Songwriter In-The-Round features professional songwriters

Miranda Holguin, Reporter | Posted: Monday, February 20, 2017 8:52 pm

Music of acclaimed songwriters filled the Music Recital Hall Thursday evening during the Songwriters In-The-Round Concert hosted by Arthur Winer, a professor of the music industry studies program.

The songwriters came from a variety of backgrounds featuring Winer (MacArthur), Eleni Mandell (The Living Sisters), Mike Viola (Candy Butchers), Vicki Peterson (The Bangles), Shelly Peiken (“What a Girl Wants”), Kelly Jones, Keaton Simons, Mara Connor, Linus Dotson (Linus of Hollywood), Bleu McAuley and Will Bissic, also known as MC Prototype.

Each of the night’s featured songwriters has knowledge and experience working within the music industry.

Peiken is a Grammy-nominated songwriter who has been involved in the music industry for more than 20 years working with Celine Dion, Britney Spears, Cher, Miley Cyrus, Demi Lovato, Selena Gomez and Keith Urban, among several others. Christina Aguilera’s “What a Girl Wants” is one of the most famous songs written by Peiken.

McAuley has also worked with Demi Lovato and Selena Gomez as well as the Jonas Brothers and Boys Like Girls.

Viola has written and produced for artists such as Panic! At The Disco, Andrew McMahon, Fall Out Boy and Ryan Adams.

Jones and Simons have performed alongside big-name artists on talk shows such as “The Tonight Show with Jay Leno” in addition to their solo careers.

The songwriters took turns performing their original songs and sharing some of their stories. Many of the songwriters played instruments to accompany their singing.

Mandell talked about a time where she was given an assignment to write a song inspired by a picture of a cowboy on fire. Mandell was skeptical at first, but it turned into something she enjoyed.
“You might think ‘Oh what a chore,’ and it turns out to be something you really love,” said Mandell, who will be joining CPP as an instructor for spring quarter.

Peterson, who is one of the founding members of The Bangles and wrote much of the band’s material on its debut release with Columbia Records including “Hero Takes a Fall,” touched the hearts of the crowd when she performed a song for her sister who passed away from lung cancer, entitled “Map of the World.” This was the first time the song was performed in public.

Peterson also suffered the loss of her fiance and spoke about how these losses were a source of inspiration for her music.

Pamela Sanchez, a fifth-year music student, commented on what she gained from watching the performances and listening to the songwriters’ experiences.

“There’s so many different types of songwriting and so many different types of genres,” said Sanchez. “You don’t have to have the prettiest voice. It’s definitely about writing and getting the message across. The instrumental accompaniment really enhances the story. The spoken word was really cool. It said so much.”

Sanchez is a student of Winer’s and is beginning to write her own original songs. She was interested to see the songwriters perform since she couldn’t attend Songwriting Summit, which took place earlier in the day.

The expert songwriters all participated in the summit. It offered the opportunity for students who are a part of the Songwriter Showcase Ensemble to perform their songs and get feedback from the experts.

After their on-stage performances, students had a chance to have one-on-one time in the practice rooms to work with the experts as well.

The Songwriter Showcase ensemble was created in 2007 when Winer was hosting a masterclass with Viola. Viola’s arrival was delayed, so in order to pass time Winer had students perform on stage.

Winer realized the potential of students performing their original songs and thus the Songwriter Showcase was born.

This year will mark the 14th Songwriter Showcase, to be performed May 18 and 19 in the Music Recital Hall.

Since the experts were on campus, it posed a great opportunity for them to perform as well, and so came about the Songwriters In-The-Round Concert.

“The concert is just icing on the cake,” said Winer.
Following the showcase, MC Prototype, an alumnus of the music industry studies program, gave advice on what to do when struggling with songwriting.

“I think the best advice is just to live life,” said Bissic. “The words will eventually come to you.”