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UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA MORRIS

Odello works to find and support community music groups

Across Minnesota, musicians of all abilities have formed community ensembles, both to give themselves an opportunity to perform and to provide entertainment for their neighbors. These groups are valuable community assets that University of Minnesota Morris Associate Professor of Music Denise Odello wants to help support.

But first, she has to find them.

Odello received a research fellowship from the Center for Small Towns, which works to connect UMN Morris faculty and students to community projects that will benefit residents of small towns of 10,000 or fewer and work toward more vibrant and equitable rural communities. Odello proposed a project that has evolved over time to identify and amplify the benefits that community music ensembles bring to Greater Minnesota.

“Music is a participatory thing, and it can be challenging, especially in rural areas, to connect, create and find opportunities to play together,” Odello said. “There are plenty of community ensembles out there that have no website or are not easily found.”

Odello and a student, Grace Hiltner, '22, Coon Rapids, have reached out to regional arts boards and community ensembles to develop an interactive map listing the groups. So far, they have about 30 musical groups listed.

The map is only one part of the project. There is also an ensemble member form that asks about the benefits that people find being involved in community ensembles. Odello hopes to use that information to create advocacy materials.

“We want to include any kind of musical group that is open to new members who are looking to just make music,” according to Odello. “In addition to recruiting, I want to set up a mechanism for resource sharing for things such as grant writing.”

Odello encourages conductors and members of community ensembles to visit the map at <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/75f9c1e7c0594d9d903657730d80a06d> to see if their group is listed.

You can also email directly to Odello at odell059@morris.umn.edu or musicalmn@morris.umn.edu.

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