

Choral director remembers her escape from Communist Cuba

By JEFF WRIGHT
Reporter

As a 9-year-old Cuban refugee allowed to bring only three sets of clothing and her piano books, Patty Fleitas boarded the plane for America. She left behind her parents, friends and baby doll but brought with her the one thing that would direct her life — her music.

Today Patricia Fleitas is the assistant vocal music coordinator for the Vocal Music Programs and vocal music and artistic director for the MSC Madrigal Dinners at Texas A&M University. She serves as director of the Century Singers and the Women's Chorus.

"I didn't even know Texas existed when I came to this country," Patty says. "I certainly didn't know about Texas A&M."

Patty has been involved in music since she was three years old.

At the age of 6, she watched her country, city, school, church and home fall to Communist control. The quiet and peaceful lifestyle of the Cuban people was disrupted by a revolution that resulted in Castro's control. Patty's hometown became the site of bombings and martial law. Her parents wanted to get her and her brother Tony out of the country before they were chosen to help in the war. America was the answer.

To leave Cuba, they had to place a request at the American Embassy and then wait for a telegram that either granted or denied permission to leave.

"We stood in line for hours to put in our request," Patty says. "All we could do after that was sit and wait."

After weeks of waiting, the telegram came. Patty and Tony could leave the country. Their parents could not. Her father was a physician and the regime needed him in Cuba.

"They said he probably would never be able to leave," Patty re-

membered as she shrugged her shoulders.

On August 4, 1962, Patty and Tony and their aunt and grandmother boarded a Pan American flight for Miami. Not knowing when she would see her parents again, she left Cuba carrying her piano books in a hand-made needle-worked bag.

In October 1962 all flights to the United States were closed and interaction between the two countries was impossible. The anticipated reunion with her parents seemed to be slipping further and further away.

Patty's group settled in Miami as a refugee unit. They received money and medical assistance from the U.S. government, along with powdered milk, canned meats and cheese to supplement what was bought with money from work.

She attended public schools where she learned to play the violin. In junior high school, she joined the orchestra.

"My parents loved to hear me play the piano," Patty said as a tear rolled down her cheek. "I missed them so much."

One day the phone rang and Patty's father said they would be in Miami the next week. Little did his children know that he had given everything he owned to be with them. He gave his home and everything else he owned in exchange for a pass to America.

Dr. Fleitas passed the American Medical Examination and got a job in Marlin, Texas, in the Veteran's Administration. After three years, he moved his family to Bryan to open a private practice. Patty was a senior in high school.

"I did not like Texas," Patty says. "I lived for Christmas and summer-time when I could go back to Miami."

After going to Texas A&M one summer and Blinn College one semester, Patty went back to Miami to finish her degree in music. She re-



Patty Fleitas directs the Women's Chorus

ceived a bachelor's degree in music education from Barry College and a master's degree in secondary music education from Florida International University before returning to Texas.

In 1980, she completed a master's degree in performance at the University of Texas. During this time, Patty served as interim director for the Century Singers and assistant director for the Reveliers at Texas A&M. When offered a full-time position, she accepted without reservation.

"I love working with Aggies," Patty says. "I have learned the true meaning of dedication through my experiences with Aggies."

"I believe in what my daddy said when he got to America," she says. "He said people could take away everything you own, but they can't take away your education."

Although she is not a native American, Patty has become a true Aggie. She supports Aggie traditions and says she is proud to be a part of such a unique and genuine association of people.

Jammin' at A&M

By JULIE ENNIS
Reporter

Members the Texas A&M Symphonic Band and the Texas A&M Jazz Band may have different musical styles, but their devotion to entertaining Bryan and College Station is common.

Floyd Kaminski, director and member of the Jazz Band, says any student interested in playing big band type music is welcome to join the group.

He says the Jazz Band was created five years ago to let students play blues, ragtime, big-band and other related jazz music.

"I have been a member of the Jazz Band for four years now," he says. "It used to be very limited for students not in the Corps to have an outlet to play instruments such as the horns."

Bill Dean, director of the Symphonic Band, says any student can audition for the band, but membership is limited to 75.

Dean sends informational notices about the Symphonic Band to many Texas high schools.

"A lot of musically talented high school students aren't aware that Texas A&M has a band like this," he says. "And it's always good to get the freshmen interested in the band early in their college career."

Kaminski says the Jazz Band has 22 members and doesn't recruit from high schools.

"The size of the band largely depends on the type of music we are playing at that time," he says. "Some

programs need more instrumentation than others."

Kaminski says the band practices every Monday night during the school year in the lounge area of the Commons.

Depending on the weather, the Jazz Band plays in the Memorial Student Center or at Rudder Fountain on home football weekends.

"The alumni really seem to enjoy the big band music," Kaminski says.

The Jazz Band also schedules noon sidewalk concerts on campus to entertain students, faculty and visitors, he says.

"We have also played for graduation parties and fundraising events," Kaminski says. "We use the money that we earn from these programs to buy equipment and instruments."

Dean says the Symphonic Band members practice on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 12:30 p.m. to 1:40 p.m.

"It's impossible to have a rigorous schedule during the school year," he says. "The students really practice hard to gain the most out of the short practices."

The Symphonic Band puts on a Christmas program and a spring concert in the Memorial Student Center. The band also schedules outdoor concerts on weekdays.

The first organizational meeting for anyone interested in joining the Symphonic Band will be on Tuesday, August 28.

The first organizational meeting for the Jazz Band will be on Monday, August 27, in the lounge area of the Commons.

A night on the town can ease the stress

By JUDY OLIVER
Reporter

It's been one of THOSE days. It started out with three tests, included a nagging roommate and ended with an unexpected call from mom. There is only one thing to do. It is definitely time to party.

College Station's nightlife doesn't compare to the excitement offered in Austin or Houston, but it does have choices. No taste is too odd that at least some form of entertainment can't be found.

Popular choices for a restaurant and bar are Bennigan's Tavern and J.T. McCord's. For those who like to dance there is Roxz and Graham Central Station. And for a laid back atmosphere with live music, try Dr. G's.

One of the most popular dance spots in College Station is the Roxz. Steve Graham, manager of Roxz, says that Roxz is successful because it has a good location and is kept up to date. He says the students go there because of the drink specials and the lights. Graham says that 90 percent of the crowd at Roxz are college students.

Graham, who is manager of Teasers as well, says the new club caters to a wider variety of people: cowboys, older people, and just about anyone who wants to dance.

Ruthi Wiethorn, senior management-marketing major, likes to go dancing at the Roxz because that is where her friends are.

For those who prefer country and western music, Graham's and The Texas Hall of Fame are available. Melissa McDaniel, a senior education major, says she likes Graham's because there is a variety of music and good drink specials. Martha Sweet, a senior chemical engineering major, prefers the Hall of Fame because of the live bands and large dance floor. Don Crow, a junior mechanical engineering major, says he likes Graham's because of the drink specials.

"I prefer a place with good drink specials, good music and a good time," says Crow.

The Zephyr Club is another popular night spot. Zephyr's has lasted in College Station for two and a half years, unlike some clubs that change hands every six months. All the employees as well as both managers are students. The employees have as much fun as the people who go there, says manager Curt Jones.

"It's a meeting place," says Jones. Zephyr's is a place to sit around and have a few drinks, he says.

For bands the choice is Dr. G's. Every Friday night on KAMU-FM from 10 p.m. to midnight "Live From Dr. G's" can be heard.

Peter Rocha, a senior English major, likes Dr. G's because there is no strict dress code and it gives local bands a chance to play.

Depending on what a person is in the mood for determines his choice for nightlife in College Station.

Jazz ensemble in the swing of things

By KAREN GILES
Reporter

The Reveliers, a vocal jazz, pop and swing ensemble, have been promoting Texas A&M through music for the past 10 years.

The group, directed by vocal music coordinator Robert Boone, consists of 16 singers and four instrumentalists who perform 15 to 20 shows each year at banquets, conventions, campus-sponsored events and several out-of-town activities.

Formal shows include the Texas A&M Vocal Music Program's Christmas concert and an annual spring concert, scheduled next year on Valentine's Day. "The theme will be love," Boone says.

The Reveliers are noted for their unique style of presentation, Boone said.

"The music, depending upon the arrangement, is about 99 percent vocal jazz or swing, but we'll throw in a little 'pop' now and then," he

said. "It's danceable music, but it's difficult, since it's mostly harmony and rhythm."

Members are selected through two auditions, a solo singing audition, followed by a group audition with the Reveliers.

"They must maintain their grades at Texas A&M, and prepare themselves to devote four to five hours per week to rehearsal, not including performance time," Boone said.

He said the Reveliers are a tight-knit group. "There are no individuals," he said. "It must be a team effort."

Boone said the group has had little chance to travel.

"We'd like to travel more, but it's just so expensive," Boone said. "We charge an honorarium of \$45 per song, which goes back into the budget for such things as costumes and maintenance of instruments."

The Reveliers have nine openings to fill this fall, and Boone said he expects a big turnout at the auditions.



Vocal Music Director Robert Boone

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