

Community Engagement Fellows Project Report
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The final outcome of my time as a Community Engagement Fellow—in addition to wonderful cross-campus relationships that will hopefully continue to deepen for many years to come—is a commitment as Director of Orchestral Studies to devote a segment of the orchestral curriculum to a substantial community outreach project each year.

Public concerts are among the central activities in my department; however, the challenges in physically getting to campus, particularly on weekday evenings, make it prohibitively difficult for many people—often including those who stand to benefit the most from exposure to the performing arts—to attend our events.

In November 2015, the WWU Orchestra visited three local Title I elementary schools, giving a memorized, choreographed performance of *Peter and the Wolf*. The response—both from audiences as well as the student musicians—was so overwhelmingly enthusiastic that it became clear this kind of work needed to be a regular activity for the Orchestra. Not only do our audiences benefit from these types of performances, but our students gain priceless experience in performing “outside the box” in a range of venues and engaging with a diverse public—a critical skill for musicians in our day.

My initial concerns about the logistical challenges of planning and executing these types of events were allayed by the readiness of the Center for Service Learning to provide support in connecting and working with schools and other community partners. For me, this assistance is absolutely essential in facilitating a sustainable outreach program.

The plan for the 2016-2017 academic year is a joint concert of the WWU Symphony Orchestra and the Western Big Band performing Tchaikovsky’s *Nutcracker* alongside Duke Ellington’s ingenious adaptation, the *Harlem Nutcracker*. BFA Dance students will participate as well. Because of the number of people involved, this will be an on-campus event; however, by offering two performances over a weekend and reaching out heavily to local schools, we hope to make this incredible music as accessible as possible.

My long-term hope is that on- and off-campus outreach concerts like this become a regular part of the curriculum for all of Western’s musical ensembles, and that the walls of our building grow increasingly porous, with performances occurring out in the community as frequently as on campus.