First Choice - September 2008

WUSF, University of South Florida

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/wusf_first

Part of the Broadcast and Video Studies Commons

Scholar Commons Citation

This News Article is brought to you for free and open access by the WUSF at Scholar Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in First Choice Monthly Newsletter by an authorized administrator of Scholar Commons. For more information, please contact scholarcommons@usf.edu.
Russell Gant needs no introduction to the thousands of listeners who know him as WUSF 89.7’s classical music director and weekday on-air host. Gant combines a deep baritone voice with a deep understanding and love of classical music. He first joined the WUSF family as a part-time board operator in 1983 while he was still studying music at the University of South Florida. Gant has been a full-time on-air host since 1987 and became the station’s classical music director in 2006, responsible for nearly 67 hours of classical programming each week. No music snob, Gant presents insights about Mozart, Rossini, Beethoven and the other greats with the understanding of a long-time friend. Classical music is a continent of new discoveries. WUSF listeners are happy to have Gant as their knowledgeable guide as they explore it every day.

continued on following page
When did you first fall in love with classical music?
It began when I was studying music at USF. My first love was choral music. My appreciation grew and evolved from there. This station had as much to do with expanding my knowledge and appreciation as did my studies. I was an avid WUSF listener as a student, and even more so after I came to work here.

**How do you compile your classic music selections?**

Normally I don’t arrange by theme or era—except for certain times of the year, like July Fourth, when I might offer selections of patriotic music. Otherwise, I like to create a good balance of composers, periods and textures. I’ll follow an up-tempo piece with something more solemn. It’s a balancing act. We have 72,745 selections of music to choose from! I try to make the selections fresh. I like to introduce listeners to great pieces that haven’t been played regularly. There’s no real formula for it. Loosely, what I like to do is follow music that appeals to the heart with music that appeals to the mind.

**Where do you get your tidbits of classical music history?**

I have various resources. I’ll pick something out of The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, do a search on Google, or draw on things I learned in college or picked up over the years.

**Do your selections reflect your tastes?**

No. I don’t try to impose my taste. I suppose I function as an editor. It’s like creating an anthology of great literature.

**How would you describe the typical WUSF classical music listener?**

Our listeners are well-educated, enlightened and intelligent. They love good quality music. Music isn’t a trivial thing to our listeners. They want to know something interesting about it. Above all, they want to hear music—the outstanding performances and stellar musicians and composers.

**Do your selections help listeners build their own music libraries?**

All the time. We get constant feedback from listeners asking where they can get a recording. I’m always happy to help. Listeners can access our playlist selections on our Web site and then order them through the Amazon.com link on our Web site. A portion of every purchase made this way goes back to the station.

**What’s your favorite part of the job?**

Listening—both to the music and to the listeners. I love hearing from listeners, discovering how we’re touching their lives. I also love listening to new CDs. My desk is covered with stacks of CDs of the world’s finest music, performed by the world’s greatest musicians and orchestras. I make new discoveries every day. It’s a tough job, but somebody’s got to do it!

**How would you define classical music?**

The true classical period is the time of Mozart and Haydn—the period between the Baroque and Romantic eras—but the term is used broadly. It’s often used as a synonym for all serious music, encompassing eras from the 15th century on through to the 20th century and even beyond.

**Are you a musician?**

Yes. I’m choir director and cantor at St. Paul Catholic Church in Tampa where my wife, Mary, is the full-time music director and organist. I’ve also sung with various local ensembles over the years, including The Master Chorale of Tampa Bay, and the Heralds of Harmony barbershop chorus.

**What’s your take on the local classical music scene?**

I think it’s growing. People are constantly discovering classical music thanks to WUSF. We do so much more than just play music. We’re connected to the community—hosting concerts, interviewing musicians and artistic directors, announcing musical events. It’s really a personal connection to this community. We’ve devoted our lives to classical music because it’s something we love. It’s also great to be able to see our listeners at the concerts—the people who love classical music. We share the same passion. It’s a great feeling.
Can you hear us now? Thanks to the support of a generous listener, we recently installed a new broadcast antenna for WUSF 89.7 and WUSF 89.7² that really goes the distance. We’ve boosted our signal strength, bringing clearer radio reception to homes from North Port to Kissimmee. Today, thousands more people can hear WUSF loud and clear. Listeners across the planet can always enjoy all of our radio programming online—anytime.

We appreciate the benefits of new technology. But some things never change. Whatever our high-tech improvements are, it’s always people who make it possible. Our television membership campaign is on the schedule this month and we’ll be looking forward to hearing from you. Your support made our DTV programming possible—and your support during this campaign will allow us to continue to set the standard in the central Florida region.

In this issue, we cast a spotlight on our 2008 Volunteer Appreciation Event, acknowledging the nearly 200 volunteers who donated 6,088 hours of their time for WUSF’s many vital projects in the past year. Here’s just one example of their service: Our volunteer readers recorded 3,432 hours for the Radio Reading Service, which brings the printed word to the visually impaired. Bravo to all of you who give your time to make WUSF shine.

We also congratulate USF students Danielle Murkerson and Jessica Hall, recipients of the 2008 Student Endowment Awards, a program that helps promising students launch their careers by giving them the opportunity to work at WUSF. Thanks to dedicated WUSF members, James B. and Jo Ann G. Heck, and Barbara and Dean F. Martin who fund the endowments, talented USF students gain professional experience—and WUSF gains from their talent.

Also in this issue, Russell Gant, our erudite classical music director and on-air host, shares his passion for the timeless music of geniuses from Bach to Rachmaninoff—a passion that all of us gladly share.

Of course, you share a passion for knowledge, as well. WUSF Public Broadcasting is educational and entertaining, which is why our partnership with community organizations like G.WIZ comes naturally to us. WUSF depends on people—especially those who are curious about the world around them.

Let us know how we’re doing. We depend on your bright ideas!

JoAnn Urofsky  General Manager
University of South Florida students Danielle Murkerson and Jessica Hall were recently awarded the prestigious 2008 Student Endowment Awards. The awards simultaneously recognize their outstanding academic achievement and empower their future professional development. Hall and Murkerson are only the latest in a line of promising students whose careers in broadcasting and electronic media have been launched by these generous award programs. Each of the $25,000 endowed funds was established in 2003 to provide meaningful employment opportunities for USF students at WUSF. The funds were established by WUSF Cornerstone members Barbara and Dean F. Martin and WUSF’s former general manager, James B. Heck, and his wife Jo Ann G. Heck.

“This very special endowment was established to enable talented USF students to gain professional experience,” notes JoAnn Urofsky, WUSF’s general manager. “Students get hands-on experience in the broadcast world. WUSF gets the benefit of their education, skills, enthusiasm and perspective.”

Urofsky explains that the students work in various departments at the station.

Students are selected for their professional contributions to WUSF and for their outstanding academic achievements, explains James Heck. Prior to his work with WUSF he served at USF as professor of education, dean of regional campuses, and dean of extended studies and learning technologies.

“This program provides professional experience that moves students ahead in their careers,” he notes. “In recognizing students who excel, the award adds to their resume and also helps WUSF.”

Murkerson, a senior in USF’s computer science program, spent the last two years working with WUSF’s Web development team learning the intricacies of Web design and development. “The work I’m doing here will benefit my life and career greatly,” she says. “I plan to build a career in this field after I graduate in December.” Hall studied mass communications at USF and graduated in May. She worked with the television production team at WUSF and helped produce numerous programs and documentaries. After her internship, she was offered a full-time position at WUSF, which she gladly accepted. “I’ve always had a place in my heart for public broadcasting,” says Hall. “My internship at WUSF was perfect. I’m learning about TV production, field work and documentaries—soaking up as much information as I can.”

“In our view, it’s one of the best investments one can make,” says Dean F. Martin, Ph.D., a distinguished university professor emeritus of chemistry at USF. “Working with WUSF’s staff exposes these students to creative, dedicated, precise, and thoroughly professional people. The students are bound to benefit by their example. And they'll have a good working experience because of their assigned project.”

“Barbara and Dean and James and Jo Ann have been involved in education all of their lives,” says Cathy Coccia, WUSF’s development director. “Helping students pursue their dreams and get real-life experience is exactly what they need.”

The first rung of the ladder is often the hardest, adds Coccia. “We all have to start somewhere,” she says. “What better place than WUSF?”
More Locally Hosted Classical Music!

WUSF is giving you more of what you listen for. More Russell, Coleen and Bethany! The voices that you hear accompanying classical music on the weekends are some of your favorites. Russell Gant pulls the early shift from 6 to 8 a.m. on Saturdays and Sundays; Coleen Cook keeps us company on Saturday afternoons, from noon until 5 p.m.; and Bethany Cagle is behind the microphone on Sunday afternoons from 1 to 3 p.m. Check out our program schedule for complete details at wusf.org.

The Met Opera: Live in HD Begins This Month

The “Metropolitan Opera: Live in HD,” a series of live performances shown in high definition in movie theaters, starts this month on Sept. 22. The opening night gala stars Renée Fleming in fully staged performances of scenes from three different operas: Verdi’s La Traviata (Act II), Massenet’s Manon (Act III), and the final scene from Richard Strauss’s Capriccio. Tenor Ramón Vargas and baritones Thomas Hampson and Dwayne Croft co-star. Met Music Director James Levine and Marco Armiliato conduct. For more information about theater locations, visit wusf.org.

Cruising the Rivers of France with Burt Wolf

This May, more than 100 WUSF friends and supporters cruised down the Saône and Rhône rivers with Burt Wolf, host of the public television series Travels & Traditions. The culinary and cultural journey included visits to the ancient towns of Tournus and Mâcon, and two days in Lyon, one of France’s gastronomic centers. Participants visited the twin cities of Tournon and Tain l’Hermitage, celebrated for their medieval architecture, as well as Avignon and Arles. Wolf’s filmmaking crew recorded this river adventure, allowing guests the rare opportunity to view television in the making. “This was an extraordinary opportunity for WUSF friends and members to meet Burt Wolf and watch how his program is produced — and be a part of it, if they wished,” says JoAnn Urofsky, WUSF’s general manager. “It gave us an opportunity to make new friends and thank long-time supporters, and learn first-hand their thoughts about public broadcasting. It was also a WUSF fundraiser—specifically designed by Burt Wolf to give back to public television.” Urofsky says that the trip was so successful that WUSF is planning a Danube River tour (through Czechoslovakia, Germany, Austria and Hungary) with Wolf in July 2009.
2008 Volunteer Appreciation Bash!

WUSF honored its hardworking volunteers at its 2008 Volunteer Appreciation Event in June at Traditions Hall in USF’s Alumni Center. Nearly 90 WUSF volunteers enjoyed delectable Italian cuisine from Castellano and Pizzo’s. The popular Tampa restaurant and market also donated gift certificates as door prizes—so several lucky people will be getting second helpings of its great food. WUSF’s general manager, JoAnn Urofsky, presented awards honoring the volunteers’ commitment and service to the station. The Sandy Hahn Volunteer of the Year Award went to Ken Van Alstyne. The Sandy Hahn Volunteer Group of the Year Award went to Key Chorale, Sarasota’s symphonic chorus.

“Volunteers are a vital part of WUSF Public Broadcasting’s operations,” says Urofsky. “We couldn’t do what we do without their support. When we say that, we mean it—literally. Volunteer work hours save the station thousands of dollars each year. Many of our activities couldn’t succeed without volunteer help.” To show its appreciation of these volunteers, WUSF staff produced a DVD depicting images of the many volunteers working on WUSF projects over the years.

“This is just one small token of our appreciation,” notes Karen Monroe, WUSF’s volunteer opportunities coordinator. “We count ourselves lucky to work with such a dedicated and talented group.”

G.WIZ and WUSF: A Natural Partnership

WUSF Public Broadcasting partners with a host of area cultural groups. It’s only natural—community involvement is at the core of our mission. And what could be more natural than a partnership with G.WIZ, a Sarasota-based non-profit center exploring the wonders of science, technology and nature?

“Our partnership is an ideal fit,” says Cheryl Burstein, interim executive director of G.WIZ. “Both enterprises facilitate learning for people of all ages. We share the same audience: people eager to learn more about the world around them. WUSF has been instrumental in getting the word out about our programs and events.”

Burstein explains that the relationship is mutually beneficial. G.WIZ selected WUSF as a major media format for educating the Tampa Bay region about its programs and events. “The WUSF audience is ideal for G.WIZ,” she explains. “Public broadcasting is a vital part of our region’s media landscape. WUSF TV/DT is the ideal format to educate viewers about what we’re doing at G.WIZ. Having G.WIZ mentioned on a station whose name is synonymous with education furthers our mission of increasing scientific awareness. So many families watch the educational programs WUSF TV/DT offers; the partnership is really a natural fit!”

To learn more about G.WIZ, visit gwiz.org.