Symphonic Band practices more than music in Cuba

BY KALI WOLKOW
OPINION EDITOR

Stepping away from the comfort of home and into a new culture or environment can often lead to unexpected situations. But when deciding to travel to Cuba over Spring Break, no one on the Northwestern College Symphonic Band knew that this step would send them down a rockslide of unpredictable events and unknown outcomes. Neither did they know that out of the dust would rise something even more beautiful than expected.

When the band’s director, Dr. Tim McGarvey, began hunting for a tour location for 2013, an unexpected opportunity came about when the band was invited by the National Band of Cuba to spend seven days touring the country and playing with them in the city of Havana. This opportunity was not to be taken for granted. Since 1960, the United States has had an embargo against Cuba that forbids Americans from entering the country without special invitations of this sort.

The band spent seven days in Cuba, but did little according to plan. Two days after the band’s arrival, Hugo Chávez, the President of Venezuela and good friend of Raul and Fidel Castro, current and previous presidents of Cuba; unexpectedly died. His death caused quite a stir in the fellow-Communist state of Cuba, and the country was declared to be in a state of “official mourning.” One term of this observance was that it would be illegal to produce any kind of music in the three days following Chavez’s death.

The symphonic band members were shocked to hear this news. Nevertheless, McGarvey said he was confident in the band’s calling to be in Cuba. “While our cancelled performances may be seen as missed opportunities to some, the band was able to invest more in specific relationships outside of our music,” McGarvey said. “I knew God still had great plans for us in Cuba.”

Despite these unfortunate circumstances, the band did perform two of its five originally planned concerts—one at a local music conservatory and another as originally planned with the National Band of Cuba. The band also delivered, donated and fundraised music supplies and Spanish Bibles to the musicians in these groups.

Junior Aaron DeBoer said he appreciated the balance of the trip. “I loved getting to both invest in the people of Cuba and have fun exploring their country,” he said. “I feel like it gave us a better picture of the life of the people we were meeting and serving.”

After returning to the States, the band spent another day volunteering at Youth for Christ of Greater Miami and the Broward Outreach Center in Hollywood, Florida.

Senior Charlotte Richards said the band learned some important lessons during their time in Cuba.

“I learned a lot from seeing how well many Cubans cared for the few possessions that they had,” she said. “They’re known for having really old vintage cars, and they take care of those cars because they’re all they have. Is your house wall crumbling? Paint over it and repair it. Our first instinct is to throw things out or replace them, but that wouldn’t be necessary if we didn’t take what we have for granted.”

Richards said the band had to adjust to a different cultural sense of time. “The trip was also a test in patience,” Richards said. “The band always talked about ‘Cuba Time’ and strived to embrace how relaxed and easygoing the atmosphere was.”

The band would like to thank everyone on campus for both their financial and spiritual support throughout the trip. “We truly couldn’t have done it without you,” McGarvey said.

The band would also like to invite any and all to their home concert at 7:30 p.m. this Friday, March 15, at in Christ Chapel. The concert will feature the pieces played throughout the band’s tour, as well as stories and testimonies from individual students about their experience abroad.
"Star Conflict" interesting, lacking

BY MICHAEL GUTSCHE

"Star Conflict" can most easily be described as "EVE Online" had an affair with "World of Tanks," and the baby grew up to be an attractive-but-shallow teenager who squandered his youth on revelry and lecherousness, eventually burning out and drunkenly driving off a bridge before landing in rehab."

Those words are being used across the internet whenever the game is discussed. Verbatim.

Free-to-play games that get released out of nowhere onto Steam have a habit of striking huge crowds for a few days and settling into a stable-but-considerably-smaller player-base, staying afloat on the bloated flippers of micro-transactions. This is like aspiring to be the best lint trap cleaning expert. Not exactly a lofty goal, but it excels in its own niche.

As Multiplayer PvP MMO-kind Games go, it'll do. This sort of game has a formula, and "Star Conflict" follows it rigidly. Small upgrades and slight alterations to each step up the tech tree. Ship and equipment names that don't change beyond adding a different letter or number. Hercules, Hercules 2, Hercules Arrow, Railguns Mk. I, Railguns Mk. II and so forth. This is common enough in eastern games, and even more so in science-fiction ones.

"Star Conflict" has learned a lot from both of its "proud" parents, "World of Tanks" and "EVE Online." Seeing familiar elements such as Kinetic, Thermal and Electromagnetic damage; variable resistances; lock-on timers; effective and optimum ranges, and so on evoked only a smile, as really, what do you expect? The tiers of ships, equipment and faction-based unlocking seem to have been stolen from "World of Tanks," but again, if you’re going to learn, learn from the best. WoT is doing something right, apparently.

Don’t get me wrong, its beautiful and immediately satisfying. It just lacks depth, competitively and casually. Turning on three different offensive modules to maximize rate of fire and damage output before unloading lasers into the enemy until they overheat feels pretty good.

The obviousness and somewhat generic nature of both the ships’ design and the general aesthetic gets offset a bit by how well-implemented it is. The game looks sharp and runs incredibly. Although space games don’t exactly have a lot to render, it’s certainly pretty. It’s no revolutionary science fiction art, but it does the generic cool-spaceship-with-lasers as well as I’ve ever seen.

There’s certainly more fluxuations and interesting gameplay going on here than your average free-to-play arena MMO. The customization and mechanical differences between flying an interceptor and flying a larger drone frigate are just significant enough to be engaging, but ultimately that small.

Even the default game modes are more creative than Deathmatch, Team Deathmatch, Capture the Flag, etc. Having a hangar of three ships that are distinct and customizable, but also can serve as the three lives afforded to each player.

"Neat." That’s the word for it. That is a pretty neat method of implementing the metagame. There’s a half-dozen-odd ways to play against or with one another, and that provides enough variety to keep things interesting.
‘Oz’ takes viewers on magical ride

BY MERIDEL WEITZ

Everyone is familiar with the magical story of Dorothy Gale crash-landing in the wonderful world of Oz, and everyone remembers her journey to the Emerald City, her attempts to get back to Kansas and all of the wonderful characters Dorothy and Toto encounter while they are off to see the Wizard. But who exactly is this Wizard of Oz, and what makes him so wonderful?

“Oz: The Great and Powerful” is the story of how the “Wonderful Wizard” came to the land of Oz. Before he became the man behind the curtain, Oscar Diggs (called “Oz” by those who worked with him) was a carnival magician, a con man and a womanizer. All that changes when he is whisked away in a hot air balloon by a mysterious tornado to a land of color – Kansas. He is an impostor to fulfill the prophecy that must be fulfilled. Oz knows he is the Wizard, it’s just a matter of when.

Although some might cringe at the idea of making a prequel to a beloved classic, there is plenty to like about the film. Oz is incredibly colorful. In fact, the movie seems to be nothing but color at times. The color comes from the exotic flora and fauna Oz is famous for in our imaginations. Butterfly trees, bell flowers, water fairies and other unnatural wonders are enjoyable and add to our notion of what the land of Oz should look like.

“Oz” is also good at telling the backstories of many familiar characters. Glinda, the Good Witch of the South is given plenty of explanation. Oz is the main character of the movie, and we learn a lot about how he became the Wonderful Wizard. But what might be the most interesting story line for some (especially those who are not familiar with the Broadway show “Wicked”), is the story of how the Wicked Witch of the West became a memorable villain.

All is not perfect in “Oz.” However, the story lines fall short of reaching their full potential in some places, and there are gaps in the story throughout the movie. If you were frightened by the flying monkeys when you were young, you haven’t seen anything yet. The Wicked Witch’s minions are now rabid, crazy, flying baboons with long teeth and a scream that would terrify anyone.

As for the movie: Oz himself (played by James Franco) is flat and boring at times. Because the audience already knows he stays in Oz and becomes the Wizard, it seems redundant to have him battle with himself over and over again for two hours about what he should do.

And don’t expect to find a bunch of munchkins singing songs about Munchkinland, yellow brick roads or wonderful wizards. There is hardly any singing and very little dancing. There is also a rather appalling lack of ruby slippers.

Although Oz might have changed since we first watched it as children, the lessons we learn there still ring true. Good will always triumph over evil, friendship can be found in the most unusual of places, and there is no place like home.

Rating: ★★★

James Franco returns to a magical, colorful world to reluctantly fulfill a prophecy in “Oz the Great and Powerful.”

MOVIE REVIEW

BY KARA NONNEMACHER

“Jack the Giant Slayer” is a spin-off of Jack and the Beanstalk, and this fantasy is predictably cliche.

Many will criticize the predictability of “Jack,” and viewers should not go into the movie expecting to be blown out of the water by originality. It’s a fairy tale, and all fairy tales follow the same predictable-yet-satisfying plotline.

Jack (Nicholas Hoult) happens upon a bag of magic beans on his way to the beans grow underneath Jack’s house and carry Isabelle away into the sky. The remainder of the film outlines the search and rescue of Isabelle by Jack and members of the royal guard. The group battles a brood of foul giants and confronts betrayal as well as produces Jack and Isabelle’s improbable romance.

There is nothing new about the events in “Jack the Giant Slayer,” but because of its fairy tale nature, this is acceptable. The variation of a childhood fairy tale is entertaining but far from a home run.

The intentions of the film’s producers remain in question, but the most pressing question is who is supposed to watch it? The film is rated PG-13 for a good reason. Any 5-year-old — or any 10-year-old for that matter — who is hoping to see a cute rendition of one of their favorite bedtime stories is not going to enjoy this movie. The giants will scare children with both their fierce battle cries and their violent habits.

But “Jack the Giant Slayer” isn’t engaging enough to attract the older crowd either. It strikes an old chord between a “Shrek”-type fairy tale with “Lord of the Rings”-type violence. The producers try hard to incorporate the technological capabilities in making the giants but sacrifice the young audience in the process.

The film is enjoyable, but its confused identity will keep it from experiencing the fairy tale success the producers hoped for.

Rating: ★★

MOVIE REVIEW

A combination of terrifying monsters and childish dialogue makes “Jack the Giant Slayer” inaccessible for any age group.
Features  
Students follow command to serve

Katie Raab and Sarah Jones (above) clean up after a painting project in New Orleans.

At a basketball game, Spencer Groeneweg (above) makes friends with a young boy in Cary, Mississippi.

Abbi McDonald (above) helps a little friend at the after school program in Jonesboro, Arkansas.

Students (above) climb Mt. Josephine in Grand Portage, Minnesota on a day off.

The Compton, California team (above) stands in front of the fellowship hall they painted for a local church.

All Mathis (above) plays outside with some school girls at an elementary school in Haiti.

Students in Amsterdam (above) stand in front of the Jordan Shelter where they served throughout the week cleaning, preparing meals and sharing the Gospel.

At a basketball game, Spencer Groeneweg (above) makes friends with a young boy in Cary, Mississippi.

PHOTOS SUBMITTED
International Club celebrates campus culture

International Club, or I-Club, has been a part of Northwestern for many years. Now, members of the group are bringing something new to campus March 18-22: International Week.

“This is the first year of International Week,” said I-Club leader sophomore Trevor Delamater. “The games are a way of breaking cultural barriers in an easy way that will get people interested.”

I-Club leader senior Bekah Wicks originally had the idea for International Olympics. “I lived in Alaska for 12 and a half years, and we had native Olympics in there,” Wicks said. “We did all these different games that were so cool. I thought ‘I’m sure other cultures have different games.’ Students don’t always want to sit down and hear things about different cultures, but I thought maybe if they actively participated they would want to learn in that way.”

A movie night with discussion will take place on Tuesday. The I-Club leaders plan to show “Babette’s Feast.” They said their hope is that the movie night will be coordinated with D-Groups. After the movie is played, groups will receive a list of questions to discuss.

Delamater said “Babette’s Feast” tells the story of a French woman who is a refugee in a tiny community on the Dutch coast. “The movie works through a lot of intercultural perceptions,” said Delamater, adding that it’s also quite humorous. “People don’t have to worry that this will be a very difficult movie to watch. It’s a good movie to watch because it facilitates conversation and raises issues about cultural differences and how we interact with others. We want to see how that could be relevant to our lives at Northwestern.”

Thursday and Friday will be nights of preparation for the Ethnic Fair. I-Club members said they hope to facilitate discussion about different cultures through cooking. “We need a lot of food for the ethnic fair, and we need people to help cook the food,” McMahan said. “By cooking with other people, we can teach about other people’s cultures.”

Wicks echoed this sentiment. “Food brings people together,” Wicks said. “You have more conversations in the kitchen than sitting in a forced discussion session. So we thought it’d be really great to include the campus community in making food for the Ethnic Fair.”

I-Club will host its annual Ethnic Fair on Saturday to wrap up International Week. As is tradition, there will be a buffet with authentic Japanese, Korean, South African, Vietnamese, Canadian, Thai, Colombian and German food. Entertainment will include native dances, songs and storytelling, a fashion show that features students wearing the traditional clothing of their home countries and a “Chopstick Challenge,” that tests contestants skill with chopsticks.

“I-Club members said they hope International Week and the Ethnic Fair will make it clear to students that I-Club is not exclusive to international students. “I-Club’s main goal is to provide opportunities for international students and all other students to meet and understand each other,” Ho said. “People get confused that I-Club is only for international students, but they don’t realize that as part of America, they’re part of the international group, too.”

Ho said that everyone is a part of the global village. “Because of all the people’s cultures.” Wicks agrees and admits that it is a big feat to approach new people.

“It’s huge to step outside of your bubble,” Wicks said. “We can say that we have friends who are international or are of a different ethnicity, but do we really understand their culture? International Week, Ethnic Fair and I-Club are all chances to experience culture first hand without having to step on a boat or fly across the world.”
Serve others smarter

Let me guess: You have a greater desire to serve God’s kingdom after going on an SSP? I bet I’m right because year after year SSPs tend to spur students toward continued service work.

I want NW students to serve outside of 10 days in March, but I want us to do it in a way that bears fruit. As you plan service projects during Easter Break or with your wing, I hope you keep a few things in mind so that our common goal of bringing the Kingdom to others can be effectively pursued.

First, let’s understand mission work is not the same thing as a good deed. What Jesus was really saying is as if they are incapable of doing it themselves. Second, understand the type of help or aid you’re providing through the organization. Is it relief, rehabilitation or development?

Relief is what’s given after a crisis when basic needs have to be met. Rehabilitation is the process of turning aid-provision over to the community. Development is what most long-term missions are interested in, and that means creating self-sustaining programs.

What usually happens on our half-planned trips is relief, which means one-way giving. That’s fine if you were flying to New Orleans two days after Hurricane Katrina, but it is not OK to still freely give out clothes years later.

As Robert Lupton says in Toxic Charity, “Giving to those in need what they could be gaining from their own initiative may well be the kindest way to destroy people.” Don’t give someone jeans when they need is a ride to the thrift store to purchase clothing with dignity. Don’t give a beggar your change when what he needs is to be taught how to properly access his education records for a job application.

Jesus told his disciples that they would fish for men. “For” does not mean that we stick the poles in the water for people as if they are incapable of doing it themselves. Thirdly, our service has to be mutually planned with the community we are helping. This includes both the long-term organizations and the community leaders. It might be a pastor, a coach or the owner of the corner drug store. Do not fall into the “Great White Hope” trap of going into an area with our ideas of what “they need.” It is insulting to the community’s awareness of its own shortcomings.

Books such as When Helping Hurts by Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert tell horror stories of orphanages getting painted six times a summer or new church buildings constructed and never used. Don’t go into a project with an idea of what you want to do. Instead, ask what you can do for those you’re serving.

My goal is not to discourage you from planning these life-changing trips, but rather to encourage you to do them smarter. Your SSP was probably really beneficial for you because your leader did a lot of these steps behind the scenes.

It is time that Christians stop hanging their hats on good intentions and start to look hard at the results and decide if we are tangibly making a difference in the world. Let us be the hands and feet of Christ, but let us do it appropriately, efficiently and lovingly.

I see every morning, I start to realize how big the world is and how small I am. Many times, I find myself running across the street because of impatient drivers – crosswalks aren’t quite as revered as they are in Orange City. Pedestrians are unobservant, and the drivers are reckless.

Cars and buses whip around corners, and taxi cabs pull U-turns in the middle of the street. However, even with all of these cars buzzing around, I’ve yet to see any collisions. I frequently catch myself standing tensely on the bus or tube ready to grab the bar at any moment to prevent myself from flying into the lap of a fellow rider. Although falling into the lap of an attractive person could make a good movie plot, when it happens in real life it tends to make everyone feel awkward.

Sometimes I regret the hustle of London. I love the richness of the city, but sometimes it seems too overwhelming to take everything in.

I’ve made a promise to myself: I will keep my feet moving and my eyes open to witness as much as I can.

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NW surprised in first round

CAL-MARITIME DROPS NO. 4 RAIDERS IN OPENING GAME AT NAIA TOURNAMENT

BY JORDAN DYKSTRA

The Raider men’s basketball team fell to Cal Maritime 76-54 on March 7 at the NAIA National Championship in Point Lookout, Mo. With the first-round defeat, the Raiders ended their season with a 24-7 record. Northwestern came out flat and never recovered from the early slump. The Keelhaulers opened the game on a 9-2 run and continued to build on their success to halftime, by which time they led the Raiders 32-18. It proved to be too much for NW to overcome.

Like he did many times throughout the season, senior guard Ben Miller led the Raiders in scoring with a game-high 23 points. Miller also grabbed 11 rebounds. No other Raider managed to reach double figures in scoring. Apart from Miller, the squad only managed to score 31 points.

“We were never able to get into a rhythm offensively,” Miller said. “We played the game at their pace and weren’t able to put pressure on them.”

The Raiders shot only 28 percent from the field, which marked a season low. They also shot a mere 23 percent from three-point range during 5 of their 22 attempts.

“It simply came down to the fact that we expected it to be an easy game and they came out ready to play against us being a highly ranked team,” said senior post Daniel Van Kalsbeek.

For the squad’s five seniors, Miller, Van Kalsbeek, Stu Goslinga, Jacey Hoegh and Josh Vander Plaat, it marked their final game in the Red Raider uniform. This senior class compiled a 57-38 career record at NW.

Three National Tournament appearances and two GPAC titles were the highlights for this group of seniors. All received playing time in multiple years during their careers. Van Kalsbeek was GPAC Freshman of the Year in 2010 and picked up his third All-America honorable mention this season. Miller received three All-America accolades as well.

“It has been an extremely fast but extremely fun four years,” said senior forward Jacey Hoegh. “I have shared a lot of awesome moments and memories with some great teammates.”

Some of those memories include on-court success.

“Reaching the National Tournament for the third-straight year, as well as winning another conference title, made for a very successful year,” said senior guard Josh Vander Plaat. “It was unfortunate with the way it ended, but we made a lot of great memories along the way.”

“It was great building these relationships for the past four years, even if we never did win a championship,” said senior post Stu Goslinga.

“It has been very enjoyable watching our team compete and improve throughout the season,” Miller said.

Miller finished his career as NW’s seventh all-time leading scorer with 1,803 career points. He finished fourth with 915 rebounds and eighth in assists with 447.

Van Kalsbeek finished ninth all-time with 1,770 points and 1,061 rebounds per contest. All-time with 1,770 points and 1,061 rebounds per contest. De Jong. She led the Raiders in scoring and rebounding throughout the season, with averages of 18 points and 11 rebounds per contest.

That work ethic earned her both the NAIA Division-II Player of the Year and GPAC Player of the Year. It will not be the hardware that lives on in DeVong’s mind, though.

“I think one of the most memorable moments was it would be together on the court and we needed a big stop, and we would play an awesome defensive possession,” DeVong said. “Those are the things I want to be remembered as being a part of.”

The Raiders were no strangers to the sort of come-from-behind situation they were confronted with in the semi-final game. They had come back from many double-digit deficits to win games all season, and during their tournament run to the Final Four. Their experience did not help them in the overtime battle, which NW lost 28-18.

Regardless of the season’s final outcome, this NW team can brag of their companionship, as they feel they have grown closer than other teams in the past.

“When I first came here, I thought it was really cool to see how close the team was,” said senior Mallory Cunaard. “I think every year I’ve been in the program this team has gotten closer and closer. There is not one person on the team that I don’t genuinely love, and I would do anything for.”

Yaw commented on the different leadership styles.

“Our senior leaders (De Jong and Cunaard), are both tremendous leaders,” Yaw said. “They lead in their own unique way. We don’t grow the way we did without these young ladies investing in each other and their relationships.”
Around Campus

Tryouts to begin for chance to win $500 NC/DC prize

Tryouts for the singing competition, NC/DC, between Dordt and Northwestern will be held Monday, March 18, from 8 to 10 p.m. on campus.

The annual singing contest usually brings in around 20 Northwestern hopefuls. Individuals and groups with any level of musical talent are encouraged to sign up.

“For tryouts, we understand that there may not be enough time for students to put everything together that they have in mind for the preliminaries,” said student coordinator junior Alexis Graves. “If that is the case, singing a cappella or an acoustic version will give us a good idea of your talent.”

After tryouts, the NC/DC committee will select 12 groups or individuals to send on to the preliminary round, which will take place at 9 p.m. on Friday, March 22, in Christ Chapel. NW students will vote online for the top five performances during the 2011 NC/DC competition.

Finals will take place on Saturday, April 20, in the Bultman Center. The top four finalists will be announced and will perform two musical numbers. Voting will take place at the finals, during which the six semi-finalists will perform. A special guest judge and performer will be present at the final round.

The winner of NC/DC will win a $500 cash prize.

Students prepare for Justice Week

Justice Week starts Monday, March 18, and ends Friday, March 22.

Justice Week is a week-long event that focuses on raising awareness and getting students involved in justice issues that are going on around them. Senior Kayla Johnson is the coordinator responsible for planning the week’s events.

“Justice Week is a focused week on reconciliation where we take time to talk about issues in our culture and how we can make a difference,” Johnson said. “We are having discussion times with different people such as Chris Heuertz (senior strategist for the nonprofit organization Word Made Flesh), professors and other students. This allows us to hear from different backgrounds and opinions on how we can all play our part in advocating for others.”

To kick off the week, Heuertz will speak in chapel on Monday about his organization that is dedicated to reconciling the church to the world’s poor. A discussion will follow in Vermeer South at 7:00 p.m.

Tuesday, Heuertz will continue his discussion on Word Made Flesh in chapel. An informational luncheon will follow with representatives of various justice and service organizations at noon in Vermeer South. Students are encouraged to meet with different organizations to get involved.

On Wednesday, there will be another informational lunch at 11 a.m. in Vermeer South. That night faculty and staff will be hosting discussions in their homes at 7 p.m.

On Thursday, at 10:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. there will be a service project packaging food in the RSC Mall.

Students package meals for those in need during a past year’s Justice Week.

Justice Week leader. “The organizations really encourage seniors that are looking for internships.”

Smith said Justice Week is a way to discuss and learn. It also gives students the opportunity to participate in a service project.