Three music ensembles jazz up recital hall

Miranda Holguin, Reporter | Posted: Monday, November 28, 2016 6:34 pm

More than 125 guests filled the recital hall on Nov. 22 for a night full of jazz.

The concert was a combination of three ensembles: the Cal Poly Pomona “Bronco” Jazz, the CPP Jazz Combo “Double Down”/”No. 7 with sauce” and CPP Vocal Jazz “A Cappoly.”

All of the ensembles are courses open to all majors and are intended to be a year-long commitment.

The CPP “Bronco” Jazz Ensemble is directed by Dave Kopplin. The largest of the three ensembles played songs from Radiohead and a composition arranged by Kopplin entitled, “Softly, as in a Morning Sunrise” ft. Laura Pluth as vocalist.

“I have very eclectic taste and generally don’t have themed concerts. I try to get a balance between old and new,” Kopplin said.

Kendra Vuk, the director of “A Cappoly,” selects her group’s songs in a similar fashion, blending the old with the new.

“You can learn from the old, listen to what the masters did before and apply to today’s music and reinterpret it in a new way,” Vuk said.

“A Cappoly” started last winter and is an auditioned course comprised of what would be considered vocal jazz and acapella. Students are encouraged to audition for next year at the end of spring quarter and beginning of fall.

Kopplin touched upon the historical significance of jazz and its unique culture and feel.

“The history is rich culturally. [Jazz is] really African-American music with a little European influence,” said Kopplin. “It’s kind of a story about overcoming oppression.”

Vuk echoed Kopplin’s sentiments speaking to jazz music’s creativity.

“With jazz, you get to create, it’s all about improvisation... It’s free,” Vuk said.
This improvisation allows each member to be heard and share his or her own take on the music in what Kopplin referred to as a “musical opinion.” Jazz is also less formal than classical, for example, and is intended to make you move.

“Musical ensembles may be more like real world experiences more than anything else you do at Cal Poly,” said Kopplin. “You have to do your part in the group, and if you don’t hold up your part everybody knows.”

Currently, the Jazz Band is trying to raise money to go on tour in Hawaii next March. Fourth-year music industry studies student Teresa Lem took on the fundraising as part of her senior project.

“My goal is to get all 22 members to Hawaii under a comfortable budget,” Lem said.

Lem is the band manager and hopes to raise enough funds to get all students to Hawaii for free.

After the concert, there was a silent auction including items such as handcrafted tote bags and a round of golf for four in order to raise funds.

There is also an ongoing sale of T-shirts, chocolates and stickers.

In addition to Jazz Band merchandise, Lem is planning fundraising events, including a Disney and coffee themed event (date still to be announced) and Associated Students, Inc. BEAT is pairing up with the Jazz Band in Ursa Major at the Bronco Student Center Jan. 27 for a swing dance night. There will be people teaching how to swing dance and live music for students to enjoy.

Donations to help get the Jazz Band to Hawaii can be made at www.gofundme.com/cppjazzhawaii.