

Six Appeal thrills with singing, dancing, comedy at Shuler

By Tim Keller — For the Comet | Posted: Tuesday, May 5, 2015 1:15 am

RATON – Raton Arts & Humanities Council’s annual Performing Arts Series at the Shuler Theater scored another success Friday night when Minneapolis vocal band Six Appeal quickly won over a large audience with its big sound, winning personalities, and laugh-out-loud humor.

The a cappella band devotes one voice to “vocal percussion” and another to emulating an electric bass. That leaves three voices to layer harmonies above and below a lead voice, with all six members getting turns in the lead position. They use no instruments beyond the human voice, and no recorded backing tracks.

Six Appeal applied its sound to well-known songs from Michael Bublé, the Doobie Brothers, Van Morrison, Michael Jackson, Queen, and Gloria Gaynor, along with film themes from “The Lion King” and “Despicable Me 2.”

A highlight came when they set down their microphones and stood close together at the front of the stage to sing Billy Joel’s “And So It Goes” like a church hymn performed by a circle of six young men on a New Jersey street corner in the 1950s. At the song’s close, the six-part harmony faded with the final syllable and a woman in the second row was heard saying, “Perfect.” She was right.

The band is used to skepticism, though, for its vocal rhythm section, that is so good many assume they’re sneaking recorded tracks into the mix. So, they brought vocal percussionist Andrew “Berko” Berkowitz to center stage where he demonstrated his craft by playing, with only his voice, a bass drum. Then he added a snare drum. One at a time, he added a hi-hat cymbal, then tom-toms, then crash cymbals and ride cymbals. Finally, he performed a convincing—and astonishing—drum solo, all from just his mouth and microphone.

Next, Berko demonstrated the difference between that vocal percussion and the skill of beat-boxing, in which the singer emulates a DJ with a turntable. He sounded so real that he even had little scratches in the record he was playing...with his voice.



The Minneapolis vocal group Six Appeal hams it up during an April 24 performance at the Shuler Theater.

The group’s comedy included exaggerated exhaustion from dancing at high altitude.

Big dreadlocked bass voice and “bass player” Rueben Hushagen filled out the rhythm section while leader Michael Brookens sang mid-tenor, Jordan Roll sang low tenor, and Nathan Hickey sang baritone. The only member not from the far northern Midwest, Floridian Trey Jones sang low tenor and provided more than his share of the evening’s laughter, often based on a Floridian moving to the relative tundra of Minnesota.

The six members produced a big powerful sound while also dancing around the stage in constantly shifting choreography that sometimes crossed over into humor. Twice, they finished physically demanding dance routines to feign an inability to continue, knocked out by such exertion at 6,600 feet of elevation. They milked it for laugh after laugh, but soon they were dancing and singing again.

When the audience realized that the show was over, it rose to a standing ovation and won an encore of “You Are My Sunshine.” The show was a good example of why so many people buy season tickets to RAHC’s dependable Performing Arts Series. The final show this season is “Close to You: The Music of the Carpenters” featuring Lisa Rock and a six-piece band, arriving at the Shuler May 12.