



## Programs planned to celebrate music museum's 40th

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Monday was the official 40th anniversary of the National Music Museum (NMM), and plans are being made to ensure that it will become as national as its title implies.

Museum director Dr. Cleveland Johnson laid out some of these plans during a special meeting with the Vermillion City Council Monday afternoon.

"My goal at the museum is to make this place pop a lot more than it ever has before," Johnson said.

One way this will happen is through a variety of NMM-related programs celebrating its birthday that will begin in the fall.

The first of these will take place in September, when the NMM will be the center of a broadcast of the Public Radio program, "From the Top," which features musical child prodigies.

The kids will be at the museum Sept. 14-15 taking tours and playing instruments, culminating in the program itself, which will be held in Aalfs Auditorium.

Then in November, the NMM will be visited by Rob Kapilow, who will host a show called "What Makes It Great?," along with the Rawlins Piano Trio.

"They choose a particular piece of classical music, and then (Kapilow) deconstructs it," Johnson said. "He's a fun, crazy professor-type, and he deconstructs this piece of music and describes it bit by bit. The Rawlins Trio will demonstrate what he's talking about, he'll tell funny anecdotes and help you to get inside this piece by Beethoven."

During the second half of the program, the Rawlins Trio will play the piece as it is written so that the audience will be able to appreciate it from a new perspective.

Kapilow will be doing the show free of charge because of a project he's interested in doing with the NMM.

"He and I are going to be talking about the possibility of collaborating on some kind of media production, whether it's a series of videos or something that could be produced for the public television market,



National Music Museum Director Cleveland Johnson told the Vermillion City Council that a variety of programs are planned to celebrate the museum's 40th anniversary.

(Photo by David Lias)

whether it's a travel show or a music show. We don't quite not what," Johnson said.

These events will come on the heels of other recent happenings at the NMM, such as the open house featuring "celebrity instruments," including a guitar once owned by Elvis Presley.

Held on commencement weekend in May, the event took almost 500 people through the museum in a day and a half, a new record, Johnson said.

"My goal is, at least once every quarter, if not more often than that, that there actually be some event at the museum to which we can invite the public and that we can have a reception ... to give the public something to talk about," Johnson said.

While the Elvis event did bring more visitors than ever through the museum, it was not without costs. Johnson said about \$4,000 was spent on promotion, Presley's motorcycle was brought in at a cost of

\$1,000, and all the food served was provided for free.

"It is an investment," he said. "It's a sprint that we couldn't do every week ... but we'll do this every now and then because it's fun, it has a great pay-off and it creates a lot of buzz for the community."

Another way to generate that kind of buzz – and not just on a local level – is through the Internet.

The museum's Facebook page has gained closed to 4,000 friends over the past four months alone, Johnson said.

"We see followers looking at us from all over the world," he said. "It's surprising – we have more followers in LA than we do in Vermillion."

Many other followers hail from as far away as Portugal, Russia and the Philippines, he said.

As those numbers continue to grow, the NMM will try to convert those "likes" into actual visitors.

"If we can get 1

percent of our Facebook followers to become members, 1 percent of our 4,000 followers now would be 40 people, which would be a 7 or 8 percent increase in our membership," Johnson said.

One year from now Johnson hopes there will be 10,000 Facebook followers, 1 percent of which would be 100 new members.

"There's a real potential there just because of the sheer numbers game," he said.

Johnson thanked the city for its continued support of the museum, noting that after the South Dakota Arts Council, the city is the NMM's largest funder in the region.

"We're looking forward to making all this happen, and again, we couldn't make it happen without the support of the city," he said. "You are a significant part of what makes us tick, and we hope you continue to see that as a great investment."

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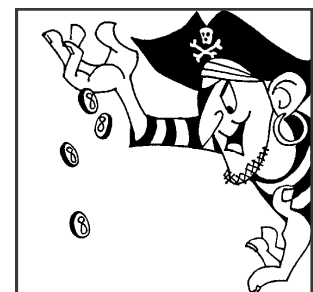
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