



the Alumni Forum

Vol. 10 – Issue 2

Iota Alpha Chapter

Winter 2001



ISSUE CONTENTS

Page 1

- ▲ A Word from the President

Page 2

- ▲ Grim Prospects for the Future of Iota Alpha

Page 3

- ▲ Event Schedule
- ▲ American Music Concert
- ▲ JazzFest

Page 4

- ▲ Province Workshop

Page 5

- ▲ Mills' Thoughts



A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT

Greetings Brothers,

I hope that you all are doing fine and enjoying good health. To be honest, our chapter is not doing as well as we should. For starters, we had only one probationary member this term, but sadly he had to de-pledge due to personal issues. He however wishes to pledge next term. Second, Valentine Serenades fell through this year; we were not organized enough to carry on the event.

However, this is not my main concern. As a chapter, we have lost "the fire" for Sinfonia. We do not give Sinfonia the priority it deserves. It seems like there is a general apathy in the group. We just seem not to care for our brotherhood anymore. I am saddened to say that I personally do not feel a fraternal bond with most my brothers in the chapter, and no one else in our chapter seems to either. Chapter meetings, song rehearsals, and other activities have been taken with an attitude of "another thing to do" rather than "let us enjoy our time together as a brotherhood." This cannot be! Sinfonia is too fine an organization for us to take it for granted.

We need help! We have been trying hard to identify our problems, and we have. The main problem in our chapter is "a lack of sense of brotherhood." In general, our "brotherly flame" is struggling to stay lit. We hardly ever do things as a brotherhood anymore. Many traditions of our chapter are being forgotten. The amount of effort we put into brotherhood building is not enough. If we continue this way, we will most likely die. That cannot be! I think I have said enough. I will let brother Decker describe in more detail our situation later on in this newsletter.

On the other hand, not all news is bad. After taking a term off school, our brother Aaron "Opus" Decker returned to school and has been actively working for our chapter. Also, brother David "Spanky" Smith is back from his study abroad in India. He has been elected secretary and is also contributing to improve our chapter. In addition, our chapter hosted the Province 2 Workshop this year. Although most chapters in the province had low attendance at the workshop, it was a huge success. Everyone who attended experienced one of the best workshops in Province 2 history.

Some of the upcoming events for this term include our annual Jazz Festival, American Music Concert, Chapter Day ceremony and grill, Initiation Ritual, and our annual retreat to Lyrecrest or possibly some other location.

Well, I hope you have a good year and would like to hear from you soon. Please feel free to e-mail me with any ideas, questions, or any other suggestions on how to improve our chapter.

Yours in Phi Mu Alpha,
Francisco "Apollo" Garcia
President
OAS AAS LLS!!! !

A SINFONIAN'S OUTLOOK

Brothers in Phi Mu Alpha,

I am writing this note on behalf of my fellow actives and myself. We are currently facing a crisis within our chapter, and I feel that one of our strongest assets is our alumni membership. The crisis we are facing is one of a lack of fire for the group and dwindling numbers. At the end of this year, our number will be dropping to nine. The following year, not including new members, our active collegiate membership will drop to two. These prospects are, I am certain, as unpleasant to you as they are to me. Along those lines, I strongly encourage you to help us save our chapter. You have more knowledge and information and ideas about this chapter than all of our active members combined. Share with us and help us to get through this. Although our numbers are small, there is still a strong spirit for Sinfonia among many of us. We want to help our chapter; we are just not so sure how to go about it. Please give us your ideas and your input to save what I consider one of the best things to happen to any of us. Also, if you are in the area or are going to be in the area, come and visit. We are always happy to hear from you and even happier to see you. Thank you for your support.

Work for Sinfonia and Sinfonia will work for you!

Live for Sinfonia and Sinfonia will live for you!

Once a Sinfonian, Always a Sinfonian, Long Live Sinfonia!!!!

Jon Cuttitta, Warden and Music Director

THOUGHTS FROM THE FEO

My brothers,

It is with heartfelt gladness that I take this opportunity to bring you greetings from the active membership of our chapter in this issue of *the Alumni Forum*. So, greetings! It is, however, without gladness that I must deliver you news of and appeal to you for help on behalf of the active membership of our chapter of the Sinfonia.

No, it is not a financial appeal I bring to you. Many of you have been generous of this in the past, of which we are certainly grateful, as you no doubt were when you were an active member receiving the same. Also, while we certainly miss many of you, and would love to hear how you are doing, it is not a bit of news I appeal to you for. It is, rather, advice, suggestions, encouragement, and even, perhaps in a short time, personal involvement we need, and desperately.

These days, the future of the Iota Alpha Chapter looks grim, as you have read twice already in this newsletter. Let me be a bit more descriptive than our fellow brothers. It would seem that half of our very small active membership is suffering from general apathy, and the other half from burnout which appears as apathy. Indifference is contagious, and seems to have spread through all the brothers. Only one or two of us run the business of the fraternity, with no time remaining to organize activities to bring the fire for Sinfonia back into the group. Worse, a lack of enthusiasm among the active brothers makes it impossible to instill excitement for Sinfonia in non-Sinfonians, and bring more men into the brotherhood. Our chapter has been shrinking for years, and it is now almost too small to accomplish anything.

Special projects, while suggested in copious amounts, never occur. Singing Valentines fell through this year, as did Sweetest Day Serenades. Projects involving local area school music departments have been brought up, but no work has been done on them. Acts for the American Music Concert have not been forthcoming. Attendance is at an all-time low, though not recorded as such, as most events get cancelled due to lack of attendance.

My Fraternity Father, Tim Marsh, once suggested that a Sinfonian's priorities should be: God (if applicable), Family, School, Sinfonia, and then everything else. Our current members seem to mix up the latter two, making Sinfonia the least subject on their minds. Nonetheless, most brothers care about Sinfonia. Nobody wants it to die here at Alma. Still, brothers' estimates place chapter's life span between one and three more years; no one seems to know how to extend it.

In the coming months, we will be beginning a weekly, hour-long planning session for Sinfonia's future. The majority of this will take the form of vision seeking, goal setting, task planning, and so forth. While a structure is being laid out for this, suggestions will need to be brought forth for activities and goals, especially that of reviving that fire that "flames with godlike fire" in every Sinfonian's heart. Furthermore, as our one Probationary Member has just asked to push pledging off until next term, we are beginning a Chapter Education Period to help bring back the flame. Any suggestions, any advice, any input would be most welcome. We desperately want to save Sinfonia from passing into non-existence, and none of us doubt that you, too, would be disappointed to see our chapter disappear. Our chapter is dying. Please, take this opportunity to help it live!

Ever undertaking the Pilgrimage, I am your Brother,

Aaron "Opus" Decker, Fraternal Education Officer

WINTER TERM SCHEDULE**March**

- 16 – 7:30PM Lock-In; Ponchero's Run (Lansing)
- 23 – 9:00PM Sinfonian Family Feud
- 25 – 11:00AM Choir in Grand Rapids
- 25 – 4:00PM Choir in Brighton
- 31 – 10:00PM Ritual with Discussion

April

- 6 – 8:00PM ASO & Choir – Handel's *Messiah*
- 7 – 6:00PM American Music Concert
- 8 – 3:00PM ASO & Choir – Handel's *Messiah*
- 12 – JazzFest (all day)
- 16 – Chapter Day
- 20-22 – Province 2 Spring Fling at MSU
- 22-28 – Chapter Retreat. Location Undecided.
Alumni wholeheartedly invited for all or part!

**RITUAL REHEARSALS and the AMERICAN MUSIC CONCERT**

Greetings Alumni,

I would like to give you an update on Ritual rehearsals and the upcoming American Music Concert. This term our Ritual rehearsals have gone pretty well. We have decided to break from recent tradition and focus on individual parts rather than doing a straight dry practice. Between portions of the Ritual performance on March 31, there will be a discussion on each character and what they mean to the performers, as well as the significance and symbolism in that part of the Ritual.

On April 7 at 6:00 P.M. in the Heritage Center, the Iota Alpha chapter of Phi Mu Alpha will hold our annual American Music Concert. Currently we have four outside acts and a variety of performers from members in our chapter and SAI as well. I will be contacting the brothers of the Nu Pi Chapter (CMU) and the Gamma Epsilon Chapter (MSU) to see if they would like to perform or attend our concert. Also, I challenge any alumni who can to attend this event. Last year for our AMC we had an attendance of 105. My goal for this year is 150.

Fraternally yours,
Cardell 'Paul' Johnson, Vice President
OAS AAS LLS

JAZZFEST

One of my favorite Sinfonia events is scheduled to take place April 14th on Alma's campus. The annual Jazzfest concert, sponsored by ΦΜΑ and ΣΑΙ, has become quite an event. Attendance from schools increases every year and we now have twenty-two high school and middle school bands scheduled to perform. Jazzfest is an all day activity starting with set-up around 6AM and lasting until clean up is finished around 7PM. The Jazzfest Committee has responsibly set up a thrifty schedule to help our concert run flawlessly. The greatest compliments we have received (one I have heard several times myself) were from school music directors indicating how well put together and organized our concert is. Everyone from directors to students to the community seems to enjoy this festival greatly.

Jazzfest has always been open to the general public and in the last couple of years we have had great community attendance. Last year, the Heritage Center was packed the entire day. People from the community would wander in to listen and stay for a couple of hours. We have had much positive feedback from the community and hope to continue to provide a quality musical experience for them. In this way, Jazzfest is one of the greatest ways ΦΜΑ has been able to reach out to the community and be recognized for our work at the same time.

I have been on the Jazzfest committee now for three years. Looking back through all the old papers in the Jazzfest folder, I have realized it wasn't always what it is today. It has taken a lot of effort and dedication from lots of people to bring us

(continued page 4)

JAZZFEST

(continued from page 3)

to where we are now. Don Metcalf started the Jazzfest tradition at Alma and has continued to lead the Jazzfest Committee, showing the spirit of a true Sinfonian. While things may seem rough at times in our chapter, I've found that all Sinfonians can find solace in music. I feel Jazzfest helps spread this wonderful message to others through the community, aspiring students and even some directors. I am certain all will go well this year, and I would encourage anyone who is in the area to stop by and hear some great music.

Fraternally yours,
Randy 'Anakin' Beutel
Treasurer, JazzFest Committee Chairman


PROVINCE WORKSHOP 2001 – “Life: Mental, Moral, Physical, and Spiritual”

Each Province of Sinfonia is required to have a workshop for its constituent chapters each year. This year's Province Two Workshop was sponsored by and held at Alma College on the weekend of February 16. While attendance at the Workshop was less than perfect, this proved to be the only down point of the otherwise highly successful weekend!

The planning committee decided to make the workshop last the entire weekend in the hopes that it would make some of the furthest chapters more eager to attend. This plan was effective in that it opened the weekend up for more activities than any previous workshop.

Friday night sported a party spanning multiple rooms in Bruske's basement, with many people attending—Sinfonians and Alma students alike! Although it was a late night, everyone still managed to get up and be (almost) on time for the first Workshop Session at 9:30am Saturday. The theme of this “Gold Session” was “Truth in Music” and featured presentations by Tony Patterson on Electronic Music, Dr. Nichols on Vocal Music, and Don Metcalf with a Jam Session. Following this was a “Red Session” on Chapter Operations, in which Province Governor Kenton Barnes discussed Probationary Periods and Francisco Garcia led a roundtable discussion on Recruitment Methods. After lunch was “Black Session,” a well-attended, insightful, and truly meaningful discussion of the history and symbolism of our Initiation Ritual by Brother Aaron Decker.

A Song Rehearsal was held in the evening, and after dinner, present brothers headed to the Masonic Home to perform for the residents. Later, after the Band concert, brothers gathered in the Sinfonia Room for a two-hour long open forum discussing how we can take the ideals of Sinfonia and put them to work in our everyday lives. A Province Council Meeting on Sunday rounded out the Workshop.

Those who were present during the weekend agreed that this Province Workshop was highly successful, and truly a Sinfonian event to remember. Certainly, the Workshop Committee is greatly relieved now that it is over and we are enjoying a much-needed Winter Break. Nevertheless, the current active brothers of the Iota Alpha Chapter are proud to have hosted it, and look forward to the next opportunity to hold a statewide Sinfonian gathering here at Alma College.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

(Reprinted from *Sinfonia Year Book*: V (March, 1905): 11-12.)

Dear Brother Sinfonians:

Another year is being added to the history of the Sinfonia Fraternity. Six years ago the sixth day of last October the little seed was planted from which has grown what we believe to be one of the greatest factors in existence for the betterment of the young men musical students of America. Since the last President's message there has been a healthy growth in both Chapters and membership. It is very gratifying to be able to say that at the present time our beloved Fraternity is in a most flourishing condition. Conservatism is becoming the settled policy of the Fraternity, I believe, both as to the founding of new Chapters and also of the various Chapters as to the reception of new members. We have learned, in our short existence, that it is better to go slowly and carefully, thoroughly investigating all who seek admission into our Fraternity, rather than to make grievous mistakes by undue haste or careless methods.

It is with great pleasure that I avail myself of this opportunity to address all members of our beloved Fraternity, as I sincerely hope that steps will be taken by each individual Chapter to place a copy of this Year Book in the hands of every member – active, associate, and alumni. I have many things that I would like to say to each brother, but space will only allow me to touch upon some of the most important at this time. We often hear it said that musicians are a very peculiar class of people, impractical in many ways, and I have been told time and again during the last few years that a fraternity could not exist any length of time if it depended upon musicians for life and support. I believe that our experience is teaching us that such a thing can be done, and I trust that all brother Sinfonians will unite with me and with one another to make the Fraternity a success world that, although musicians may be in a living in harmony and of experiencing and spirit. With this in view, let us always have Fraternity as expressed in our Constitution – of the best and truest fraternal spirit, the students, the advancement of music in In this connection, I cannot refrain from Sinfonian a paragraph taken from “Delta and tradition of a Fraternity man to be a dishonorable and mean, but to bosses those from birth and breeding – kindness and These are good words, and I would earnestly consider them. Let us strive to emulate the the other, “in honor preferring one another.” “Let your nobility shine forth in your character, your friendship be marked with kind words and deeds.” Let us believe in our Fraternity with all our hearts, be jealous of its good name, wear the emblems with pride, be regular in attendance at the meetings of your Chapter, be eager to possess any publication that may be issued in the interests of our Fraternity, and be faithful in all other duties. By doing so we shall keep the fire of fraternal love burning brightly. Let it be our ambition to make the Sinfonia a power for good, and have faith to believe that in future years its beneficent influence will be felt around the globe.



Finally, brothers, let us remember that “harmony is ever to be the noble aim of our beloved Society – harmony not only in music, but in the life within the Fraternity and in the broader and fuller live beyond its portals. It is the harmony whose music is felt in the hearty hand-clasp, heard in the cheerful greeting, seen in living notes in the generous act.” And now, congratulating you all, my brothers, on the success attained in the past, rejoicing as you rejoice in our present honorable position in the fraternity worlds, and hopeful, in common with all Sinfonians, of the bright future that awaits us, I am, as we all have sworn to be, “Once a Sinfonian, always a Sinfonian.”

Most sincerely and fraternally yours,

Ossian E. Mills