Written by Mike Schulz
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On the list of things that are tough to get youths on board with - right up there with meeting curfew and putting down their cell phones - attending the ballet has to rank near the top. Consequently, Ballet Quad Cities Executive Director Joedy Cook has, for years, been bringing the ballet to them.

"The majority of our performance now has some type of outreach component," Cook says of Ballet Quad Cities' public output, "whether we have a special school matinée, or we have programs that we go into schools with."

So when the time came to prepare *Ballet Rocks II* - a follow-up to last autumn's high-energy, rock-heavy collaboration between local rockers and Ballet Quad Cities - Cook was looking to capture the attention and interest of younger audiences, and to showcase her organization's second company of high-school dancers.

Cook says that "in the process of trying to find a good collaboration - a good ‘in' to youth - what I thought would be perfect is if we could find a young, up-and-coming band to be a part of this, and to incorporate our second company" in the show.

Enter the Siyg.

Until recently, the band - featuring Jared Wuerzburger (lead vocals/rhythm guitar), Logan McDaniel (lead guitar), Chris Harkins (bass/vocals), Dave Soliz (drums/vocals), and Jake Palmer (piano) - was best known for their youth, as all of the Siyg's musicians are in high school or college. That, and for having an odd band name with an odd pronunciation. (It's pronounced

"sigh.")

But since the April release of the group's debut CD, *Here & Now, Now or Never*, awareness of the Siyg has markedly increased - the
River Cities' Reader
's
Jeff Ignatius wrote, "The Siyg puts a premium on vocal and instrumental melody and texture. ... The CD runs the gamut from warm, Hootie-like pop to more muscular rock, and is adept at both." - and for Cook, this was exactly the "in" she was seeking.

"It's a perfect fit," she says of the youthful pairing between dancers and musicians. "Because these kids are so committed to their art forms - they're so young, they're *so* committed, they're *s o*
passionate, they love it so dearly - that they maybe don't even know how talented they really are."

Wuerzburger reveals that the group's roots began with McDaniel and Soliz in 2004, when both were students at Alleman High School. The duo subsequently added Harkins to the mix, and Wuerzburger was invited to jam in March 2005, after the trio heard him sing the National Anthem at a basketball game. (Palmer joined the Siyg shortly after *Here & Now, Now or Never*'s release.)

"He [Harkins] heard me and asked if I was into rock music," Wuerzburger says, "and I said yeah. Did I play any instruments? Yeah, I play guitar. So I came over and we practiced for a while, and after a couple weeks we started getting some material down."

(They also got a band name, but good luck getting its meaning from Wuerzburger. "It's kind of an inside joke," he says, "and I'm kind of not allowed to say what it is. Sorry.")

Admitting that "after a while, playing in the basement gets a little old," Wuerzburger says the group was looking to perform publicly, and chose to promote themselves through a CD. "We decided we needed to record something so we could give some kind of *product* to people," he says, "so they'd know what we sounded like before they had us play."

Through new compositions and songs previously composed by McDaniel, Soliz, and Harkins, Wuerzburger says, "We kind of evolved. After a while we started getting a little bit better and we had more material, and soon we had a 12-song disc."

Advertised through the Siyg's Myspace page (http://www.myspace.com/thesiyg), *Here & Now, Now or Never*
captured the attention of a steadily growing group of fans, one of whom was friends with Joedy Cook.

Having enjoyed the recommended CD, Cook's inspiration was to have the Siyg perform before the show, accompany the second company in an opening number - after which the Metrolites would again accompany Ballet Quad Cities' professional dancers - and play during intermission, a notion embraced not only by Ballet Quad Cities Artistic Director Matthew Keefe, but also by the Siyg.

"I did a lot of drama in high school," says Wuerzburger, "so I've been interested in the performing arts. And the ballet is something I never really witnessed, so I thought that maybe it'd be kind of a cool idea. It's kind of neat to have your music depicted in a different *form*, especially in dance."

As *Ballet Rocks II* would feature new music from the Metrolites, and new choreography by Keefe and Dan Stark, Keefe asked the band members whether they, too, had any new offerings to share. They did, and presented him with a recording of four previously unheard tracks.

"I got with the second-company dancers," says Keefe, "and we all kind of collectively decided which one we wanted to use, which one we all responded to. And we all agreed on a track they gave us called ‘A Noise Too Loud.'"

According to Wuerzburger, who wrote the song, "A Noise Too Loud" is "about getting through what life throws at you. About trying to find the *strength* to get through whatever gets thrown at you," and Wuerzburger thinks he understands its appeal for the
Ballet Rocks

dancers.

"It has three different segments in it," he says, "which is probably the reason they picked it. It almost has, like, three songs in one. It's got a faster upbeat at the very beginning - it's a little aggressive - and the middle part is a little bit slower, and the end returns to that *up*beat again. And they're all in the same key, so they mesh perfectly."

Keefe admits that "A Noise Too Loud," as choreographed, does give the second company "a very high-level dance," with seven performers dancing on pointe (the toes of the dancers' footwear) - no easy feat. Yet he's quick to add that, regardless of the dance opportunities offered, he and the company were primarily sold on the Siyg's *music*. "I think that they've got talent beyond their years," he says.

With the *Ballet Rocks II* performances and a CD that Wuerzburger says should be released "in a month-and-a-half or so," the Siyg is generating awareness with almost intimidating speed, which the lead vocalist says is more than surprising - it's *necessary*.

"We don't have as much time [to perform together] as you'd actually think. A lot of us are going away to school eventually. I mean, three of us are at Black Hawk, and Dave - he's still at Alleman - is graduating this year."

So will the Siyg continue after the band members' respective graduations?

"I don't know for sure," says Wuerzburger, who pauses before adding, "Of course, we'd like a bigger fan base."

Ballet Rocks II *will be performed at the Capitol Theatre Friday, October 6, through Sunday, October 8. For tickets, call (309) 794-7306.*