Fundraisers and all that Jazz

By Christopher Fretz
Staff Writer

Anne Gross just wanted people to dance. Gross, a voice instructor at EMU, repeatedly encouraged the audience at Friday’s “Taste of Love” jazz concert to dance, and halfway through, some brave audience members finally did.

The concert was a fundraiser for the music department scholarship, and was a valentine-themed performance of jazz music.

Gross acted as master of ceremonies for the concert, and sang the majority of the songs as well. She was backed up by Mark Whetzel on guitar, Tom Harbeck on bass guitar, and Marlon Foster on percussion.

Whetzel and Foster are adjunct professors at EMU, and all three musicians occasionally perform locally. They covered a variety of mainly classic jazz songs dealing with themes of love and relationships. Gross emphasized that they were not only love songs, but also songs about “the one that got away.”

Marie Morris was also featured as a solo vocalist on several songs. At the beginning of the concert, Gross invited the audience to be comfortable, to feel free to get up and socialize, and to feel free to dance. Included in the concert was a half-hour intermission for both the audience and musicians to socialize and have dessert. Their selection of desserts included cheesecake, chocolate silk pie, raspberry truffle, brownies, and baklava. A variety of hot teas and coffee were also offered.

“The dessert is a special addition to the concert,” Gross said. “It adds a little more luxury to the evening.”

After intermission Gross continued to encourage the audience to dance, and after receiving no response, went into the audience, pulled a student from the front row, and began dancing with him. Several other couples followed Gross’s example, and Gross resumed singing during the following song.

Students, faculty, staff, and community members made up the audience for the concert fundraiser. Gross was glad to see interest and support in the music department.

“I hope people are aware of what the music department is doing and enjoy what we have to offer,” she said.

The scholarship is offered for students in music majors and a committee holds auditions for the scholarship every year. Auditions for next year’s hopefuls will be held at the end of February.

Audience response to the concert and Gross’s performance were very positive.

“I enjoyed watching Anne between songs,” said alumna Kirsten Beachy. “She had some really funny facial expressions.”

Senior Joanna Doyle was emphatic about the performance. She said, “It was a great night of jazz with a smooth drummer, two inspired guitarists, and Anne stole the show with her playfully, sexy vocals.”