Lindsley memorial honors late professor

Izbel Torres, Staff Writer | Posted: Tuesday, November 3, 2015 7:00 am

Students and faculty from the Department of Music at Cal Poly Pomona performed at the Music Recital Hall on Thursday night for the Charles E. Lindsley Memorial Vocal Scholarship Fundraiser.

The annual benefit show was established in 1994 by music professor Susan Burns and the current music department Chair Iris Levine to honor Charles E. Lindsley, a late professor of voice. Lindsley taught music at CPP from 1970 to 1992. He was the founder of the Kellogg Chamber Singers and the Opera Workshop.

Coincidentally, Lindsley was on the committee that hired both Burns and Levine.

“[Lindsley] passed away about 20 years ago, and he was just beloved by everyone and all the students,” said Burns, co-director of the Lindsley Memorial Fundraiser. “He was a wonderful voice teacher and conductor. We decided to set up this memorial scholarship in his memory.”

Students who apply for this scholarship are evaluated on academic excellence, vocal performance ability and service to the music department.

“Every year we present a voice concert of some kind with a different theme,” said Burns. “The money raised from that goes towards a special Lindsley memorial scholarship. One outstanding vocalist, usually someone who has given service to the department, they are an outstanding performer, they’re an outstanding student, they are awarded that scholarship.”

This year’s theme was “Applause! Applause!”; it was chosen to be inclusive of all musical styles and musical performances.

“We always try to find a theme that is all encompassing,” said Susan Ali, the co-director of this year’s Lindsley Scholarship Fundraiser and assistant professor at the music department. “Different students will want to sing different kinds of music, so we don’t want to exclude them by saying ‘An Evening of German Music’; then, immediately, we might be excluding some people who otherwise would participate. There is a song called ‘Applause! Applause!’ from the musical ‘Applause! Applause!’ I thought that would be all-encompassing.”
At the fundraiser alumni, students and faculty performed music from various genres such as classical music, musical theater, mariachi and commercial music.

This year’s Lindsley Scholarship winner was Morgan Semrau, a soprano and second-year vocal performance and musical theater student. Her performance of “Per Pieta Bell’idol Mio” impressed the audience because of her vocal range.

“I was able to [perform at the Lindsley Memorial fundraiser] last year as well, and I just loved it,” said Semrau. “I loved how everyone was honoring this person that gave us this opportunity to be able to do this and be able to perform for each other [for] the sake of loving what we do and being able to share that with everybody.”

Semrau earned the scholarship after applying to multiple music department scholarships. Out of all the ones she applied to, she received seven.

“Well it’s really really easy,” said Semrau. “That’s why I’m so surprised that more kids don’t [apply to scholarships]. I just went online, and there was an easy to find tab on the website. I filled out multiple applications and just because so many people don’t apply, I was able to get around seven different scholarships.”

Semrau’s performance career began when she was six years old. She enjoys performing any kind of music she can and has especially loved Italian arias since she first began singing in a choir.

“I’ve been performing since I was six years old, so it’s just something that was in me, and I knew that I had to carry that into college,” said Semrau. “When you’re doing music, it’s a part of you, and you know that, and it’s just really nice to carry that on with you throughout your life.”

Among the most memorable performances of the night was a humorous performance of “Duetto Buffo di Due Gatti” or “Humorous Duet for Two Cats” by Burns and Ali. The lyrics to this piece consist entirely of the word “meow.” Fifth-year music student Paulina Nuñez and Sergio Oliver ('15, music) also performed a bossa nova and jazz rendition of the “Pokémon” theme song while wearing a Pikachu beanie and character Ash Ketchum’s signature hat.

“Sergio and I decided to make like a bossa nova jazz version of the Pokemon theme song,” said Nuñez. “[We did it] just because ‘Pokémon’ is awesome, and it has never been done before here. It’s completely original. We practiced and worked on it, and a lot of the arrangement came from [Sergio], if not all of it.”

At the end of the night, both Burns and Janet Noll, a coach and piano accompanist, were honored, as both will be retiring by the end of the year. Noll received an arrangement of flowers with tags holding lovely messages from students and faculty, and Ali presented Burns with a beautiful floral bouquet.
Up next, the Music Theater Workshop will present a musical production of “The Addams Family” on May 12, 13 and 14 at the Music Recital Hall.