Dear Ty,

Happy Summer All!

I have been wanting to stay in touch more frequently, so welcome to the summer newsletter. Below you will find a summer update, a great short piece by one of our student Executive Board members, who happens to be working here this summer and a few other brief updates. Please drop by and visit anytime you are on campus. We want the Platt House to be your home as much as it is the student’s.

Summer at the Platt House

Ty A. Furman, Ed.D.
Director
University Life Arts Initiatives

People are often quite surprised to know that the Platt House staff works year round. What could we possibly be doing over the summer? I thought I would share a bit of what keeps Laurie and I busy over the summer. There are four major things that occupy our time: rentals, year end work (the fiscal year ends June 30), planning for the fall and pre-orientation programs. I’ll start with the pre-orientation programs. The office is financially responsible for four of the five programs, PennQuest, coordinated by Laurie, PennArts, coordinated by me, Pinnacle, coordinated by Rodney Robinson in the Office of Student Affairs and PennGreen, coordinated by Chuck Brutsche in Fox Leadership. Actually, work on these programs begins early in the spring semester with recruiting student leaders. Together these four programs utilize close to 70 upperclassmen as leaders. Mid Spring we have to make changes to and order the brochures, update the web sites, and of course actively recruit participants. Each program must also work with the student leaders to solidify the program details. For instance, with PennArts we need to set up the faculty meetings, hire the master artists, schedule the mural arts tour and fringe shows and plan a number of activities. Finally as the program date gets closer we deal with selection of participants, ordering t-shirts and setting up early move in for our participants and leaders (more than 250 people).

Undergrad Perspective

Rachel Romeo, ’11

When my fellow Performing Arts Council chairs and I asked University Arts Initiatives Director Ty Furman if we could install bunk beds in the gratefully air-conditioned small office we shared in the Platt Student Performing Arts House, so that we could just never have to call someplace else at Penn home, he chuckled in his did-you-really-just-ask-me-that way, knowing it wasn’t just the sprawling availability of rehearsal space, couches perfect for meetings (or naps), or the never-ending supply of the lifeblood we called coffee that made this space our home, but rather because it had been home-base for what was the most time-consuming, most creativity-demanding, and easily the most momentously significant pursuit of all my time at Penn—the performing arts.

After losing count of how many jaw-flooring groups appeared before me at Freshman Performing Arts Night three years ago, coaxing the
Administratively we spend a good part of our summer time closing out things. For instance, I have to work with Rodney Robinson in Student Affairs to review the invoices from each show over the past year and refund the appropriate facilities costs that are covered by the Student Activities Council. I need to write and submit an annual report, which requires us to review all show and program data including hours spent in rehearsal and number and participation in other sponsored programs. We then begin the process of getting ready for students to return in the fall. There is always something to do for that including requesting future performance and rehearsal spaces from any of five different facilities on campus, confirming audition and training schedules, and assisting the Performing Arts Council Executive Board in making new students aware of the Platt House, Performing Arts Council, Freshman Board in making new students aware of the Platt House, Performing Arts Night, and of course auditions.

In addition to other summer tasks like redoing the admissions brochure, we do a number of things related to the physical space. For part of the summer we are able to rent the space, the revenue of which goes toward any physical improvements, for instance this past year we bought a new upright piano and had three of the rehearsal rooms painted. This summer we have or will be renting to a local theatre company, a local dance company, the Wharton Executive Education program and for five weeks the Philadelphia Department of Recreation's Young Performers Theatre Camp. It is a wonderful use of the space and while somewhat noisy with nearly 60 middle school children rehearsing the musical of choice, we are glad to have them.

I hope that gives you a more complete understanding of the work we do. Of course we are grateful for the less hectic tempo that the summer provides and we take our share of vacation time. As always, thank you for your interest and support of the work we do at the Platt House.

young audience to come join their ranks (just think, I could audition for TEN a cappella groups, play the lead in Macbeth, AND learn to swing dance in a single semester!), I quite fittingly found my niche in Bloomers, Penn's all-female sketch comedy group. Our stage might only have been a hundred square feet of floor space coupled with bleachers full of folding chairs and a dressing room that doubled as a conference room by day, but what better place to bask in raucous laughter while donned in a top-hat and Abe Lincoln beard, muscle-suit with centaur legs, or my favorite of all, a blond wig and very presidential red suit. This group of girls (or zombies, or Confederate soldiers, or Guantanamo prisoners-whatever our Head Writer decided to make us that day) quickly became my family-the only people for whom I would get up at 10 a.m. on a Saturday (A SATURDAY) to learn the dance to Beyonce's Single Ladies in six-inch high heels, or risk my life in a two-foot snow storm on crutches only to finish writing a medley of Disney songs about a mafia family. At the beginning of every semester when we just began to squeeze every free ounce of creativity from our brains into scripts, I longed for the week preceding each new show when we would catch catnaps under the spotlights of 15-hour set load-ins and nightly 6-hour rehearsals until the final curtain closed (well, it would have closed if we actually had a curtain) and we slapped each other on the back for another show well done. And each spring we would wish our graduating seniors a teary goodbye as they turn in their bloomers to become "Girdles," and we wonder how the cast, band, tech team, and biz squad would ever go on without them...until a fresh batch of talent came knocking on our audition doors the following fall.

As I begin my final year at Penn, my second year as chair of Singers, Musicians and Comedians-what I like to call the "et cetera" category of the Performing Arts Council, and now as the chairwoman of Bloomers, time will only tell what this next year under the lights could bring. Maybe (gasp!) I'll finally truly learn Bloomer's dance to Michael Jackson's Thriller for Family Performing Arts Night, instead of half-assing a zombie-esque sway in the back row. Or maybe (double gasp!) I won't actually break a leg on opening night! Hey, a girl can dream right? Or maybe, just maybe, I'll produce a runaway smash hit Charitable Laughter, collaborating five of Penn's comedic performing groups on a single stage for one night only, to such rave success that we have standing room only in Iron Gate Theater and have to turn away hordes of money-thrusting fans to the streets of West Philly while still bringing in over $1000 to donate to Art Reach Philadelphia...oh wait, I've already done that. Well, whatever this year may bring to the stage of my life, I know there will be many long nights in production booths focusing the spotlight juuuuuust...
mark your calendars now for October 30th at 9pm in the Platt House, and dust off those dancing shoes and vocal chords and get ready to share your talents and catch up with fellow alums. For more information or to help plan the event email us or join the facebook group, search "Penn Bacchanal 2010."

right, even more writing meetings begun with "What if we did-" "NO! We'll get expelled!", and certainly-hopefully-a box of pirate costumes and tap shoes.

We're on Facebook!
Look for us on Facebook, just search "Upenn Student Performing Arts Alumni" and "Platt Student Performing Arts House Programs".

As always your financial support is greatly appreciated and encouraged. This past year we spent over $10,000 buying a new piano, painting three rooms and purchasing new equipment for our keyboards and sound systems. In addition to those kinds of things you can also support some theater initiatives, community service through the arts and of course we still have some rooms, just waiting for your name! You can give online. There are three drop down boxes, in the first choose Arts & Culture, in the second and third chose Platt Student Performing Arts House.

Checks can also be written to the Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania and sent to our address. Thank you for your support!

If you know someone you think would like to receive this newsletter be sure to click "Forward Email" at the bottom of the newsletter.

The Platt Student Performing Arts House
3702 Spruce St.
160 Stouffer Commons
Philadelphia, PA 19104-6026
215-898-2312
Email us