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Photo from MSU College of Music.

There are few events where attendees can learn about fungicidal programs and hear famous jazz standards performed live within the space of two hours. But Music in the Garden, a monthly event at MSU's very own W.J. Beal Botanical Gardens, is one of those places.

Each event in the series features a different MSU music ensemble and is followed by a tour of the Beal Gardens. Concerts are scheduled on Tuesdays at 7 p.m., with Slavistar ^[2] scheduled for Tuesday, July 31, with a tour on plants toxic to dogs, cats, and horses; Pure Winds Quintet ^[3] for August 14, with a tour on plants important in human history, and Percussion Duo ^[4] on September 4, with a tour focused on the history of American Indian agriculture.

The first installment of the 2018 series happened in June. Unfortunately, the inaugural concert did not take place in the advertised venue due to inclement weather, but that didn't stop several hundred audience members from piling into a multi-purpose space in Dem Hall to hear the Spartan Student Jazz Ensemble.

The quartet of MSU jazz students played an hour of well-known jazz standards, complimented by free cups of ice cream from the MSU Dairy Store. An MSU food truck was supposed to be on site

as well, but broke down before it could make an appearance.

Despite these obstacles, event organizer Christine Beamer was excited about the level of attendance at the concert. Beamer, who has organized the series since its start in 2015, has witnessed its burgeoning popularity firsthand.

"I think the first concert we had, we had 60 people," Beamer said. "Last night we had over 250, which is great, considering it was a rainy day."

The increased audience size is a reflection of how the program's goals have expanded over the years. Initially intended as lunchtime entertainment for MSU staff, who oftentimes remain on campus in the summer when students and faculty leave, the event has expanded to welcome anyone in the Greater Lansing area wishing to experience what the music and horticulture departments at MSU have to offer.



"We want families, we want kids, we want all ages to come on out because it's not a formal atmosphere," Beamer said. Audience members are encouraged to roam freely around the gardens during the concert, and although Tuesday's impromptu venue was not particularly conducive to it, dancing is encouraged.

In addition to the concerts, which feature a new MSU ensemble at every event, garden tours led by Beal Garden assistant curator Peter Carrington seek to entertain horticulturally inclined concert-goers with the history and biology of various plants in the garden.

"This year in particular, one of our goals was to really integrate the gardens more with the music," Beamer said. "Previously, it's been, "the concert happens in the garden," but that's the extent of people's experience in the garden, and we really wanted to get people to dive in deep to the garden, the way they dive in deep with the music."

The theme of the tour varies at every event, and June's was "The Trees of the W.J. Beal Botanical Garden." On the tour, Carrington discussed the fungicidal regimen MSU uses to keep its American elms healthy, the cultural significance of the Chinese empress tree, and the alleged value of dogwood berries as diabetes medication.



Naturally, such a collaboration between the College of Music and the Department of Horticulture can hardly occur without conflict. On the tour, Carrington told the group about the impending removal of a grove of Norway spruces to make room for an addition to the music building, which had recently been delayed, shaking his fist in mock triumph.

"Those of us in the Norway spruce department," Carrington said, "were cheering."

Those interested in attending future Music in the Garden events can find more information at music.msu.edu/events [6].

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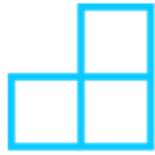
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