

Local writer signs copies of new book

By Hannah Rishel
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Susan Russell, a Penn State professor and adviser for Cultural Conversations, told the crowd at her book signing Sunday night not to give her too much credit. She merely organized "this genius."

Parents, girls and members of Cultural Conversations gathered in the second floor space of the State Theatre, 130 W. College Ave., for Russell's book "Body Language: Cultural Conversations Reaching Out and Reaching In" book signing. Profits from selling the book go straight to Cultural Conversations.

Attendees mingled and signed copies of the book, occasionally stopping to listen to one of the girls read a monologue from the book.

Russell's Body Language Project, which inspired the book, encouraged girls to compose monologues on body-image issues, which they performed as part of Cultural Conversations' annual theater event last year.

"It's really nice to have everyone back together again," Reagan Copeland, a member of Cultural Conversations, said.

"It's a homecoming of sorts." Copeland (senior-English and theatre) said that it was like having the "whole community" in the room, with the mothers who tirelessly support their daughters, the girls involved in the project, the college students involved in Cultural Conversations and the professors, who created the project.

She said that she helped run the workshops that Russell ran, so she witnessed the girls creating their monologues.

"We have the opportunity to learn from them," Copeland said. "Young people rarely get to voice their opinion in a way the adult community can hear."

Natasha McCandless, a sophomore at State College Area High School who participated in the project, said it was "amazing" to see her monologue printed in a published book.

"My monologue is kind of the light and happy one," she said. "It's about how I'm trying to be myself."

She said that last year she was going through a rough time and didn't feel confident, but the Body Language Project helped turn that around.

"It taught me that everyone has a

story and everyone is beautiful in a different way," McCandless said.

In addition to the books that were printed for the signing, 100 books will be taken to Sri Lanka by Ruth Canagarajah, a member of Cultural Conversations, to expand the project globally through The Paalam Project.

"Paalam" means bridge in the Tamil language, according to the pamphlet. The project's goal is to "bridge international emotions to external expressions, unspoken hopes for the future to cultural conversations on rebuilding," according to the pamphlet. Sri Lanka is currently going through a rebuilding period after a war. The project will focus on the youth's role in it.

"They'll be using theatre as a way that they can communicate their hopes," Canagarajah (junior-international politics and sociology) said.

Russell was extremely pleased with the event. "This whole experience has been a juggernaut that rolled on its own energy," she said. "I'm happy, I'm honored and I'm moved by these girls. It's very emotional how powerful they are."

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Chloe Elmer/Collegian

Pittsburgh-based rock band The Clarks perform on Friday night at the State Theatre.

Clarks concert meshes old, new

By Madeline Fitzgerald
FOR THE COLLEGIAN

Even for a band that has been around for more than 25 years, The Clarks' Friday show at the State Theatre was not a typical concert.

The Clarks played at the 130 W. College Ave. theater to a packed auditorium of both students and community members.

Many attendees said the band made sure all audience members were pleased with the variety of songs played during the concert. The set list included better-known hits, as well as a few new songs.

Tina Grasha (junior-journalism) said Friday's show was her favorite Clarks performance — and she's seen them four times.

"They played exactly the songs I wanted to hear," Grasha said, adding that those included "Penny on the Floor" and "Butterflies and Airplanes."

Some attendees said they liked that the band interacted with them.

Kevin Johnson (graduate-aerospace engineering) said it surprised him.

"They were energetic enough to be interactive with the crowd," Johnson said. "They are clearly excellent showmen."

Longtime fan Lauren Waltman (junior-life science) said the band did a great job of combining its old and new music — but for her, the best part of the show came at the end, when a band member handed her the set list, and her friend a drumstick.

This tour marked a new era for the band — after it added two new band members in the summer of 2009.

Skip Sanders plays the electric keyboard, while Gary Jacobs plays the pedal steel guitar. Both musicians became a part of The Clarks' most recent album "Restless Days," revitalizing its sound, guitarist Robert James said before the concert.

"They really breathed a lot of important new life into the band," he said. "They add new texture, and I think that takes us to another level."

The band has played in State College several times since its creation in 1986, but it has previously kept its shows relatively consistent, James said.

This time, however, band members broke out of their usual concert protocol by taking a request from the audience to play its lesser-known song "These Wishes" as a part of the encore.

The band told the audience the song was so rare that the new members were not familiar with it.

While the band normally likes to stick to the set list, James said change can be good.

"Since we don't get to play together as much as we used to, a curveball can be problematic. But it's good to have a lot of songs in rotation," James said. "That way, you don't get sick of playing them."

But The Clarks can't always stick to their guidelines, James said.

"No matter what boundaries or stipulations we set out, what ends up happening is usually completely different," James said.

Paul Benson, lead singer for opener Bishop Clay, said he could learn a lot from The Clarks.

"They're very talented musicians, obviously," Benson said. "But they're also great guys. They're very generous and kind. It's a great group of guys to look up to."

Rap, pop combine at HUB concert

By Ashley Smalls
FOR THE COLLEGIAN

Rapper J. Cole told the HUB-Alumni Hall crowd Friday night that a star is born every day.

J. Cole and pop-punk band We The Kings performed as part of the Pringles Xtreme Campus Tour.

Fans crowded the hall as J. Cole opened the concert by introducing himself as the first artist to be signed to Jay-Z's label Roc Nation.

J. Cole performed hits such as "All I Want is You" and introduced fellow artist Omen, who performed with him.

The rapper also introduced the crowd to his production skills by mixing a new beat on stage while Omen rapped to it.

"This is the first time I've heard his music and I must say it's great to hear meaningful rap," Aishia Correll (sophomore-biological anthropology) said.

After much anticipation, J. Cole performed "Who Dat" which drew cheers from the crowd.

"He really knows how to give the crowd a good show," Memuna Forna (junior-communication sciences and disorders) said. "I love the fact that he interacts with his audience."

J. Cole ended his performance with his verse from Jay-Z's song "A Star is Born." While leaving the stage, he shook hands with fans.

"J. Cole just touched my hands. I don't care what anyone says. We had a moment," Ayanna James (sophomore-theatre) said.

We The Kings took the stage not long after J. Cole finished, introducing



Amanda August/Collegian

Rapper J. Cole greets fans during the Pringles Xtreme Campus Tour on Friday night in Alumni Hall. Pop-punk band We The Kings also performed after Cole.

themselves by parodying an iconic Penn State chant, shouting "We are... We The Kings."

While teaching fans how to fist-pump, the band performed songs such as "Check Yes Juliet" and "Heaven Can Wait."

We The Kings guitarist Hunter Thomsen also gave his own rendition of Lil Wayne's "A Milli," and drummer Danny Duncan played his version of the theme song to TV show "Fresh Prince of Bel Air."

"We don't care if you guys want to rock out like it's a rock concert or shake your ass like it's a Lil Wayne concert," We The Kings lead singer Travis Clark said.

"This music is for everyone."

Fans fist-pumped along with the band and crowd-surfed in an attempt to get on stage.

"There's a lot of energy and big hit songs," Andrew Ferri (senior-information sciences and technology) said.

We The Kings ended its performance by throwing drumsticks into the crowd for fans to catch and invited the audience to party with them after the show.

After the concert, fans received free Pringles products from the sponsor.

"It was insane — the best concert Penn State has had yet," Chris Ferri (freshman-information sciences and technology) said.

17th-century opera examines sex, power

By Sarah Becks
FOR THE COLLEGIAN

Dim the lights and cue the music: This weekend, the Esber Recital Hall hosted a show about sex, power and imperial affairs.

The Penn State Opera Theatre and Baroque Ensemble presented "Lincoronazione di Poppea" (The Coronation of Poppea) at 8 Friday night.

Though written in 1643 in Italy, the opera sung in English took place in Rome under the reign of Emperor Nero and never specified an actual time period. A story about sex and power, the opera was easy to follow, Angel Merz (senior-marketing) said.

"This is my first opera, so I'm impressed. I was expecting not to understand, but I could follow it," he said.

The stage was set with two lamps, a staircase and a structure in the middle that appeared as a bed, altar, bath and tomb throughout the show.

Scene changes were made by the projections on the back wall of the stage.

The Baroque Ensemble performed on stage next to the actors, so there was limited space to perform.

"I've never been to this venue, and I was wondering how they work going to work with the space," Michael Murray (sophomore-music education) said.

He said he was impressed with how the actors used the limited staging.

Along with the staging, the audience members said they were surprised by how risqué the opera was.

"It's edgy, which is really surprising for the 17th century," Brian Lettie

(senior-animal science) said.

Lettie said the male lead being played by a female was different.

But it worked in part because the role called for a high vocal range, he said.

"I like how it's keeping with tradition, and it makes the show a little more interesting during some scenes," Lettie said.

Adrienne Price (graduate-music) played the male lead, Nero. The director, Ted Christopher, said she "bravely" took on the role.

"When the director tells you that the male lead was played by a female, you're wondering how it's going to play out at first," Murray said. "After a while, it's not really weird at all and you come to accept it. The show does a really good job of bringing into the scene and you forget you're in an auditorium."

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