

Raton school bands shine in annual concert

By Tim Keller

Special to The Chronicle-News

RATON — The Shuler Theater hosted yet another big music concert, this time hosting several dozen singers and instrumentalists, but none of them had to take a tour bus to rooms in local motels: All of the performers were Raton locals.

Raton Schools' Music Department presented its annual community concert Tuesday night to showcase all of its musicians and singers.

"An Adventure in Music" presented a full night of music, nearly three hours with short breaks and intermissions. It was the first local performance for new band and choir director Nathaniel Ashbaugh, who came to Raton in January.

Ashbaugh, the fifth music director in seven years, appears to be off to a strong start. Smiles abounded throughout the concert — from Ashbaugh, from his young musicians, and from the audience, which was large enough that the balcony had to be opened to handle overflow after the concert had begun.

Graduating senior Mariah Fleming, who plays flute and sings in the choir, presented Ashbaugh with a gift onstage, a large stuffed frog selected during the group's recent performance trip to Dallas.

"With his green shirts and red hair, Mr. Ashbaugh looks a little like this frog," she remarked. "We were very lucky to get a nice guy like him to save our band and choir."

Ashbaugh stepped in at mid-year when the previous director left after only one semester. Students were disheartened, but now they say that Ashbaugh has brought back the joy. Equally important, he's building on a solid foundation of musicianship established by Russell Woods, who departed the program last year.

Tuesday's concert was varied and enjoyable, ranging from classical pieces to show tunes, from blues to movie soundtracks, from humor to Dixieland. Not surprisingly, performance quality varied widely, with the older students' experience producing markedly more accomplished results. But all the groups had both weak and strong performances: if each had left out its weakest number, each group would have fared better.

All of the singers need more work in projecting their voices: the middle school and high school



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Tuesday night's annual Raton Schools band and choir concert at the Shuler Theater closed with Francis McBeth's "Canto." Raton Middle School advanced "Tiger" musicians include Juan Prieto Archuleta, Kendra Velenquela, Forrest McConnell, Alicia Gomez, Saphire Encinas, Melanie Alderette, July Hunnicut, Heather Sandoval, ReAnne Fissel, Cierra Brooks, Shiloh Lucero, Megan Trantham, Jonathan Cariales, Andy Petrovich and Jason Harrison. High school band musicians are Mariah Fleming, Noelle McDonald, Kristina Jansen, Collette Village Center, Tara McDonald, Codi Angeli-Stone, Brooke Armendariz, Dariela Aleman, Callie Wilson, Max Gonzales, Shyanne Lucero, Christina Gonzales, Jarrett Janell, Warren McConnell, Heather Segura, Taryn Trujillo, Jarrett Trantham, Ashley Hester, Caylene Romero, Toby Henson, Robert Calderelli and Lucas Jansen.



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The combined choirs of Raton's high school and middle school finish off a spirited rendition of "Basin Street Blues," accompanied by pianist Linda Trice and drummer/choir director Nathaniel Ashbaugh. Singers include middle school students Alexis Torres, Abigail Trujillo, Allie Irvin, Savannah Trujillo, Johnny Gentry, and Estrella Vargas. High school singers include Mariah Fleming, Jacque Alcorn, Randi Vigil, Katherine Little, Shyanne Lucero and Caylene Romero.

choirs couldn't be heard over the piano in much of the auditorium. The audience needed some learning, too: Many patrons lacked basic etiquette, talking too loudly or allowing noises from their cell phones. As

Ashbaugh builds the Raton music program, these are weaknesses that he and his young musicians can help remedy.

A great example was the way Ashbaugh turned his teaching skills to the audi-

ence Tuesday night, having band sections, for example, each demonstrate a competing theme before the whole band performed the integrated piece, "Attack of the Garden Gnomes," complete with screams. Before each

selection, Ashbaugh spoke directly to the audience, adding information that helped bring the audience into the piece.

Performance highlights included the combined middle school and high school

choirs singing "Basin Street Blues" with Ashbaugh on percussion and Linda Trice on piano, followed by a tear-inducing ballad called "One Candle."

The advanced "Tiger" middle school band combined with the high school band to close the show with Francis McBeth's "Canto."

The audience favorite, though, was probably a group of six young men who produced a 10-minute composition of "uncommon drumming." Electric bass and drum kit accompanied two percussionists who banged on hardware store products and two others who banged on homemade PVC xylophones, all while being conducted by Ashbaugh, who donned a backwards cap to fit in.

The piece incorporated improvised solos from percussionists Ryan Gray, Mark Valdez, Joshua Trujillo, and Clayton LePlatt. They were augmented by guest drummer Andy Petrovich and bassist Ysidro Lopez.

A phrase that came to mind was, "The Ashbaugh era begins." Tuesday night's show presented enough fun and promise to hope that the phrase becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Knowing risks, precautions can help avoid skin cancers

Summer is almost here, bringing with it plans for leisurely walks, long days at the lake, perhaps a visit to the tanning salon to get that glowing sun-kissed look as bathing suits and strappy dresses come out.

Under breezy summer skies, it's easy to forget that seemingly harmless sun exposure can cause skin cancer.

Skin cancer is the most common cancer in the United States.

"More than 2 million people will be diagnosed in the United States this year.

Of those, the American Cancer Society predicts that nearly 77,000 cases will be the deadliest type, called melanoma," explains Donna Wood, practice leader of Clinical Operations at Quorum Health Resources. "More than 9,000 Americans are expected to die from this form of skin cancer in 2012."

To raise awareness of skin cancer prevention and the importance of early detection, May has been designated Melanoma/Skin Cancer Detection and Prevention Month by the American Academy of Dermatology. Focused on melanoma prevention, the academy encourages skin self-examination on "Melanoma Monday," the

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Helpful hints

Here are some helpful protection tips:

- Seek out shade, especially during the midday hours
- Wear clothing that protects skin from sun exposure
- Use a wide-brimmed hat to shade the face, head, ears and neck
- Wear wrap-around sunglasses that block 100 percent of both types of harmful ultraviolet rays, UVA and UVB
- Use sunscreen with a protective factor (SPF) of 15 or higher with both UVA and UVB protection
- Do not use indoor tanning facilities.

All of these can be signs of skin cancer. Skin cancers can look different from person to person, so you need a medical evaluation from a dermatologist to ensure proper diagnosis. It's important to be aware of these signs, because most skin cancers are highly curable if caught early and treated appropriately.

A pictorial of warning signs and images of skin cancer is available on the Skin Cancer Foundation website at www.skincancer.org.

Several factors are key when assessing your risk for skin cancer. There's a genetic link, so find out if close family members have had skin cancer.

Light-skinned people are more likely to develop skin cancer, although all skin types can be affected. And exposure to invisible ultraviolet rays can cause cell changes that lead to skin cancer. This exposure can occur naturally from the sun or artificially from tanning beds or lamps.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention warns that ultraviolet light causes 65 percent or more of melanoma. About 90 per-

cent of other types of skin cancers are linked to this exposure.

Additional skin cancer risk factors cited by the CDC are:

- Personal history of skin cancer
- History of sunburns early in life
- Skin that burns, freckles, reddens easily or becomes painful in the sun
- Blue or green eyes
- Blond or red hair
- Certain types of moles
- Numerous moles

One alarming trend is the rise in melanoma among young people aged 18 to 39.

The Skin Cancer Foundation cites a recent study that shows this potentially deadly form of skin cancer has grown by 800 percent among young women and 400 percent among young men since the 1970s.

While lifetime risk of melanoma usually is higher for males than females, the pattern seems to be reversed in this younger population.

The study authors point to indoor ultraviolet tan-

ning as a potential explanation for this trend. More females use indoor tanning, which is linked to higher rates of developing melanoma, as well as less threatening skin cancers.

The good news is that while melanoma incidence is rising among young people, death from the disease is decreasing due to early diagnosis and treatment.

When a doctor identifies skin spots that need to be further evaluated, the first step is usually a biopsy. All or part of the suspicious skin will be removed and checked by a pathologist for cancer cells.

This often is done using local anesthesia as an outpatient procedure in the doctor's office, a clinic or hospital. If cancer is detected, the next step is to "stage" the disease. This test determines if the disease has spread to other parts of the body. Treatment options will be based on this staging and could include surgery, chemotherapy or radiation therapy.

Treatments with special drugs and lights also may be used to slow the cancer growth or kill the cancer cells. These are called photodynamic therapy and biological therapy.

Researchers are working to find new and more effective ways to treat skin can-

cer. One area of study is the use of a vaccine after surgery for people with advanced melanoma.

The National Cancer Institute provides information about clinical trials for new treatments on its website at www.cancer.gov.

Health advocates and agencies have developed guidelines and other information tools to encourage safe sun exposure from youth through adulthood. People of all ages are advised to stay out of the hottest mid-day sun, if possible, and to realize that exposure in any season can be harmful.

Americans are sun-lovers who spend a great deal of time out of doors. This enjoyment doesn't have to be dimmed by the threat of skin cancer. By taking precautions to protect yourself from sun exposure and checking regularly for the signs of skin cancer, you can greatly reduce the threat of this common malady.

For more information on the American Academy of Dermatology's efforts to promote skin cancer detection and prevention, go to <http://www.melanomamonday.org>.

This article provided courtesy of Mt. San Rafael Hospital and Quorum Health Resources.