

Committee for Public Events
Report for 2006-2007

Faculty members of the Committee this year were Claire Moisan (Chair), Edward Phillips, and Jon Andelson. Student members were Sollie Flora, Karly Newton (All Campus Events Coordinator for SGA), and Dan Furuta.

The 2005-06 Committee had booked the following events for the 2006-2007 academic year:

The New Orleans Jazz Orchestra (September 15, in Herrick Chapel)

Florestan Trio (October 26, in Herrick Chapel)

Urban Bush Women (February 8, in Roberts Theater)

Joyce DiDonato and Julius Drake (February 24, in Herrick Chapel)

Quartet New Generation (April 29, in Herrick Chapel)

Having completed its roster, the Committee also had a unique opportunity to engage **Joan Baez** (who was touring the Midwest) for an additional public event concert on November 6, in Herrick Chapel.

The Joan Baez performance drew a great crowd, which accompanied her in a heartfelt rendition of *Amazing Grace*. Baez's website refers to the Grinnell concert as one of the highlights of her tour: "It was a spectacular evening This audience received more encores than any other on the tour." The New Orleans Jazz Orchestra and Urban Bush Women likewise attracted large crowds with a good mix of students, faculty and townspeople. The remaining three concerts drew in smaller though still quite enthusiastic crowds. The DiDonato/Drake concert-goers showed particular devotion as the concert occurred amidst the terrible ice storm of '07; luckily, power returned just before the performers took the stage.

The Committee for Public Events could not have staged these wonderful performances without the enormous and indefatigable support of Director of Conference Operations, Rachel Bly, and her assistants, Pam Montgomery and Shannon Geisinger. Rachel made contacts and developed important relationships with artist managers at the Midwest Arts Conference in Little Rock in September. She brought back many brochures and ideas for potential performances, which she shared with the Committee at our bi-monthly meetings. She also collaborated with Georgia Dentel, who continues to provide valuable expertise in arts programming and especially in bargaining with managers. Georgia was particularly successful in negotiating an extraordinarily low cost with Joan Baez's agent.

Every year, her bargaining enables the Committee to stretch its dollars and thus bring in a greater range of performers every year. (She also helped a student negotiate \$4,000 off a contract with jazz musician Kurt Elling.) All members of the Committee recognize that the College has greatly benefited from its long-standing relationship with Georgia, and we strongly recommend that the College continue to work with her in the future. As well, we cannot overstate the importance of Rachel's and Pam's aid to the Committee. They both met regularly with the Committee throughout the year and managed each of the public events efficiently and gracefully, serving as liaisons with both the managers and the performers. We thank Dann Hayes for his work in event publicity and Jim Powers for his lovely posters and programs. The Committee also wishes to extend thanks for contributions of time, energy, and advice from Paul Nelson, Erik Sanning, Shawn Womack, Don Smith, and all others who have helped make this an outstanding season, including a host of diligent and skilled student workers. Particular thanks are due to Ed Phillips for his dedication to the arts and the professional guidance he provided to the committee.

The Committee faced a few budgeting and publicity challenges this year. Just a week before Joan Baez was to arrive, her agent demanded an extra \$2,000. We agreed to this request since we found the alternative—canceling the concert—unthinkable, and thus we decided to exceed our budget. We also agreed to Eugene Gaub's request for funds to voice and regulate the grand piano in Herrick Chapel in the week preceding the DiDonato and Drake concert. The Music department requested our help because its budget only includes funding for tuning but not for voicing and regulation; consequently, this process had not occurred for four years, despite professional recommendations that it be done yearly. Although the Public Events Committee does not have a line-item for maintenance either, we agreed to Gene's request because we think it important to provide our world-class performers with the best possible instruments. The Committee urges the College in the strongest terms to work out a better arrangement for such costs.

A second problem we encountered was with publicity, particularly with the DiDonato and Drake concert. The *Des Moines Register* misrepresented the concert in its calendar of events (where it should have publicized the DiDonato and Drake concert, it inserted the name of a group that performed last year around the same time); the press release and web-page contained several factual and even spelling errors (which we quickly rectified with the help of Pam, Rachel, and Dann Hayes); and finally, this information was printed relatively late in the week by the *Grinnell Herald Register*. In this particular case, these problems were made moot by the ice storm—many potential concert-goers likely believed that the concert was cancelled. Nonetheless, we met with Kate Foster about future publicity practices. She clarified the Office of Communications' policies and procedures concerning the timing of press and web publications, and we agreed that members of the Committee should review and edit (to the extent allowable by the performer's agent) both releases and programs. We appreciate Kate's and Dann Hayes's swift and efficient response to our concerns and hope that we will continue to collaborate effectively in following years.

The program of Public Events for 2007-2008 includes the following:

The Second City comedy troupe (Wednesday September 12th in the Harris Center);

Thomas Meglioranza '92, baritone (Thursday November 8th in Herrick Chapel);

St. Petersburg Ballet possibly performing Carmen (January 26th in Roberts Theatre);

The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center performing early 20th century English music (Saturday March 6th).

We are also still in the process of negotiating a price and date with jazz musician **McCoy Tyner** and hope to bring him to campus sometime after Spring Break in 2008.

The faculty members of the 2007-2008 Committee for Public Events will be Jon Andelson (Chair), Claire Moisan, and Shawn Womack.

Respectfully submitted,

Claire Moisan
Chair
May 18, 2007