



Guest conductor influenced band

By Erika Lipiec

For many MHS students and other high school students from surrounding towns, Saturday, Dec. 11 was the musical experience of a lifetime. The All-District Band clinic and concert were held with guest conductor Mr. Stephen Melillo.

"It was a wonderful experience to work with such a talented composer/conductor/musician. Over all, I thought the concert went really well, and it is an experience I will never forget," said Jami Longenecker '02.

As Michael Jordan is to basketball and Steven King is to novel writing: Mr. Melillo is to music. In his lifetime, he has traveled worldwide holding clinics, conducting concerts, and composing music. He has composed a total of 879 pieces. His music is a genius balance of simplicity, technique and beauty. The images that it creates are left to the musicians and audience to discover and imagine.

One of his latest compositions, "The Nature of Hope...an Epilogue for a Knight" was premiered at Saturday's concert. This piece of music is a selection from the series, "American Knights," a collection of songs written to inspire the next generation of heroes.

This song was written during the time of the shooting at Columbine High School. The music is an expression of the feelings and emotions he has experienced with the death of Cassie Bernall, the young woman who was killed because of her profession of her belief in God. Mr. Melillo admires Ms. Bernall as one of the "knights" battling the darkness of today. He dedicated this song in part to her heroism and also to the parents who support school music programs and inspire the heroes of the future.

"The Northwest All-District Band clinic and performance were fantastic. Steve Melillo unselfishly led the group into a great musical experience. His unique and dynamic approach to music inspired the students to strive not only for technical perfection, but more importantly, for the emotions that are the basis of music," said Mr. Alan Hutchcraft, NWMSU student.

Composition is not the only field of music that Mr. Melillo is involved in. His knowledge of music and corresponding subjects is that of no other person most people have met. Throughout the clinic, the knowledge that was obtained by the musicians will never be forgotten and constantly be used as their musical experiences continue.

"He is an exceptionally knowledgeable man. As well as being easily read, he's very intelligent in the history, math, and science fields. He incorporates this knowledge into his music which makes it so extraordinary," said Mrs. Heidi Dodd, band instructor at MHS.

It was not Mr. Melillo's knowledge or experiences that affected musicians on Saturday. It was the expression and depth that his music held. It was the outward portrayal of the love and passion that he has for music. Not only was it visible, it was contagious. The feelings, emotions, and depth his music holds was felt throughout not only the band, but the audience also.

"Watching him direct made the All-District Band concert one of the most powerful concerts I have ever seen," said Holly Wilmes '01.

As musicians left the concert Saturday night, there was not only a feeling of sadness, but a feeling of inspirational rebirth. Participants left with a new understanding and passion for music.

"He's one of the most inspirational people I have ever met. He makes you want to practice," said Shane Griffin, All-District Band member, Kearney, Mo.

This was a great last-birthday-in-the-1900's present!

It appeared in the Maryville (MO) Daily Forum on Thursday, 23 December 1999.

Godspeed!

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