Some Things Never Change

GRADUATES OF 1957 AND 2007 SHARE A PASSION FOR TEACHING AND THE UNIVERSITY

You might think that a 1957 graduate of the University of Hartford and a soon-to-be 2007 graduate would have little in common. Surprisingly, the opposite is true.

Sure, Sam Falcetti had to commute 80 miles round-trip every day to the Hartt College of Music when it was on Broad Street in Hartford. Josh Magee, by contrast, lives on today’s beautiful 320-acre residential campus in West Hartford. Hartt College concentrated on preparing musicians; the University now offers more than 80 undergraduate degrees.

Nevertheless, Falcetti and Magee have very similar things to say about their experiences at the University. Both say their passions were nurtured by dedicated faculty. Both benefited from small classes and individualized attention. Both credit their schools with giving them the tools for success after graduation. Falcetti has maintained a link with Hartt, and Magee seems poised to do the same with the University.

Many things have changed over the past 50 years at the University, but many things have remained the same.

“Like my professors at Hartt, I take teaching very personally,” Falcetti says. “Fortunately, I still have as much energy today as I did when I was in college.”

A Passion for Music and Teaching

Sam Falcetti ’57, founder of Falcetti Music, has been living his dream for the past 50 years.

“Thanks to the outstanding education I received at the Hartt College of Music, I’ve been able to pursue my passion fully and completely for the last five decades.

“I started Falcetti Music with a $50 loan from my mother, who was also my first employee,” Falcetti says. “We opened our doors on February 22, 1957, the day after the University of Hartford was founded. I was still in school at the time, but I knew this was what I wanted to do for the rest of my life.”

Falcetti taught 40 students at the Westfield Accordion Center in 1957. There are now six Falcetti Music stores in Western Massachusetts and Connecticut, with a roster of 2,000 students ranging in age from 4 to 104 years old.

Falcetti still teaches classes and still provides a personal evaluation for every new student, a practice that began in 1957. “Like my professors at Hartt, I take teaching very personally,” Falcetti says. “Fortunately, I still have as much energy today as I did when I was in college.”

Falcetti has always been willing to go to great lengths to pursue his passion. As a student, he made the 80-mile, round-trip journey from his home in Westfield, Mass., to Hartt College on Broad Street in Hartford every day, hitchhiking when he needed to.

Hartt was a small, intimate school in the 1950s. “There were 26 students in my graduating class,” Falcetti recalls, “and we all knew each other very well. I made friendships at Hartt that have lasted a lifetime.”

Even though he was running his own business, Falcetti maintained a 3.8 grade point average during his four years at Hartt. “We had fantastic professors,” Falcetti says. “They nurtured my passion for music.”

Falcetti is still linked to The Hartt School. Falcetti Music has placed more than 20 pianos at Hartt’s Community Division and helped provide 50 pianos at a significant discount, some of which will be used at the new Performing Arts Center. A portion of that discount was a donation to the center. In addition, Sam’s son, Tony Falcetti, is on the board of The Hartt School.

“The last 50 years have been great for me,” Falcetti says. “I’ve accomplished everything I ever dreamed of and more since I graduated from Hartt. I give them full credit for my success.”
A Seeker of Knowledge and Experience

Joshua Magee ’07 is an honors student majoring in mechanical engineering with an acoustics concentration and has a 3.73 grade point average. He teaches an introductory lab in optics. He has mastered the Segway, the 21st-century personal transporter (right). He serves as a mentor to incoming engineering majors. And he’s worked on research grants for NASA.

“I started out as a music major at The Hartt School,” Magee says, “then switched to mechanical engineering, and finally discovered that physics is my true passion. I can’t think of another university this size that gives students so many choices.”

That decision put him behind other students studying physics. “My professors have all been very supportive, especially Jim McDonald, who helped me catch up very quickly.”

McDonald, an assistant professor in the Department of Physics, is teaching Magee a course in modern physics one-on-one. And Magee is performing spectacularly, as usual.

“Josh has an amazing ability to absorb new material from self-directed study, and his questions demonstrate an understanding and inquisitive nature unusual for his age and experience,” McDonald says.

Magee has a wonderfully generous spirit as well. “Giving back to the community is a long tradition at the University of Hartford,” he says, “and I’m proud to carry on that tradition.”

In his sophomore year Magee founded a local chapter of Alpha Phi Omega, the nation’s largest service-based fraternity. “We’re providing over 500 hours of service each semester to people in need in the Hartford community,” he says.

Magee’s not always working. In his spare time he trains in Aikido, a Japanese martial arts system dedicated to the peaceful resolution of conflict. He attends the Cambridge Culinary Institute and is becoming a gourmet cook and pastry chef. He’s also an amateur magician and juggler.

Magee brings great passion to everything he does. “My parents are both teachers, and they inspired me to excel in my studies and to find ways to give back for all the blessings I’ve received,” he says.

What happens after graduation? Magee plans to get a PhD in physics and teach at the university level.

“I may even end up back at the University of Hartford when I’m done. I’ve had amazing opportunities to develop academically and personally over the last four years. It would be a real thrill to help a new generation of students achieve excellence in their lives.”

Although Falcetti and Magee may have employed different methods for getting themselves to class, what they found, once there, was the same—small classes, caring professors, and support in reaching their goals.