

Soaring high: Dance troupe defies gravity, performing on buildings at Lehigh University

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Micaela Hood / LehighValleyNews.Com

Members of the performance troupe BANDALOO on the side of Lehigh University's library on Thursday.





The crowd was outdoors, and the walls were the exterior of the building.

It was all part of free performance by BANDALOO, a dance troupe based in West Oakland, California, that puts on performances on the sides of skyscrapers, bridges and billboards.

Thursday's performance took place at the Fairchild-Martindale Library in collaboration with [Zoellner Arts Center's 25th anniversary](#).

BANDALOO performed a free show at Lehigh University's library on Thursday, April 13

- **Seventh-graders from Broughal Middle School attended the performance, which was organized by Zoellner Arts Center**
- **The dance troupe also will perform at Zoellner's 25th-anniversary gala on Saturday, April 15**

BANDALLOOP's show, dubbed "Loom: Field," was created by artistic director Melecio Estrella and dedicated to his grandmother.

Estrella took over as artistic director from Amelia Rudolph, who founded the troupe in 1991.

"My grandmother died in World War II in Philippines," he said. "She was kept prisoner, and while she was in the prison camp, she would crochet fabric and make these elaborate bedspreads.

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"Because she couldn't get more yarn, she would unravel and start again. In the months leading [to] her death, she was crocheting."

The idea of making fabric became "soothing and healing" for Estrella, who wanted to create a show that addresses such themes as the nature of art and textiles and sustainability.



As part of Thursday's performance, one of the dancers swayed and sang on the side of the wall while unveiling a long bedspread – similar to the one Estrella's grandmother created during the war.

Weaving in local history

Before the performance, 160 seventh-graders from Broughal Middle School in Bethlehem spent the morning attending workshops, looking at photos of BANDALOOOP and speaking with Estrella.

They also weaved their own art projects during a demonstration by staff from the

silk mill industry.



Courtesy / Zoellner Arts Center

Broughal Middle School students attended workshops at Lehigh University organized by the Zoellner Arts Center and the National Museum of Industrial History on April 13, 2023.

The middle school's invitation is a partnership between Zoellner and Bethlehem School District's Ensuring the Arts for Any Given Child initiative.



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BANDALOOP performed at Leigh University on April 13, 2023.

The program is designed to create a long-term arts education plan for students from

Zoellner Arts Center is the lead organization for the program.

"They were excited, especially to do it as an entire grade is special," Joe Anthes, supervisor for related arts for Bethlehem School District, said. "There [are] connections to both their arts and history classes."

Learning how to soar

BANDALOO has performed with pop singer Pink and at Super Bowl LVII.

In addition to its public performances, BANDALOO offers dance workshops for children and adults who would like to explore airborne choreography.

On Monday, students from Broughal will practice with dancers from BANDALOO at Zoellner.

Rose Huey said she's looking forward to teaching the kids some new moves.

"I love this work because it's the closest to flying I'm ever going to get," Huey said. "I also love looking out at an audience and seeing everybody taking in what we're doing and hopefully having a good time."



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Dancers from BANDALOOOP perform on the walls of Lehigh University's library on April 13, 2023.
