

Music from Over Here Helps the Soldiers Over There

By Tucker Nickols ↴ November 1, 2012



Fighting the War on Terror armed with music, staff member Amy Layhew transitioned into her alternative life as an Airman in the Air National Guard last summer. Days before her students crossed the stage in May, she boarded a military aircraft headed to an undisclosed location in the Middle East. “The jobs are so different; you have to mentally switch gears and make sure you are mentally and physically prepared for deployment,” Layhew said. “Something that is unique to Guardsmen.”

As a citizen, Layhew works as an administrator at the Brentwood campus; as an Airman, she is a technical sergeant in the 566th Air Force Band. The band, called “Vector” or “Permanent Party” during rock gigs, was deployed with the mission to win hearts and minds. “Bands rotate every forty five to ninety days,” Layhew said, “our unit had boots on the ground for forty five days.” However, unlike most rock bands, they would not be riding first class or sporting leather jackets with tight jeans. In fact, there would be little extravagance on this band’s tour.

Layhew’s ten-year enlistment began when one of her brothers told her about an opening for a clarinet in the band. “He wanted me to try out, like any band, only this band came with basic training,” Layhew said. “I always knew I wanted to serve, there’s something romantic about wearing the uniform, but there’s also the fear of the unknown.”

Vector spent six days in Afghanistan, the first four at Bagram Airfield. The band organized themselves behind the nurse’s station at the base’s hospital for their first performance. They played during a normal shift so doctors and nurses could come and go as the job allowed.



The number of spectators, which started at about fifteen, soon tripled, and as the show went on the staff began to loosen up. “They were able to let their bearing down and dance in uniform. Sometimes its easy to lose your sense of self while part of a large organization,” Layhew said. “The music is a reminder of home, allowing you to feel like yourself again.” The mission to boost morale with music was successful, even among the toughest of crowds. “Caring for the wounded day in and day out is one of the

most stressful military jobs I can think of. I'm responsible for my clarinet; they're responsible for a life," Layhew said.



They also played for a Navy F18 ground crew at Bagram. The tent that the band set up in, dubbed the "Clam Shell," cut off the band's air flow, leaving occupants with no relief from the heat. Some of the ground crew asked if the band would prefer the tent walls removed. Doing so exposed the back engine of an F18, which they turned around to make for a better backdrop Layhew explained. "It was awesome to watch them do their job. It took teamwork and effort to move that jet, but teamwork is needed to complete any mission, not just in the military," Layhew said.

With dawn also came a sand storm. "Sand and dirt got in everything," Layhew said. With her eyes closed, she played with one hand, safeguarding her music sheets with the other. She described the weather as "taxing" and said that for two days it felt like a hair dryer was constantly in her face. The weather conditions didn't seem to matter to the guys, and they were still able to cut loose and really enjoy themselves, Layhew said. The band played everything from "Takin' Care of Business" to Cee-Lo Green's "Forget You," even performing Katy Perry and Lady Gaga. Bands have a couple months to plan their repertoire and find out "what's hitting" from deployed bands.

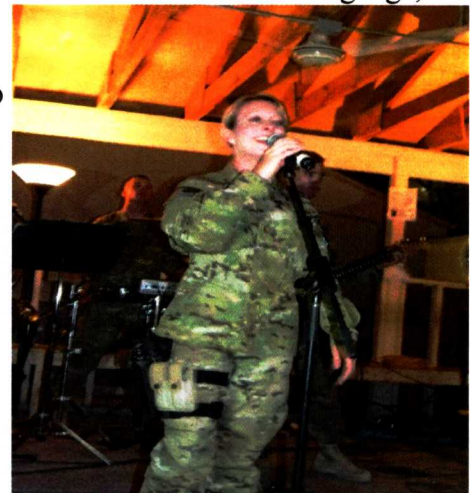
A music education major, Layhew also played clarinet and piano for Olivet Nazarene University. "I learned to play the piano when I was three and started to play the clarinet when I could fit my fingers around the instrument in third grade." Growing up, playing music is what you did in her family. "My first attempt at athletics was at basic military training, which I don't recommend," she said laughing but not joking. Although since then, Layhew has completed a triathlon as well as her first half marathon in Chicago this past month.

The band also spent two days in Jordan and Egypt, performing at the American Embassy for the Fourth of July celebration. The jazz music was something that both American and Jordan diplomats could enjoy. "Music is something we all have in common," Layhew said. "It's a universal language," with the power to bring cultures together.

The political unrest in Egypt and riots in Tahrir Square did not stop the band from playing at the Embassy in Cairo, despite being less than half a mile away. Once again the jazz band brought two groups together "providing entertainment and unity."

Layhew's deployment to Iraq in 2007 made it easier to re-acclimate herself to citizen life the second time. Having two brothers serve in the same wing with her also helps. "It's really helpful to have family that understands and can help you with the emotional aspects of deployment," Layhew said.

Layhew has been working in higher education for ten years, seven of which have been with the University. She also received her masters degree in management from the University. At the Brentwood location, she works as the Director of Academic Student Services, making policy decisions for students and handling academic records.



At the end of the forty-five days, when Layhew stepped onto the military aircraft that would take her home, she didn't want to leave. "I wanted to continue the mission, to continue to serve," Layhew said, leaning back in her office chair. Sections of paper neatly organized across her desk. A new mission lies ahead of her as she transitions back into citizen life and resumes her duties as Director of Student Services.

Operation Backpack: Unpacking Food and Happiness for the Weekend

By Rachel Lalk ↻ November 20, 2012

How to Make Tomato Soup



Add water. Stir.

For some kids facing food insecurity, a couple packets of ketchup can make a meal. These kids are supplied lunches at school, but on the weekend, they are forced to go hungry. Some even take food from cafeterias, like ketchup, and attempt to make a full meal out of them. A couple cups of hot water, and it's tomato soup. From Friday through their lunch on Monday, they have little to no options for food. And because of this, there are people like Melissa Mobley of Operation Food Search to combat the issue of food insecurity.

Keli Jackson, advertising instructor and member of the Foodology Dedicated Semester committee, read an article a few months ago about a local program that provided food insecure children with backpacks full of healthy food over the weekend. The program, Operation Backpack, was a platform off of the parent organization, Operation Food Search.

Keeping the dedicated semester in mind, Jackson contacted Mobley in the hopes that she could involve her students in the program. Not only did Jackson propose a number of food drives on campus, but she focused the advertising senior seminar projects around a campaign for Operation Backpack.

“There is more to a food drive than putting out barrels for collection,” said Mobley. “You want those who donate to feel engaged and to know where their donation is going and how it will help.” She’s very certain that the students will develop a unique and creative campaign, greatly impacting the success of the food drive.

Jackson wanted to focus her class on experiential learning, as she’s done in the past. With her new media advertising class, her students participated in Google’s annual AdWords student competition. This year, she chose Operation Backpack to continue the “experiential, real-world learning.” Seniors Erica Null and Nadia Pasque named their campaign Griffins Giving are working through December 1 on creative campaign pieces, donation events, and securing sponsorships and donations from area businesses. “I like when students can use advertising to do something good in the larger world,” says Jackson.

Founded in 1981, the mission of Operation Food Search is to fight hunger with power and hope. With two food banks in Missouri, the organization collects two million pounds of food each month. With 24% of St. Louis in poverty, and 3500 children facing food insecurity, every donation matters, Mobley assures. Through Operation Backpack, a donation of only \$1 buys \$20 of food from Food Search, and \$5 fills a backpack for a weekend. “The real solution is to end poverty, but we do what we can,” Mobley says modestly.

The children receiving backpacks are grateful for the donations, and so are the parents, says Mobley. Operation Backpack gives them relief and peace of mind knowing that their kids have their own meals for the weekend. “[the kids] tell me that it makes them feel special or like someone cares about them.”

The success of Operation Backpack stems from the support from a strong community. Mobley says, “We rely on volunteers to pack, deliver, and hand out the backpacks each week. It takes an entire team of dedicated volunteers to accomplish this task each week.”

Operation Backpack takes donations of kid-friendly items like Spaghetti's, Mac n Cheese, Juice Boxes, Granola Bars, Peanut Butter, etc. (no glass items, though). Beyond a donation, the community can get involved by volunteering to sort and pack the food. The University also has a [virtual food drive](#) for those who would prefer sending money.

The University food drive ended December 1, and our community donated nearly 600 pounds of food and \$550 to fight hunger. Over 100 backpacks will be filled with nutritious food from our donations. And 20 families will have food over the holiday season because of the University's generosity. Which goes to show that any little bit can do a lot.

Talk About a Good Thing

By Rachel Lalk 🕒 November 21, 2012

Dr. Gail Rice and Dr. Susan Lenihan of the Speech Pathology Department are as happy as a student receiving free money for school. In fact, that's exactly why they're so ecstatic. Out of 172 applicants nationwide, the University's Speech Pathology Department was approved for two grants of \$1.25 million each. Needless to say, these professors couldn't be more thrilled for their students because the majority of the funds are allocated towards scholarships.

A panel reviewed all of the proposals for the grants for five weeks before deciding on the University to receive 2 of the 38 awards. Promising to grant 70% of the funds to students for scholarships won over the approval of the panel, as well as the unique programs the University intends to offer, including finances for books. The grants will also support teacher conferences and provide each student with a mentor for their first year in practice.

Dr. Rice, professor and interim dean of the College of Education and Communication Sciences and Disorders, explains that the University is known for having a good track record and good outcomes. Dr. Lenihan, professor and Director of the Deaf Education Program, adds that good partnerships in the community as well as a good advising board also helped pave the way to this achievement. Overall, the University was looking good, and the panel noticed.

The University was included in the first and fourth focus areas to receive an endowment. The first division gave attention to "training personnel to serve infants, toddlers, and preschool aged children with disabilities," while the second focused on "training personnel in minority institutions to server infants, toddlers, and children with disabilities."

The first program enrolls 32 students in a 29-credit hour graduate concentration in the speech-language pathology master's program. According to the University's news release, students will acquire more experience working with children "who use augmentative alternative communication or who have cochlear implants and are attending school in a mainstream setting." Also, prior to their first-year professional, students will work with a mentor to allow for the smoothest transition possible.

The second program is a 36-credit hour graduate degree in early intervention in deaf education geared at setting up 32 graduate students with young children who are deaf/hard of hearing and their families, "facilitating the development of listening and spoken language." This program will also provide a mentorship for students.

(Applications for both are due Feb. 1, 2013. For more information, go to <http://www.fontbone.edu/gradapps>)

Dr. Rice and Dr. Lenihan specified that these are 5-year projects, and the funding is divided each year. The University will receive just under \$250,000 per year out of the \$9 million awarded each year throughout the country.

Both professors grin from ear to ear as they foresee the upcoming developments for their department and their students. They expect good things to come from these grants and the students supported by them. And as Dr. Rice said, all that's left is to "get the money, and fasten our seatbelts!"

I Almost Bought A Monkey

By Justin Williams  November 29, 2012



It's my first time at a casino and I'm walking out with money in my hand and a monkey on my mind.

I started out that evening with a friend of mine who was celebrating his 21st birthday, and a decent amount of money in my pocket. In a night that could have been pulled straight from the *Hangover* movies, we went to the club, danced with some gorgeous women, and then ended up at the casino.

Now back to the monkey bit, as many of you readers might be wondering where the monkey comes in. Since it was my first time at the casino, I was NOT planning on making any money. Having this expectation naturally meant I made a lot of money that night. Now, many of you are also probably putting two and two together, and thinking "You weren't planning on buying a monkey with your money were you? Who would blow their winnings on a monkey, of all things?"

Well, this guy would.

When I was younger, my grandmother showed me many pictures of her father, an American soldier who fought in Vietnam. One of my favorite pictures was of one of my great grandfather, sitting in a tree with his gun slung over his shoulder, smoking a cigarette, and petting the monkey sitting on his shoulder. He and the monkey became friends during his time in Vietnam, and my great grandfather brought him home with him as a pet. I never got to meet the monkey because at the point in time he was around, I was not really even a possibility yet, but ever since then, I've wanted my own monkey

to pal around with.

So, leaving the casino, I finally had enough money to buy what I've always wanted: a Pygmy Marmoset. Torn between doing something on complete impulse and doing something responsible, I considered my options. Pygmy marmosets never get any bigger than the palm of your hand and can live upwards of 10 to 12 years, so they're a great investment compared to a goldfish or something. If I bought one, though, I'd be taking on the task of caring for a monkey. The responsible side of me eventually won out, and I ended up putting the money toward my car and going out with some friends in celebration. I may have turned down the opportunity to fulfill a lifelong dream, but at the end of the night, I took a lot of satisfaction from knowing I almost bought a monkey.

Photo credits: <http://www.tumblr.com/tagged/pygmy%20marmoset?before=1344984087>

Music Appreciation Class Takes Trip to Les Miserables

By Amanda Teeter ↵ November 29, 2012

The ornately feathered wig in the middle of the room held my interest for so long that I almost missed the rest of them before being ushered along to the next stop on the backstage tour. I wondered how heavy it was, it had to be over a foot tall, and though it had seemed big before, I had been looking on from quite a distance when Madame Thenardier danced around to "Beggars at the Feast" in her faux-duchess attire. Close up, it looked like a broken neck waiting to happen. After my fixation broke, I only had a moment to enjoy the rest of the wigs, like the many in a row which had just graced the head of Peter Lockyear, each a little grayer than the last to indicate the aging of Jean Valjean.

On October 25th, students in Dr. Failoni's honors music appreciation class made a field trip, accompanied by Dr. Failoni's daughter, Marjorie, to the Fabulous Fox theatre to see a production of the 25th anniversary revival of Boublil and Schonberg's Les Miserables, a rock opera based on the novel by Victor Hugo. Anticipation grew as we took our seats in the upper balcony and those around us discussed their love for the play. As we had spent weeks in class studying the story, watching clips from the concert version, and discussing the clever musical motifs for which the play is famous, we had already developed some love for the show and were excited to see it in its entirety.

We were not disappointed. Short of a malfunction in the digitally projected imagery which nearly went unnoticed by the class, the production went smoothly. The projection more than made up for its momentary lapse by bringing to life the vivid imagery of everything from the inside of the French sewer system, to the bright, starlit sky. The moment the overture to "The Work Song" began and the projected ship pushing its way through the ocean faded into the beautiful set inspired by the paintings of Victor Hugo, we knew we were in for a visual treat as well as a musical one. "Even though our seats were in the balcony, I felt as though it was happening right in front of me. The show really takes you in," says Shannon Lefler. "I thought the show was absolutely beautiful."

Les Miserables is the story of a convict on the run from a corrupt justice system, of a man questioning his identity, and of the struggles of an oppressed society. Jean Valjean attempts throughout the story to be a good man despite his mistakes. He tries to redeem himself each time with good deeds such as taking in a young Cosette, or saving Marius from a deadly student protest. He questions his identity throughout, wondering if he is truly a good man or a criminal. While Valjean's personal experiences are the central point of the play, social issues are also predominantly addressed. Issues like prostitution, poverty, and helplessness as a society are critical to the plot. The abundance of relevant themes makes Les Miserables easy for anyone, including students to relate to, and its themes were not lost on us.

Though we all had differing opinions on our favorite performances, we all had great experiences and enjoyed the production. Even those of us who had been familiar with the play already were quite impressed, both by this particular performance, and by how much it benefitted to have studied the play in class before the trip. "This was the third time I have seen Les Mis on stage, and [this] production

was my favorite. While I could understand what the characters were singing most of the time, it was still very helpful to study the story in class. There is a lot going on, and being an opera, it is more challenging to comprehend at times. I think Eponine (Briana Carlson-Goodman) and Marius (Max Quinlan) had the strongest voices... The performers were very professional and the music is beautiful," says Carlyn Parent, who seemed more than excited about the entire experience of our trip.

I myself left thoroughly inspired by the performance. Peter Lockyear's (Jean Valjean) performance of "Bring Him Home" was heartfelt, bringing me near tears. Carlson-Goodman as Eponine was also inspirational, her vocal range impressed me, and her performance was deeply emotional. The significance of Eponine's sacrifice was especially well conveyed by her, particularly in her beautiful renditions of "On My Own", and "A Little Fall of Rain."

Shawna Hamic as Mrs. Thenardier quickly became my favorite performer, though; her delivery of witty lines was flawless and always met by a roar of laughter. As the only real comic relief, the Thenardiers' are critical. Their singing, more folksy than the rest of the cast, was well suited to their characters and their lyrics were easy to understand. While I favored Hamic's clever and sarcastic performance, Timothy Gulan was also hilarious in his role as the con-artist, Mr. Thenardier.

Before the show, we were introduced to Natalie Weiss, who many may remember as a semi-finalist on season four of American Idol. She is now working as a swing for Les Miserables, a cast member who stands in for ensemble roles in case someone is hurt or needs to understudy for a different part. She joined us for lunch and invited us to meet with her after the show for a back stage tour. "The backstage tour provided a different perspective on the performance. The stage looks a lot larger and more demanding from the seats," says Conner Lundius.

As we gathered around the back door and made our way inside, we also got a chance to briefly meet Max Quinlan, who played Marius, as he headed out the door. We were very excited to see him, and he kindly accepted our praise, including the exclamation that he was "even better than Nick Jonas" who had played Marius in the concert version.

Weiss showed us the variety of props, costumes and wigs which we had just seen, now hanging lifelessly on their hangers and mannequins. The chance to see the costumes up close was really interesting, we got to see the intricate detail in each outfit and wig set. The dressing area behind the stage held the wardrobe for many of the male and female actors, including a hair and makeup area.

We were then led onstage where we gained a new perspective on the theatre and the production. The audience, which had seemed to go on forever when we were a part of it, did not appear nearly as big from the stage, and we were shown the monitors above which we had never noticed, where the actors could glance for cues, etc. without giving away their performance. Above our heads were suspended the many larger props used for the show which had been brought in on harnesses and lifted away after their scenes. Javert's bridge and the huge wagon which Valjean had pulled off of a passerby in the show hovered ominously above us. Many commented on a fear that they would fall.

My favorite part of the backstage tour was the variety of murals painted on the walls, a tradition we were told started many years ago when a few actors decided to sign their names on the wall to commemorate their visit. Since then, countless acts have left their mark back stage by signing, doodling, or even painting extravagant murals depicting scenes from their play, or the poster for their

show. Dr. Failoni's daughter pointed out to us the large High School Musical monument where her signature lay among the rest of the cast of that particular tour from when they had performed at the Fox.

We thanked Weiss for our tour as we left, and some of us took pictures with her outside of the Fox to commemorate the day. We all had a long walk back to our cars, and a storm was brewing up as we made our way back, but "a little fall of rain" was no concern to us - we headed off with heads full of songs, and a deepened love for a wonderful play.