

Music degree adds 'world class' status



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Every day newspapers, television and radio continually display a world full of differences. Whether it's on Capitol Hill or at city hall, differences pervade society on all levels. Disagreement and differences are two things all cultures in the world have in common — the other is music.

It could only be a commercial single or a silly song, but everyone has at least one song invade their brain daily. In movies, music tells the audience when to be happy, sad, tense or relaxed.

Werner Rose, coordinator of the Music Program at Texas A&M, says that music is indeed a worldwide phenomenon.

"Sometimes music is referred to as an international language," Rose said. "It's not really as such, but it is represented in every culture and society on the earth."

And at this "world class" University, music is barely represented at all. Being such a worldwide force, it's amazing that A&M continues to claim it is providing a world-class education without offering a degree in music.

Of all the schools in the A&M system, only Texas A&M International in Laredo and the College Station campus do not offer a music degree. The University of Texas, Texas Tech, Rice University, the University of North Texas and the University of Houston all offer music degrees. The largest public university in Texas, however, doesn't offer such a degree.

Of the largest institutions in the nation, Ohio State, UT, Arizona State, University of Wisconsin and Michigan State, A&M is the only one not to have this degree. And Aggies wonder why their beloved school is referred to as being a backwards university. Although Aggies know A&M degrees are excellent, the rest of the academic world sees only the lack of fine arts on our campus.

Also, Aggies themselves feel inadequate in the world of fine art. A 1995 survey of recent graduates performed by Measurement and Research Services found that less than 20 percent of A&M graduates felt they had made progress in the enjoyment of art, music or drama. For the level of importance society places upon these things, A&M somehow thinks that a lack of specialization in a field will somehow overcome these basic human expressions.

A&M has been slowly working to put together a music degree program. Somehow this frightens a lot of students. From fears that the Aggie Band will somehow go non-reg, to the concern of wasting money due to low enrollment, opponents don't want

to consider the study of music in Aggieland. Of all the concerns, the factor of competition is an important consideration.

Ray Grasshoff, assistant director of Media Relations for the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), says competition and quality control are two important aspects when analyzing any new degree program.

"We (THECB) have two primary responsibilities," Grasshoff said. "First is to make sure that state funds are spent effectively [on higher education]. Secondly is a commitment to high quality without duplication." But the competition factor is not relevant.

"The plan for A&M is not to become another performance school," Rose said. "Music can be studied as an art; it has its own canon. People express themselves through the arts even when their mouths are clamped shut."

Since A&M's music degree will focus on the history and rhetoric of music as an art, it will definitely lend more credibility to a campus starving for fine arts education. Students must also keep in mind that this degree will attract many future Aggies. Not offering a music degree is the same thing as telling a musically interested student, "Go away, A&M doesn't want you."

Money will not be wasted in this program, either. Currently, there are only 25 empty seats in the music courses offered this fall. Students can take a number of courses to satisfy humanities requirements, but music seems to be one of the most popular, having no trouble being filled.

A&M is not a cultural wasteland. Groups such as the Symphonic Band, the Aggie Players and numerous theatrical and orchestral events performed year-round provide plenty of fine arts for the interested student. But since events are spread out over time and distance across campus, it is not the same as having a concerted effort.

"We have plenty of exposure (to the arts)," Rose said, "but it doesn't come together like in an education program. We have exposure, but we do not have education."

Currently Aggies have a unique opportunity in the music department — no other university offers the depth and breadth of these music courses to such a wide variety of majors. If the music degree receives the student support that it rightfully deserves, Aggies past, present and future can benefit from a higher confidence about this University's ability to really provide a "world-class" education.

MAJOR PAIN

A&M curriculum has enough majors



JOHN LEMONS
Columnist,
Electrical engineering
graduate student

Squads left, squads right, pianists, pianists we're all right. Load, ready, aim, fire, boom — A&M give us music.

This could be the future of Texas A&M University yells if the College of Liberal Arts has its way. Currently, the College is developing a bachelor of arts degree program in music. The move is another step toward making A&M into the Swiss army knife of higher education. A&M already offers 129 undergraduate degree programs in a futile attempt to cover every field of academic endeavor.

While it is admirable for the University to offer its students a wide range of majors, A&M does not need a music major. The move to add a music degree is an example of the excess occurring in higher education today.

Last July, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, which supervises all state universities, gave A&M permission to develop a degree in music. The proposed program will be a liberal arts degree in the study of music, its place in history and how it affects cultures. The degree program itself, however, will have to be approved by the Board before being offered.

Ray Grasshoff, assistant director of Media Relations for the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, said the Board was created to ensure that there is need for degree programs and to prevent University crowding of degree programs.

"It costs the state of Texas money to fund degree programs, so the Coordinating Board tries to ensure that programs are not duplicated unnecessarily," Grasshoff said. "By doing this, the Board helps ensure that the state's limited financial resources are spent efficiently, and that there are enough funds to adequately fund programs so that quality can be kept at the highest possible levels."

Texans are, however, able to pursue a degree in music at a state university. Of the 35 public universities in Texas, 26 of those institutions offer undergraduate degrees in music. Twelve of those universities offer a graduate degree in music.

Moreover, some of these schools are reasonably close to Texas A&M. Sam Houston State University and The University of Texas, which are both within 100 miles of A&M, offer degrees

in music. This is the definition of unnecessary duplication. It is unfair to expect the taxpayers of Texas to fund another music program when nearly three quarters of state universities offer a music degree.

The A&M in Texas A&M University stands for Agricultural and Mechanical, not Agricultural and Musical. After all, nobody would fear our football team if they were called the Fightin' Texas Musicians.

The study of music is outside the role of Texas A&M. Since its inception, agriculture and engineering have been the focus of this university. These are the fields in which A&M is a world leader.

While A&M does have a well-developed College of Liberal Arts, its enrollment is smaller than those of the Colleges of Engineering, Agriculture, and Business Administration.

Whenever a new degree program is approved, the University has to pay for the first two years of that program before the state will fund it. The money used to pay for establishing a music program could be better spent bolstering current academic programs. It would be better to strengthen this University's strongest points than to spread its resources thin by trying to offer every variation of academic study. Picking a major is not equivalent to picking an entrée at an all-you-can-eat buffet — students do not need to have it all.

The current music program offers students a wonderful chance to learn about music. The program offers 18 different classes.

Dr. Werner Rose, coordinator of the Music Program at A&M, said roughly 600 students per semester take advantage of the program's music courses.

"We actually have a series of courses in music, greater in number and types and diversity than any other school in the state of Texas," said Rose.

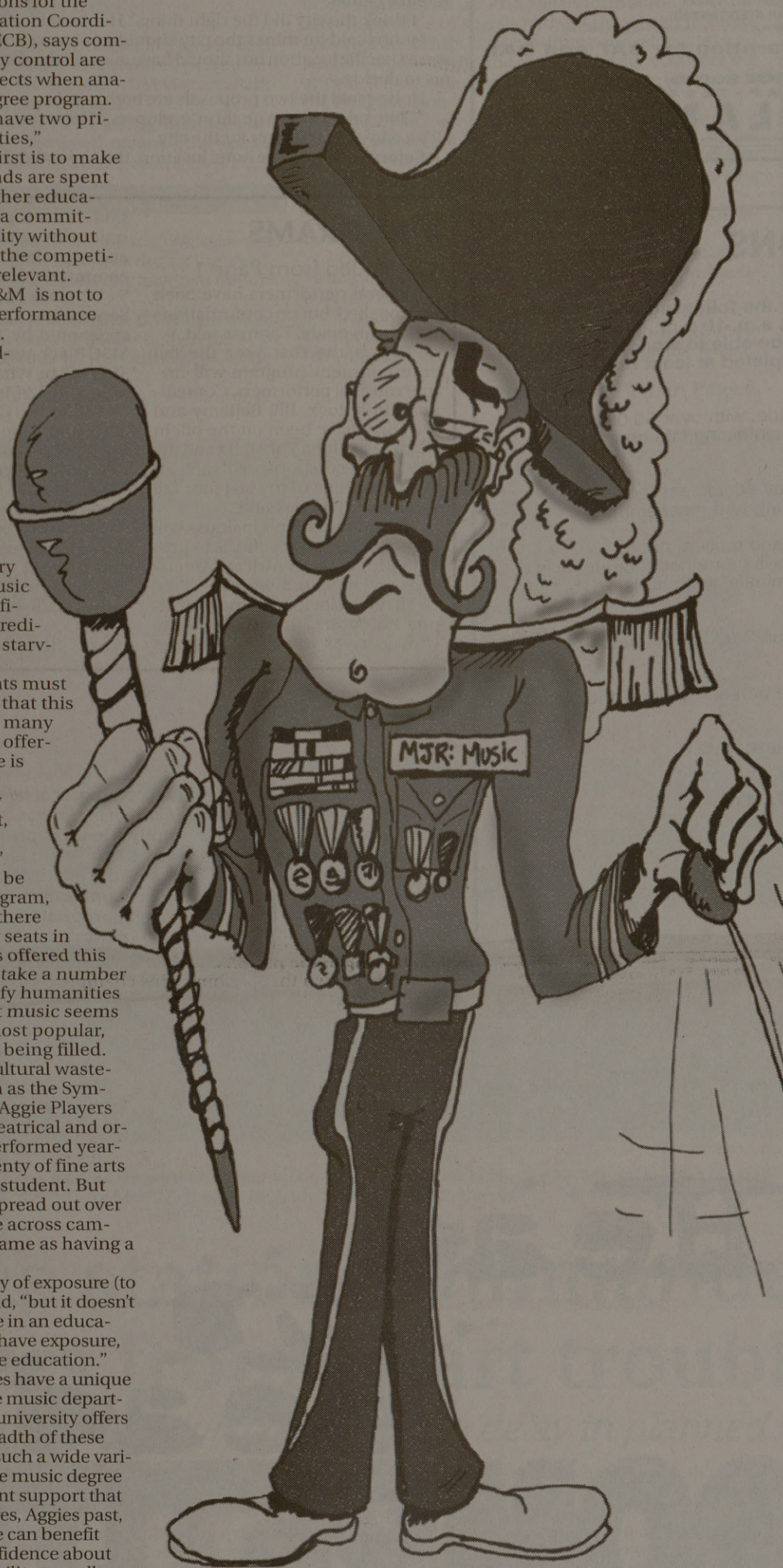
The program also offers a minor in music, yet few students are choosing to declare music as their minor.

"I think it's [the number of music minors] up in the teens now," said Rose.

Surely, the number of music minors is an indication of the number of students who are interested in a music major. Obviously, few Aggies are clamoring to become music majors.

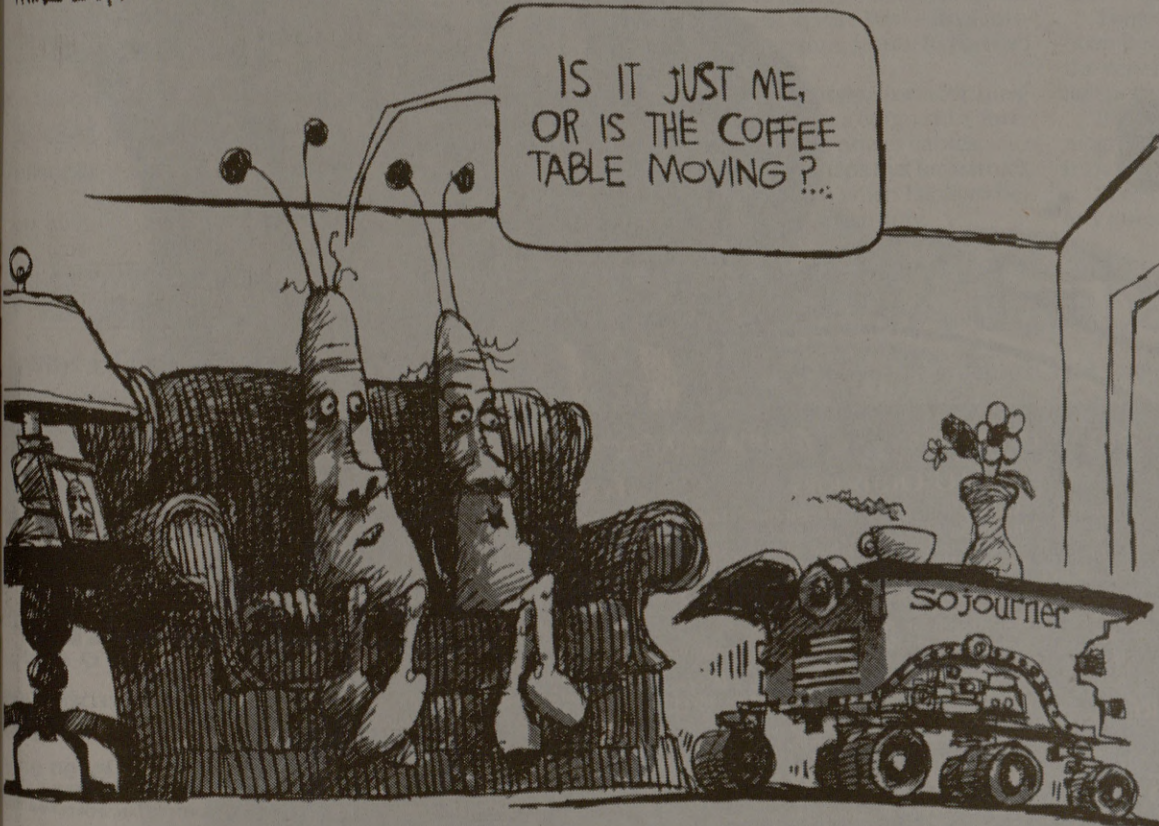
The current music program is appropriate for A&M. Students are utilizing the program's courses and expanding their horizons. The program, however, does not need to be expanded to include a major.

In the meantime, A&M should stick with providing educations that teach about the technology behind building stereos instead of teaching about what comes out of them.



GRAPHIC: Brad Graeber

MIKE LUCKENICH ATLANTA CONSTITUTION



MAIL CALL

Mascot not involved with campus repairs

In response to James Francis' July 10 column:

We have been reading the summer editions of The Battalion since the first day of the first term and when a column by James Francis comes out, more often than not we are in complete disagreement. But that is not the problem about which we are writing, since this is the Opinion page and anyone can say what they please.

But in his "A Natural Disaster" column, Francis said something that we couldn't ignore. Although his description of the construction on campus is true, it has nothing to do with the medical condition of one of the main symbols of Aggie spirit and tradition.

As far as we know, Reveille had no part in the plans to renovate campus, and the student body needing a mascot that "knows how to bark and won't collapse in an episode of violent shaking and spasmodic whimpering" has ridiculously little to do with A&M needing to make an "attempt to ensure that we won't be victims of this destructive construction derby."

Why use a totally unrelated and mean-spirited comment to prove a point that is already blatantly obvious? Francis, regardless of what you may be thinking, we are no more "Reveille-huggers" than you claim you are not a "tree-hugger."

Maybe you should stick to saving trees and leave any derogatory comment about Reveille or any other staple of Aggie tradition out of your contentious columns.

Katie Lenker
Class of '00
Monica Noto
Class of '00

Opinions should not cross lines of fact

In response to Chris Brooks' July 10 column:

Brooks writes "Some people

disagree, but they are wrong."

I understand that this column appears on the Opinion Page of The Battalion, but opinion by definition rules out "right and wrong," which deals with fact, not opinion.

When a columnist starts declaring his or her opinion as right or wrong, he or she moves out of the realm of persuasive writing and into the realm of cacophonous blathering (i.e., "I'm right because I think I'm right, so it must be right, therefore, I really am right"). Is this really the level of critical thinking that should be displayed in a college-level publication? Brooks really can do better. This is just another example of the carelessness that seems to pervade the columns in The Battalion.

And more on topic, Brooks' blunt statement of opinion as a fact only lends credence to the dictum that the common person is not intellectually fit to directly elect the President of the United States. And yes, I realize the irony of using the word dictum to support my opinion, but this is a letter — I claim artistic license. Long live the electoral college (for sake of argument).

Stephen Philp
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