

January 4th, 2021

Theatre & Music Department Chair report
for Fall semester of the 2020/2021 school year

Music Department Members:

Brandon Hill - Theatre

Brian Forbes – Band & Orchestra

Grace Choi D.M.A. - Piano

Robert Hekel – Director of Choirs

Vasil Chekardzhikov – Jr. High & Guitar

Nikola Chekardzhikov /Dept. Chair/ - Guitar & Drumline

Summary

The start of the 2020/2021 school year has been a unique one for the Theatre & Music Department, just as it was for Encore and the US schools as a whole. The Covid crises led to a late start on September 14th, which also meant that we could not have our busy schedule of fun events that would take place in the Fall semester – the Carnival, the Festival, the Barnes & Noble performances in early December and so on. The first few months of a normal school year for our department would be devoted to hectic preparation for these events, while this time we faced different challenges that our team needed to adapt to:

- Distance learning for multi-level music classes
- Students not completing the parallel classes at encorestudent.com
- Grading incorporating the online classes
- Engaging students and motivating them to practice.

Day-to-day business in the Theatre & Music Department

Conducting the day-to-day business for our department has been a bit different as well. The positives are the daily morning meetings, where teachers can reach out to the administration and ask questions or share any concerns (hoping we can retain these even after Covid). In addition, we have our monthly department meetings on the last Friday of each month, where we discussed topics specific to the department – such as creating and improving the content of the music department’s courses at encoestudent.com, grading specifics as well as sharing ideas for improving our teaching in the new online format.

As a department chair my main task once again was to support the teachers in my department in their needs. They were able to reach me by phone, text and email any time of the day, and the music department teachers have used that to a varying degree.

Interesting Developments in the Department:

- “Parade of Pianos” Foundation donations – At the start of the school year, some students did not have instruments at home to practice. Dr. Choi worked with the “Parade of Pianos” foundation, which provided two of our students with upright pianos for free including tuning of the instruments.
- Talent Show – a number of piano, guitar and voice students created and submitted video recordings for the annual talent show aired on Twitch.
- Teams- reestablishing some of the traditional Encore teams, such as Theatre X and Rhythm & Combo in the new online realm, as well as setting the groundwork for establishing a new Music Honors Society Chapter here at Encore.
- Poetry Slam – over a month worth of planning and preparation work, creating content, and filming. This year’s event understandably had a new format as well and was aired on Twitch on November 20th.
- Creating a Theme Song – The 2020/2021 Street Team members worked on creating an original Theme Song as part of their Street team classes. That included writing, recording, mastering, and making a video clip for it. Its airing on Twitch will be coming in the near future.

Areas for Improvement:

Within our department communication and on time grade submission has improved, but we are still working on turning in pacing & emergency sub plans, as well as updating the Learnworld online courses in a timelier manner.