Famed composers visit campus

Heather Martin, Staff Writer | Posted: Monday, February 19, 2018 3:21 pm

Acclaimed songwriters filled the Music Recital Hall to showcase original music pieces for the Songwriters-in-the-Round concert.

Songwriters included, Arthur Winer (MacAruthur), Eleni Mandell (The Living Sisters), Keaton Simons, Sarah Lentz, Sonja Midtune (Jonny California) and Kyle Neal.

Kyle Neal is a CPP alumnus who signed a publishing deal in 2013, which allowed him to showcase his songs in television shows and movies such as “Grey’s Anatomy” and “Riverdale.”

Arthur Winer, professor in the music industry studies program, hosted the concert Feb. 15 in the Music Recital Hall.

Each featured songwriter has current knowledge and experience working within the music industry.

Eleni Mandell, professor in the music department, has released 10 critically acclaimed solo records, and three records with her band, “The Living Sisters.”

Before moving here, Lentz had an extensive music career centered in New York City.

Lentz has performed solo and with her band at venues and colleges at the national level, and has five independent albums and songs on compilation CDs.

Mandell and Lentz both performed at Cal Poly Pomona for the first time.

Simons and Midtune both have recorded albums.

Simons has performed on talk shows such as “The Tonight Show with Jay Leno” and “The Ellen DeGeneres Show,” and has worked with notable acts such as Chris Cornell and Snoop Dogg.

Songwriters took turns performing original songs, and shared some personal stories and song inspirations.

All the songwriters played instruments while singing.
Mandell shared that the first two songs she performed were, “inspired by women’s real-life stories and experiences from the women’s prison where I teach songwriting.”

Neal performed two songs that have never been recorded.

He then sat on the edge of the stage and sang his last song without a microphone.

“The last song he played showed his authentic sound,” said Winer.

Simons performed his newly released single “123 Go,” and received a loud cheer from the audience.

Neal then performed his most popular song ‘Where I go,” that has been played over one million times on Spotify.

The reality of a city changing and growing inspired Simons to write “Crane City.”

“I really enjoyed the message of this song,” first-year food science student, Anthony Ciobanu said.

“It was very impressionable.”

Midtune performed songs from her live album Live from Universal Mastering Studios, “Lonely Bones” and “Be My Man.”

“Lonely Bones came out of nowhere,” explained Midtune.

“It was pure inspiration.”

Lentz performed two songs using a piano, “Turn Around,” and “Jericho” from her album Begin Again.

“I wrote the song Jericho after visiting New Orleans one year after Hurricane Katrina, Lentz told the audience.

“It is for the people stuck in the aftermath of the hurricane.”

Following the showcase, Midtune gave advice to students struggling with songwriting.

“Just start singing the first words that come to mind,” Midtune said.

“Then go from there.”

The Songwriters-in-the-round concert is in support of the 15th annual Songwriter Showcase that will be performed May 17 and 18.