

'Ladies' perform singles

By David Strader
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Ladies took the West Halls Study Lounge by storm Wednesday night when the Penn State Songwriters Club hosted a "Ladies' Night" open mic.

The event — proposed by Maura Westerlund, vice president of the Songwriters Club — gave women of Penn State the chance to showcase their musical talent.

"We were looking to showcase female talent for those who don't normally feel comfortable playing with guys," Westerlund (sophomore-business) said.

And Westerlund said she was very impressed with the talent drawn out by the Ladies' Night.

"I feel intimidated," she said. "These girls are amazing, and I'm in awe, even."

Attendee Sudong Jang, from Seoul, Korea — who was in town visiting a friend — read about the open mic that morning and said it would be a great way to spend his evening.

"I've been waiting for this all day," he said, "and I really love this."

Jang said he's a big music enthusiast.

Girls who signed up took turns on stage performing an assortment of both original songs and covers.

Tina Letter (freshman-biology), who went first for the evening, opened with an original song followed by a number of covers by artists like Damien Rice and Tegan and Sara.

Letter said females have a lot to offer through their music.

"Girls are more willing to completely pour their souls out, and that emotional side really comes out in their songs," Letter said.

After her performance, Letter said she enjoyed playing to such a sociable and understanding audience.

"If I make a mistake, it's no big deal," she said. "The people here are just so nice." And Letter was right — attendees like Jang were fully supportive of her.

"Even though she forgot the lyrics a couple of times, her voice was beautiful," Jang said.

The open mic drew an audience of 20-some people, and Westerlund looked at the turnout positively.

"I like that we have longer sets," Westerlund said. "When there's tons of people, you don't get to experience a full view of someone's music, but that's not the case tonight."

Westerlund said the venue was also ideal for open mics.

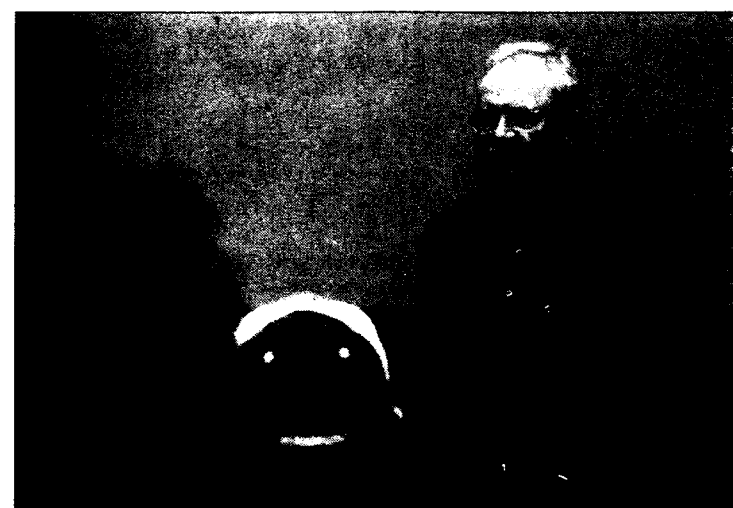
"It's the perfect space," she said. "There are so many comfy chairs, it's very easy to set up and the acoustics are great too."

Ashley Tarriff (freshman-marketing), the second performer of the evening, said she was ultimately pleased with the set-up of the show.

"I love the idea of showcasing the feminine side of music," she said.

"It's a nice gesture."

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Kelsey Morris/Collegian

Writer Kent Haruf talks about his book and his journey in becoming a writer at the Foster Auditorium in the Paterno Library.

Author offers students advice, shares journey

By Hannah Rishel
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Kent Haruf believes that fiction's purpose shouldn't be a "sermon," but rather it should "say something about the human condition."

Haruf participated in the Mary E. Rolling Reading Series on Wednesday night in the Foster Auditorium of the Paterno Library.

During the event he read a chapter from his book "Plain Song," which was a finalist for the National Book Award, and talked to the audience about how he came to be a fiction writer.

Earlier in the day he met with graduate English classes for in-depth question and answer sessions.

Haruf said he didn't publish any of his work until his 40s because he felt like everything up until that point wasn't good enough to be published and he was trying to learn what he wanted to write about.

He finally settled on using the area of his hometown of Colorado, in the eastern part of the state that "people drive across as fast as they can" to get to Aspen and Denver.

"Most people don't think it's pretty," Haruf said. "I don't think it's pretty either, but I do think it's beautiful."

He also talked about his time as an English professor before he made enough money on his books to retire.

He said that his goal is for sentences to sound "simple and direct and clear." Students often think that when they try to write

abstractly it sounds better, but Haruf said it doesn't. Haruf believes every sentence needs to be calculated and necessary.

"There's a lot of pressure on every word because it has to be the right word," he said.

Haruf also told the audience that while he's writing a new book, like he is now, he focuses on reading nonfiction books and doesn't read any contemporary fiction because he doesn't want to make himself feel "stupid."

He added that when he wants to get into the mindset to write in the morning he'll read William Faulkner and Ernest Hemingway, two authors that influenced him to pursue writing in college.

"I think his mindset and outlook on the writing process is interesting," Carl Hayman (senior-English) said. "A lot of writers just give advice but not what they think."

Jessica Seisman said that while her attendance was a requirement, she would have come anyway because she tries to go to all the events where authors are speaking.

She added that her favorite part of the speech was Haruf's comment on how his daily task is to write a capable sentence because a lot of writers try to do so much at once.

"I like that it took him so long to learn how to write," said Erika Pratt (senior-English), who attended for her English class. "I also like that he doesn't consider himself a writer, but that he's still learning."

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Soloist brings 'original' style

By Josh Bollinger
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Who needs a backup band anyway?

Martin Sexton played the State Theatre on Wednesday night as part of his solo tour in support of his new album "Sugarcoating" bringing his "original" style of acoustic rock to State College.

"I like how quirky it is," Cara Salimando said, who opened last night for Sexton.

Salimando, who's performance featured her on piano and ukulele, said she's a big fan of Sexton's music.

She said his live performances and his ability to replicate guitar and trumpet solos with his mouth are what she loves most about him.

"He doesn't need anyone else," Salimando said, who added that he's both innovative and inspiring as a musician.

Wednesday night Sexton — who's known for his ability to improvise live, replicated sound from everything from the trumpet, to the saxophone, to a drum kit — featured all three sounds with his second song "Diggin' Me."

"I'm getting there folks, I'm getting in that zone here," Sexton said after "Diggin' Me."



Andrew Dunheimer/Collegian

Martin Sexton plays in the State Theater on Wednesday night. Sexton is known for his ability to replicate sounds with his mouth.

John Fegyveresi (graduate-geoscience) said Sexton's studio albums are great, but the live performances is where he truly thrives.

Fegyveresi has recently gotten interested in Sexton's music and said he was happy he could finally get a chance to see him live.

"It's refreshing to see people who can still sing and sound this good live," Fegyveresi said. "Plus it was 20 bucks and it was right down the street."

He described the State Theatre as a place big enough for you to see a major music act, but small enough to make the audience feel that they're at a big coffee house.

"You can really hear them without having to hear them through a big PA system," Fegyveresi said. "You get to really hone in on his talent."

He said that the State Theatre was the perfect place for Sexton to play, considering his intimate, solo-acoustic style, the size will help him connect better with the audience.

Right from the beginning Sexton got the audience involved in his act, incorporating a call and response section with them in his first song.

Concerned about the audience's experience, Sexton asked the crowd more than once if his guitar was at a good volume, and he would tune at opportune moments during songs as to not disrupt them, though at one point he flat out stopped a song to alter it.

"Would you give me some of that groovy Johnny Cash reverb," Sexton said to the soundman in the back of the theatre. "Got to get it just right."

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Local documentary to focus on suicide, raise awareness

By Lauren Ingeno
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Suicide is a leading cause of death among adolescents and young adults, and if Penn State students aren't aware of this issue, then they should be, said Barbara Bird, an associate professor in the department of film-video and media studies.

Bird, along with Penn State film and video alumni and students, created the film "Toward Daylight" — an 18-minute documentary that focuses on suicide, survivorship and prevention in the Centre County region.

The film was created for the Centre County Chapter of the

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention.

The film will premiere at 7 tonight at Bellefonte High School, 830 E. Bishop St. in Bellefonte, and at the State Theatre, 130 W. College Ave., on Nov. 14.

Susan Kennedy — who helped create the chapter and serves as co-chairwoman for Penn State's Out of Darkness walk is a survivor herself and appears in the documentary.

She said the people who speak out in the film have either lost someone to suicide or have considered or survived it.

"I think that you'll find that the film is different from a lot of other films that people might see on this

topic, because the people are so real and so honest in their conversations about depression and suicide," Kennedy said. "It's very powerful."

Kennedy first asked Bird to produce the film for the foundation in 2007, because she knew Bird had done public scholarship activities in the past, in which she worked with community partners to raise awareness about issues.

She said Bird "graciously agreed" to direct the film.

"I was very interested in making suicide prevention out in the open," Bird said.

"A death from suicide and the grieving that goes along with it is very different than if you lose a

loved one through natural causes."

Recent suicide tragedies — in which over a one-month span in September, six gay students under the age of 20 ended their lives — have gained a lot of media attention, sparking discussion about an issue that is often considered taboo, Kennedy said. But eventually, Kennedy said she thinks the media will go away, the talking will stop and there will be silence around the issue once again.

"And we need to keep talking about it," Kennedy said. "That conversation can help people get the resources they need and prevent future suicides."

Bird said she thinks society

needs to stop stigmatizing people with depression, and hopes that after students see the film they will get help if they need it, or help friends if they need it.

"There is a sense of isolation and loneliness that feeds the guilt and shame and depression," she said. Kennedy said she hopes people will see the film and educate themselves on an issue that is so often in the dark.

"I hope that people will come to learn more and not stay away because it's a topic that makes them uncomfortable," she said. "In the end there's a lot of hope that's portrayed in the film."

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