

Central Cass alum to enhance musical education with one-of-a-kind show

By Sarah Sorvaag

Most high school bands have adapted their musical arrangements to include a variety of traditional warm-up sports songs, modern hits, and classic rock anthems. The trick to determining a song lineup is usually based on what sheet music is available for purchase, the price, and the size of the band or choir. For one local school, the opportunity to practice and perform hand-crafted arrangements with a professional band will likely propel the students' understanding of their own potential and what it means to participate in a musical ensemble to a new level.

Students at Lisbon High School will be given the chance to perform an assortment of musical numbers with a widely popular Minneapolis-based band on March 26.

Melanie Moos is the lead singer for CBO (Casablanca Orchestra) and one of the coordinators for CAT (Calling All Talent) in Education program. She has been performing as a professional musician since the 1990s.

As Central Cass alumni, Moos and John Monilaws have stayed in touch over the years. Monilaws saw CAT in Education as a great resource that could be utilized at Lisbon High School, where he teaches music.

According to Moos, the Calling All Talent program began in 2006 and started out as an audition tool to find musicians for CBO. She received an overwhelming response and compared it to a Twin Cities version of American Idol. Members of CBO decided to create a show around the program and include other forms of talent.

"We put the word out and heard from a dance company that wanted to audition. Some of the members were inner-city high-risk kids. We were blown away by their talent. We all saw a unique opportunity to help keep them interested in performing and not be lured by the beat on the street. One kid was an exceptional dancer and statistically he could have slipped through the cracks. CAT helped to keep him focused and aspire for more. He finished high school, found a job he loves and is now dancing professionally. That inspires me to want to work with kids and find talent out there," Moos stated.

The next step in establishing showcases was to create a format. The original CAT program was adapted to help students learn other skill sets including behind the scenes production.

"Last spring, I approached Melanie to see what it all entailed,"

Monilaws explained. "Last fall, we started getting into it and wrote several grants to help finance the program. You can't put a dollar figure on the experience we'll be giving the kids."

Moos considers Lisbon as the flagship for this program's first implementation.

"They (Lisbon students) will get to see another side of what a professional band is like. This band is full of people who are all about family and community. We're teachers and professionals. I want people to see there is such a thing as professional musicians who take things seriously, but not themselves. We don't have an ego. We want to pass the torch from what we've learned to younger kids in a safe and nurturing environment. We'd love to go into more schools, more often. We definitely want to do more of these clinics," Moos added.

Prior to Lisbon's CAT in Education clinic, the musical arrangements will be e-mailed to Monilaws so that he may determine how the seminar can best be coordinated to meet the number of students. There is also a student committee geared towards designing and selling T-shirts, advertising, and sending sponsorship letters.

Nine CBO performers plus additional crew members will mentor the students at the seminar. The visiting band will teach students hip hop dance moves, how to create a sound board, lessons in beat-boxing, alternative marching band moves, and more.

The educational portion of the event will begin with a brief discussion regarding the show's flow. All of the students will be divided into different groups for sectional work and musical genres including beat-boxing and hip hop. Near the end of the day, the individual groups will come together and run through the entire program until the evening show.

According to Monilaws, the marching band will start from the back of the gym and play a Michael Jackson tribute. The concert choir and CBO will perform Queen's "Bohemian Rhapsody." The swing choir will also perform.

"We have a 75-voice choir at Lisbon," Monilaws said. "Our motto is Michael Jackson's 'Can you feel it?' Everyone is going to get a fabulous show. CBO is the premier band in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area and they have a resume full of venues they've played."

One of CBO's most astounding events ever performed was at the 55th Presidential Inaugural, "Freedom Ball" held at Union Station in

Washington, D.C., January 2005. Foreign ambassadors from over 250 nations attended the event.

The musical variety CBO band members prefer includes everything from the Black Eyed Peas to Johnny Cash. The sheet music for the popular songs are personally arranged by CBO.

"We have music that you can't find in a textbook. It's about teaching ancient rhythms handed down from person to person. When you start learning to be a professional musician, you find yourself in the underground of music discovering aspects that can't be taught. The musical arrangements are hand-made by us. You can't go online and find an arrangement for the Black Eyed Peas. That has to be arranged by musicians who want it to sound a particular way," Moos explained.

Monilaws agrees that the concepts his students will learn in this particular environment will be priceless.

"It's going to be huge for my music program. The students will have a lot of interest in what they're going to be working on, such as lights, sound, and stage movement. The average music teacher can't get as in-depth as a professional band," Monilaws said.

Moos hopes that the event in Lisbon instills a strong base for creativity to thrive.

"The Lisbon music program is amazing anyway, but it would be great to bring it up another level, especially if the kids are inspired," she stated.

Throughout Moos' musical career, she has learned many skills and lessons related to the creation of wonderfully choreographed pieces. Her advice to aspiring professional musicians is to carefully consider with whom you share your work.

According to Moos, "You can learn some tricks to emulate what is put in front of you and what you see on MTV and YouTube, and develop your own perception of how that should be performed. When you start performing professionally, you gather a trick bag of so many things including microphone techniques and reacting to crowd response."

"There are a lot of people who say they want to do you a favor but really want to rip you off. Music is extremely competitive. Like any other business, there is room for everybody."

"As a musician, it always comes down to one thing, and that's seeing people have a good time. I love it when they can't control it, their arms are above their heads and they're rocking out," Moos stated.

Monilaws sees this program as



Courtesy Photos

Pictured above: The CBO receives the Key to the City in Chanhassen, Minn. in 2008.



Lisbon's marching band will learn a variety of skills including how to put a creative touch on interpreting musical arrangements and practice alternate choreography from CBO members during the clinic.

a significant way to promote music within his community and at Lisbon High School.

"Normally, to experience a CBO concert you would have travel expenses and a higher ticket price. Seeing them at this show, with our kids in on top of that, parents and

grandparents will see their talent elevated to another level. You're going to get your money's worth and a good show," Monilaws added.

CBO's CAT in Education will take place on Friday, March 26, from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at Lisbon High School. The performance will

be that evening at 7:00 p.m. and is open to the public. During the evening show, CBO CDs will be available for purchase and concessions will be open.

For more information about CBO, please visit <http://www.cbo-music.com>.