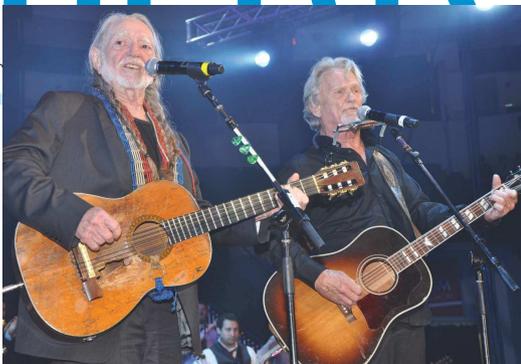


BERKLEE FEAT

Photo: by Phil Farnsworth



Willie Nelson (left) and Kris Kristofferson sing "Jambalaya" with the student band during the commencement concert.



Graduation day. From the left: Carole King, Annie Lennox, Willie Nelson, and Berklee President Roger H. Brown



Featured singers join together to close the show.

Music Legends Fête the Class of 2013

During commencement weekend, three musical legends came to Boston to help the class of 2013 (1,050-strong) celebrate the completion of graduates' Berklee studies. Scottish-born singer/songwriter Annie Lennox, American singer/songwriter Carole King, and country music powerhouse Willie Nelson—all of whom are multiple Grammy winners—were treated to a May 10 musical tribute by the students and received honorary doctor of music degrees at commencement exercises the next morning.

The Friday night concert attracted a crowd of nearly 4,000 to Boston University's Agganis Arena. After opening with an instrumental medley of three songs, one by each of the three musical guests, Berklee vocalists took the spotlight. In total, 109 singers and instrumentalists playing rhythm section, brass, woodwind, and stringed instruments explored the diverse musical landscape created by the guests of honor.

Songs popularized by Lennox when she worked with Dave Stewart in the Eurythmics and from her solo career received memorable readings. Selections spanned the upbeat dance grooves of "Would I Lie to You?" (a duet by Ingrid Andress and Alexey Musatov) and "Here Comes the Rain Again" (sung by Vince Canady) to the romantic rendering of "No More I Love You's" (Barbara Silva). The range of music performed and for which Lennox is known was striking. In a sur-

prise cameo performance, Lennox took to the stage and sang her haunting hit "Cold" from her solo album *Diva*.

Digging into Willie Nelson's trove of tunes, the students and the Yo Team (Berklee's expert concert production staff) pulled out "Crazy" (immortalized by Patsy Cline), "Pancho and Lefty" (Nelson's classic duet with Merle Haggard), "Heartland" (co-written with Bob Dylan), "Blue Eyes Crying in the Rain," and others. Nelson thrilled the crowd by strapping on his trademark battered guitar "Trigger" and singing his bluesy chestnut "Night Life" for the crowd. He was joined onstage by two of his sons: Lukas, playing electric guitar, and Micah playing charango. A third guest, singer/songwriter and former Nelson bandmate Kris Kristofferson, joined the festivities onstage for the follow-up, a knee-slapping version of the Hank Williams tune "Jambalaya."

Carole King's catalog includes 100 hit singles recorded by numerous artists. Her titles "Jazzman," "It's Too Late," "(You Make Me Feel Like) a Natural Woman," "Chains," and five more, were among those given special performances in the show. Of particular note was the medley of "I Feel the Earth Move" and "The Locomotion," which lured a grinning King from the audience and onto the stage to dance to the music as the concert came to a close.

Clad in caps and gowns, the honorees, college administrators and faculty, and graduates filed into Agganis Arena

at 10:00 A.M. the next morning for the commencement ceremonies. Lennox served as the commencement speaker. Stepping up to the microphone, she thanked the performers for the previous night's concert. "It was utterly wonderful and of the highest standards," Lennox said. "I was grateful to be part of it." She then told the crowd about the arc of her career. She shared details of her childhood in a working-class family in Aberdeen, Scotland, where she first sang in a church choir, took piano lessons, and picked up the flute. Lennox also sang lines from popular songs that were influential in her early life, including "I Heard It through the Grapevine," "Wichita Lineman," and Carole King's "It's Too Late."

She spoke of her struggles with studies at the Royal Academy of Music in London and how her partnership with Dave Stewart helped her discover her strengths as an artist. "Consider this," Lennox said, "wherever you think you're heading right now might turn out to take a completely different route. And what looks like an ending might actually be the start of a brand-new beginning. Wherever and however we find ourselves, what a privilege it is to enrich our lives through music: the incredible universal language of the soul. Enter into it wholeheartedly, make it yours to share with the world in the very best way you can."

President Roger H. Brown told the graduates, "You came here from 96 different countries, practicing every major world religion, speaking a mul-



Barbara Silva sings "No More I Love You's"



Annie Lennox addressed the graduates.

titude of languages, hailing from tiny villages and the major metropolises of the world. Let us hope and expand the spirit of a creative and harmonious community far beyond the confines of our small campus. It's been an honor to be even a small part of the unfolding of your fascinating lives. Go out into the world and make great music."

Willie Nelson added, "It's a great honor to be here, and last night was especially tremendous. I enjoyed hearing everyone play and sing so many great songs. The history of music is good, but the future is even better thanks to you folks."