

Tuesday, August 5, 2008

Student spends summer with family — making a film

By **Rebecca Wyatt Thomas**, OU Web Writer

Marilyn Burns' summer is like those of most college students. She's working and spending time with her family. Her situation is unique, however, because she's doing both at the same time. Burns, a music major planning to graduate in 2009, is one of the four managing director of Burns Family Studios, a semi-professional film studio that is currently producing a feature-length historical epic. Burns is using her Oakland University piano education and fulfilling her Honors College thesis project by working on a musical score for the film the family-run studio produced this summer.

"It may not strike you that producing a film score is a performance, but it is," Burns said. "Creating each sound, each note, requires the same level of concentration as performing on a stage. The basic principals I'm learning in school play a strong role here. Connections with faculty members and students have also proven to be invaluable. Creating a motion picture score is an inter-disciplinary process at its core."

Burns has been playing the piano for eleven years and the violin for seven. She has performed extensively as a piano soloist, as well as in various ensembles at Oakland University and in the community.

"As I music student, I am necessarily quite involved in the department. I also work part time and am extremely involved at my church, in addition to the filming project. It can be very hard trying to balance my time between each of these areas," Burns said.

Burns is secretary of Cornerstone, a Christian student organization, and is involved in the Honors College Peer Mentor Program and International Allies Student Organization. Off campus, she is involved in her church as a college ministry leader and she directs the children's choir and string orchestra. Burns also works as a private music instructor and performer and serves as business manager and music coordinator for two performing groups.

"My leadership involvement with the student organization connected with my church has been one of the most rewarding parts overall. There are constantly great opportunities for learning and growing, gaining leadership experience, and building lasting relationships. It's been really a great opportunity," Burns said.

Burns has been recognized for her academic achievement. She was a National Merit Scholarship semifinalist, received an Oakland University Talented Scholars award, Alfred T. Jones Memorial Scholarship, David and Maria Handleman Scholarship, Michigan Competitive Scholarship, Music, Theatre and Dance departmental scholarship and Jennifer Scott Memorial Award.

After Burns graduates in 2009, she plans to pursue a master's degree.

"I have definitely looked into master's programs, and would probably pursue a graduate degree at a Christian university. The degree plans that I've looked at are mainly ministry-oriented, something like missions or counseling, which I hope would complement my undergrad music degree," Burns said. "A valuable part of my undergraduate experience has been a much greater understanding of and appreciation for music. I have really enjoyed the interactive nature of the performance major, and the practical experience involved in the program. I've especially enjoyed working with other music students in small ensembles and larger groups."

While she plans to further her career in music, Burns also plans to continue with the film production.

"Once this gets into your blood, it's hard to leave it entirely behind. I expect to be around it for a while," Burns said. "The opportunity to work with my family has been one of my favorite parts of the entire project. The film-making process has been quite an adventure, and getting to share it with our entire family has been really special for all of us. It's an opportunity few families get to enjoy."

Watch The News at OU for more information on a campus premier of the historical epic produced by Burns Family Studios. A November date is targeted for the on-campus debut.

SUMMARY

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