

RATON ~ NEW MEXICO NEWS



Grand Dérangement fiddler Daniel LeBlanc duels guitarist Charles Robicheau at the Shuler Theater Tuesday night.



Bassist Jean-Pascal Comeau step-dances to the propulsive rhythms of fiddler Daniel LeBlanc and Grand Dérangement.



Photos by Tim Keller

Sticks flying, percussionist Briand Melanson propels Grand Dérangement at the Shuler Theater Tuesday night.

Canada's Grand Dérangement ignites the Shuler Theater

By Tim Keller
The Chronicle-News

Only a dead person could have sat still through Grand Dérangement's two-set show at the Shuler Theater Tuesday night: the band's propulsive rhythms kept the audience in constant motion, feet tapping, hands slapping knees in time to the impressive rhythm section and attractive step dancers.

Being the Shuler Theater, the audience did all this while sitting in their seats, although they finally jumped to their feet at show's end to give the Canadian band a standing ovation. Playing to a packed house, the four musicians and two dancers performed a wide variety of music under dynamically changing lighting designs, singing three-part harmonies in both English and their native French.

Created in 1998 in their small town of St. Mary's Bay in southwestern Nova Scotia, Grand Dérangement has spent much of the past decade touring the United States, Europe, and their native Canada. The years of one-nighters have honed their show to a tightly-choreographed and highly-entertaining mix of visual and musical elements.

The show opened with just two men on stage, percussionist Briand Melanson sitting on the

wooden box that acted as his drum while violinist Daniel LeBlanc played a lovely droning fiddle tune. The group's two founders then upshifted into a rousing dance tune, joined by Jean-Pascal Comeau on five-string electric bass and Charles Robicheau on a sometimes scintillating electric guitar; all four men dressed entirely in black. Shifting into yet another tune, they were joined by the group's two step dancers, Suzanne Comeau and Danielle LeBlanc. It was a big and effective opener.

In a constantly shifting presentation, players changed instruments and locations on stage throughout the night. One highlight was a duet between Melanson and Ms. LeBlanc (or was it Ms. Comeau - they looked like twin sisters) - Melanson beating out incessant rhythms on the front lip of the stage floor while the dancer wove intricate tap-dancing to the drummer's beats, thrilling the crowd when the shoes and drumsticks appeared to physically intermingle.

The two co-founders traded off in engaging the audience in banter. Trying to determine whether anyone could understand their French lyrics, LeBlanc threw the audience a question in French. He got one enthusiastic response, but it

appeared to come from his own sound man at the back of the theater. Later, he had fun trying to get the audience to sing along - in French - on a song called "Marietta".

Lighting was used to good effect throughout the show, shifting often and adding to the high-energy impact of the music and band. Oddly, though the spotlight looked good on everyone else, it always turned LeBlanc's face green: perhaps the lighting designer doesn't like him; or maybe, not being from these parts, LeBlanc doesn't get enough beef.

The musicianship was top notch, the band never letting its professional polish get in the way of exciting interplay, experimentation, and improvisation. Lead guitarist Robicheau, playing through a Mesa Boogie tube amp on loan from Stan Lark, repeatedly thrilled, sometimes moving front center to play in a well-earned spotlight.

Grand Dérangement's crowd-pleasing concert was the latest in a season of uniformly entertaining shows presented by the Raton Arts and Humanities Council. Next up is "Gilligan's Island - The Musical" on the night of April Fool's Day. No joke.

Richardson plans college on special session agenda

By BARRY MASSEY
Associated Press Writer

SANTA FE (AP) - The future of the College of Santa Fe will be considered in a special session of the Legislature that's likely to be held later this year, Gov. Bill Richardson said Tuesday.

The governor made the announcement in appointing members of a task force which will make recommendations to him by the end of April on options for keeping the school operating. The financially troubled private school is expected to close in May.

"Our objective is to keep the College of Santa Fe going forever," Richardson said at a news conference on the school's campus.

The event resembled a pep rally, with students cheering loudly as Richardson and others declared their support for the school.

A bill authorizing a state takeover of the four-year school failed in the 2009 Legislature. New Mexico Highlands University wanted to acquire the college.

Richardson said the school was "so valuable to our state that we must do whatever it takes to keep it open." He said the liberal arts college was well-known for its dance, film and theater programs and

described it as "an economic engine" for the city of Santa Fe.

Richardson said he will put the college on the agenda of a special session that's expected to be held on budget matters. No date has been set for the session although the governor and legislators have suggested it might be in the fall.

The state will get a new revenue forecast in July and it's likely to indicate the state will receive less money than expected in the coming year. That could force lawmakers to revise the 2010 budget, which was approved by lawmakers last week and sent to Richardson to be signed into law.

The 31-member task force includes community leaders, such as Santa Fe Mayor David Coss; legislators; state agency administrators; the executive director of the New Mexico Finance Authority; the president of Santa Fe Community College and officials from four of the state's four-year universities: Highlands, the University of New Mexico, New Mexico State University and New Mexico Tech.

Robin Martin, editor and publisher of the Santa Fe New Mexico, is a member as well as students and top executives of the College of Santa Fe.

Actress Ali McGraw will serve on the task force along with others from the Santa Fe

arts community, such as the executive director of the Lensic Performing Arts Center. Garrett Thornburg, a Santa Fe investment executive and chairman of the Thornburg Companies, will represent the New Mexico School for the Arts, a residential public charter school for the performing and visual arts that's scheduled to open next fall.

Richardson's deputy chief of staff, Bruce Perlman, is chairman of the study group.

Legislative members include Sen. John Arthur Smith, a Deming Democrat and chairman of the Finance Committee, who opposed the state takeover proposal during the session; Sen. Peter Wirth, D-Santa Fe; and Rep. Luciano "Lucky" Varela, D-Santa Fe, a graduate of the college who sponsored the takeover legislation. The House approved the measure but it died in the Finance Committee.

Although the committee did not hold a hearing on the takeover bill, the takeover was debated by the Senate when it defeated a proposal to earmark \$3 million for operating the school if it became part of the state's higher education network.

On the Net:
College of Santa Fe:
<http://www.csfedu/>

Short meeting for Raton Commission

Continued from page 1

1991 truck with funds from wild land fires last year. The department can also see a 50 percent saving by equipping the truck with fire equipment locally than having the truck come already equipped.

City Manager Mileta informed commissioners that they should be able to approve a form for items from citizens present that can go on the agenda to inform people what will be on the agenda.

Mileta noted the response from Ratonians has been positive with regard to the new radar signs in town. The signs are used as a speed calming measure and were purchased using Grip 2 funds. Mileta also noted that the self insurers fund will be giving back \$3 million to its members. The amount will be determined on a points system and are mostly from workers compensation premiums.

Mileta told commissioners

that Governor Richardson signed Senate Bill 443 today that effectively took away \$200,000 from Raton that had been earmarked for the Dispatch center. Raton had hoped to divert the money to the softball field to finish that project.

Commissioners then went into executive session to discuss property for Racing at Raton.

The next commission meeting will be at 5 p.m., April 14.

Des Moines High School Announces Honor Roll

By Tim Keller
The Chronicle-News

Des Moines High School announced its honor roll Wednesday for the third quarter of the current school year. Students in grades 7-12 must earn a grade average of 3.40 or higher to earn a berth on the honor roll. They may not have any grade of incomplete or less than a B.

Seniors on the honor roll are Amaris Newkirk, with a 3.8 average, and Tremor Atwater, 3.75.

Juniors include Lyndi Owensby and Myra Newkirk, each with a 4.0 average, and Tommy Newkirk, 3.8; Shane

Bramblett, 3.75; Dani Wingo, 3.6; and Tabor Martinez, 3.43.

Sophomores are Jake Doherty and Jon Cruz with 4.0 averages; Kelsey Towndrow, 3.86; Anahy Escobar, 3.71; and TJ Simpson, Riata Rivale, and Rhodi Martin, all with 3.43 averages.

Freshman Jenna Gilbert earned a 4.0 average. Freshmen Austin Vincent, Shayla Martin, and Cassidy Doherty all earned 3.68, while Emilio Cisneros achieved a 3.47 average.

Seventh-grader Anthony Brown was honored for his 3.71 average, as was classmate Darweesh Zmily with a 3.57 average.

County Commissioners accept Blosser Gap Bridge design proposal

By LAURA L. BREWER
The Chronicle-News

At Tuesday's meeting County Commissioners approved the proposal presented by KS Berry Engineering for the design of a new bridge on County Road A-11, known as the Blosser Gap Bridge. According to engineer Scott Berry, three bridges in the county have several years of deficit reports from the New Mexico Department of Transportation, and present liability issues with unsafe conditions; Gardner Road Bridge, Miami Lane Bridge, and the Blosser Gap Bridge.

Berry recommended that if the county budget would not allow studies at all three locations, the Blosser Gap Bridge would be the best candidate for replacement because of its poor condition and high usage. The bridge at this time even has a sign at both ends warning those wanting to cross the bridge to proceed at their own risk. Commissioner Hite expressed concern about accepting only part of the proposal. But, because the proposals presented three different designs for each bridge, the commissioners were able to accept the proposal



(Photo by Laura L. Brewer)

Blosser Gap Bridge on County Road A-11 will be the first of three bridges to receive repair.

for only one of the bridges.

Berry explained that questions have arisen as to whether the bridge could be replaced with round cement culverts instead of a bridge, a much more expensive solution. However, because the area beneath the bridge would need to accommodate at least 17,000 cubic feet per second of water to meet NMDOT specifications,

it would require eighteen to twenty culverts to handle that velocity because each ten foot culvert will handle only 1500 square feet of water.

The proposal for the Blosser Gap Bridge design was for a total of \$39,580.88. Commissioner Hite suggested that the county accept the proposal for the Blosser Gap and use it to determine cost and

possible complications before proceeding with the other two bridges. It was reported that the bridge has an alignment issue, but it could possibly continue in use while the other bridge is being constructed, thereby allowing local residents access to their properties without a much longer detour. There was no mention of when the construction would begin.



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