

Transcript: Denin Koch on the grand opening of Cowles Music Center at Whitworth University, October 10, 2016

Good afternoon. As I was just introduced, my name is Denin Koch. I'm a junior at Whitworth majoring in jazz performance. I play in the Whitworth Jazz Ensemble 1, Wind Symphony, and jazz combos. I'd like to begin by thanking all of you for being here today to celebrate this wonderful occasion. I especially thank those of you who made this new building possible – trustees, university administrators, faculty, contractors, and anyone else who had a hand in raising this beautiful facility.

Because of the attitude that society displays towards music, musicians, and the arts in general, I am often forced to question the value of my studies and work, and whether or not the world thinks that what I have to contribute is important. A recent Wells Fargo ad with slogans such as “A ballerina yesterday, an engineer today” and “an actor yesterday, a botanist tomorrow” made it painfully obvious how frequently the arts are viewed as lesser pursuits to math, science, and engineering. Nationwide, many public middle schools, high schools and universities have eliminated their music programs, which suggests that music is no longer an important part of an education. All this truly hits home when I am asked by people ranging from my peers to community members to my friends' parents about what my backup plans for a ‘real job’ are. Considering music's enormous impact on our everyday lives, our culture, and even our health and well-being, it is incredibly disheartening to see this level of respect for my trade.

However, while much of society may look down on my craft, it is clear that Whitworth University understands the importance of music as one of God's greatest gifts to humanity and the importance of supporting the people that create music. This new building is proof to myself, my fellow music students, and the music faculty that our discipline is valued both here and within the global community. This new building is proof that our contributions to the world are worth investing in. This new building is proof that music matters.

You have given us new and exciting tools and spaces, but perhaps more importantly, you have given us the encouragement to study, practice and work even harder in our pursuit to honor God, follow Christ, and serve humanity. I know that I speak on behalf of all the students when I say that every time we walk through these doors, this building will serve as a physical reminder that we do important work that is essential to Whitworth University and to God's Kingdom. To all of you who worked so hard and were so generous in your efforts to make this dream a reality, we cannot thank you enough. This is God's work that you have done for us. God bless you all.