

**BRINGING THE WORLD TO NORTHERN  
Russell M. Magnaghi**

Over the last century, Northern Michigan University has been a promoter of programs, which opened the world to the students and to the Marquette community on the far northern shores of Lake Superior. The process has evolved. First, there was the concept of "assembly" for the students. Superintendent of Public Instruction, Delos Fall and President Kaye were concerned about the character development of future teachers. In late 1904, Fall told principals (later called presidents) of the Normal Schools, "I consider the religious exercise to be important, and more especially in a school for the training of teachers." As a result, Northern's assembly program was called "chapel" for several years. As late as 1932, assembly continued to be referred to as "Chapel Hour" and missing assembly was considered similar to missing Sunday services.

When the assemblies were held on a biweekly basis, classes and offices were closed. They became voluntary in 1936-1937 and were described as "a course of musical entertainments and lectures open to students and to the public." Nine years later students were encouraged to keep 9:50 a.m. on Monday free in order to take advantage of "the broad cultural enrichment afforded by these programs." It was also seen as a time when the entire University community could come together, which it rarely did as the student population grew.

Over the years a variety of programs were presented. Harry Kahrem the world's greatest mentalist gave a program. In 1942 John Moyer presented "museum techniques" focusing on taxidermy; the Phy Ed Department presented a dancing program while newsman Orin W. Kaye told of his World War II experiences. In 1945 the noted black

poet Langsdon Hughes read his critical poetry about black life. There were musical presentations by faculty and students and in 1946 Rudolph Ganz of the Chicago Music College gave a classical music concert. The Chicago Symphony String Ensemble, the Don Cossack Chorus, opera baritones, senators and famous Americans like Norman Thomas appeared on the Northern stage. In 1959 John Homer presented "Afro-Asian People United." Eleanor Roosevelt was a speaker as was Kurt von Schuschnigg, Austrian chancellor driven from office by the Nazis. While in 1968 The Four Tops, a popular black singing group was on the stage. At another time Louis Armstrong was a guest of the University.

Despite these performers, by the late 1940s there were mixed reactions with some students feeling they were a waste of time and a decade later there was poor attendance.

In the early 1950s the Marquette Community Concert Series was established and proved to be popular as the Assembly series declined in popularity. As late as 1968-1969 the University bulletin listed a Lecture-Concert Series, which was available to students to provide "opportunities for experience in a variety of cultural and educational programs."

A number of programs operated on-campus bringing fine entertainment and speakers to campus. There was the McGoff Distinguished Lecture Series, which existed from 1978-1988. Two distinguished speakers were former president Gerald R. Ford and former Secretary of State Alexander Haig. In the decade of the 1990s this tradition continued. In 1986 the Michigan legislature created the Martin Luther King, Jr.-César Chávez-Rosa Parks Initiative, which brought numerous minority speakers to campus such as César Chávez and the leading Native American intellectual of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Vine Deloria, Jr.

Platform Personalities sponsored speakers and entertainment as did the Performing Art Series (1990) under the direction of Wayne Francis that attracted entertainment. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century musical performances are brought to campus by Dan Truckey director of the Beaumier Heritage Center. Unfortunately, the former rich cultural programs for the campus and the community has all but ended.