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Daniel Stephens directs student band at Campus School

WNY's Good Listener

Blind Prof Leads Bands, Choirs

By H. KATHERINE SMITH

DANIEL R. STEPHENS, assistant professor of music at Buffalo State College, a blind organist and choir director of Bethel A.M.E. Church, directs bands and choirs without seeing the players or singers. From the age of 10 he has been totally blind due to a detached retina.

Despite his handicap, Mr. Stephens has been gainfully employed since he was 17. At that age, he became organist of a church in Detroit, the city where he was born and lived until he came to Buffalo last September. For 10 years, he taught music to blind pupils in Detroit schools.

MR. STEPHENS plays the piano, organ and cello, and has studied every instrument included in an orchestra. He has a degree in special education from Wayne University, a degree in music education from the University of Michigan, and a master's degree in music education from Michigan State University.

He has studied music therapy. His knowledge of this field is of value at Buffalo State's Campus School where three classes of retarded children are among his pupils.

He is delighted with the facilities and equipment of our Campus School. From time to time, he brings into his classroom a college student to check the position of his pupils' hands on their instruments and the mouth formation of those playing wind instruments. Discipline problems are few because most pupils are genuinely interested in his courses.

"I TRY TO HOLD pupils' attention by making my courses consistently interesting," he told your Good Listener.

Mr. Stephens has composed music that he has played in churches but has not published. Shortly after arriving in this city, he telephoned the pastor of Bethel A.M.E. Church to enquire whether the minister knew of a local church in need of an organist. Told that Bethel Church was looking for an organist and choir director, Stephens went there and was engaged immediately. He conducts three choirs: the young adult choir, cathedral choir and gospel singers.

HE IS WRITING a book intended for sighted teachers of blind students of music. Its purpose is to give teachers an insight into what can be expected of blind students.

Mr. Stephens shares an apartment in Williamsville with Wilson Thompson, a friend from boyhood. Last summer, the two came here together from Detroit. Both obtained teaching posts immediately. Mr. Thompson is a member of the East High School faculty. In their apartment, Mr. Thompson is cook and general cleaner, while Mr. Stephens operates the dishwasher, washer and dryer.

INTERESTED in all kinds of music, Mr. Stephens tires of "rock" after a short time. Stevie Wonder, one of his former pupils in Detroit, has become a "rock" recording artist.

Bowling is a former recreation of Mr. Stephens. He plays cards and enjoys visiting various cities including Chicago, St. Louis, New York, and Washington. He also has traveled in Canada.

On the subject of violence by

blacks, he said, "I disapprove of it strongly, yet I know no important social change achieved without violence."

may, therefore, be a necessary evil."

MR. STEPHENS is in charge

of the music for a Campus Social variety show. He is a member of the honorary music society, Kappa Phi Lambda.