impact of the TLA has been on her comfort level with technology. “For me, it’s about relieving some of that fear, about how to approach technology and proceed without feeling like I have to get someone to help me. Now I’m much more brave about working through things on my own, and I’m much more confident taking information about technology into my classes. I know I haven’t even scratched the surface of what’s possible.”

You can find more case studies at http://nten.org/case-studies.
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