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Contributing their musical talents to The Melodious are, back row, Tim Caza, Mike Palmer, Justin Palmer, Tom Caza and Stuart Hammill. In front are Jordan Toman and David Rolf.

Local band strikes an uplifting chord with its music and message

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Mike Palmer has been writing and playing music since he was a kid. Over the years, he grew to recognize that music comes easy for him.

He felt it was a gift and that it was his responsibility to share that gift.

"Performing is something I felt was a calling, a divine purpose," Palmer explained.

He has played and sung in a number of bands throughout his career, including several in college and more recently with his wife, Patrice, and their children. Palmer's latest

ensemble, called The Melodious, brings together a handful of musicians who are well known to many in the Pine City area.

The members of The Melodious represent several different churches in

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the community. Everyone involved has a common purpose, the opportunity to celebrate God and bring His message to others. The music is all original and revolves the expansive collection of songs Palmer has written.

He said he named the band, The Melodious, after a line in the song, "Sweet By and By," that speaks of "the melodious songs of the blest." That phrase captures the essence of his music, which focuses entirely on faith and spiritual growth.

Although Palmer's lyrics deal with issues that are often seen as deep and personal, they are set to music that is light, uplifting and universally entertaining to anyone

who can appreciate a good performance.

Dan Bacigalupi once described the band's sound as Christian "prock," which Palmer says is a combination of pop and rock. The result is meaningful, fun music that has helped the band attract fans from a wide variety of age brackets and backgrounds.

The Melodious is continually evolving and changing. Palmer, who enjoys encouraging aspiring musicians, welcomes new members and attempts to find ways for anyone with an interest to contribute. Therefore, it can be difficult to list a roster of band members.

For example, Ron Troolin, Jobie Best and Gene

Best have all contributed in the past. Phil Eastwood occasionally sits in on cello, and Gary Johnson adds his acoustic guitar from time to time. When this interview was conducted, the group consisted of seven core members.

Stuart Hammill plays lead guitar and lends a musical maturity that comes from years of playing in different local bands, including Rezort and Rukus. He described his involvement with The Melodious as the type of experience all musicians dream of.

He said he is thrilled to have the opportunity to play original music in a group where each person contributes something important and where the focus is on creating music in a Christian environment.

"When I turn away from the focus being on

me, the best comes out," Hammill said, adding that he receives such a great sense of satisfaction simply from sharing this music with others.

Another familiar name is David Rolf, drummer for the group. His dad, Duane, also had an extensive musical career, which included a short stint with the Monkees, a band from the '60s best known for its television show. He was also influential in the local music scene and played in several popular bands, including Frontline and Byngo.

The younger Rolf grew up playing music with his father and with several church groups. His percussion skills help provide the musical structure for The Melodious and keep the audience's feet tapping.

Despite their young ages, Tim and Tom Caza

also bring experience to the band, gained mainly through involvement with worship bands over the past four or five years. Tim plays rhythm guitar for The Melodious, and Tom is on base.

Watching the twin brothers perform, it is clear they enjoy what they are doing, and they bring an energy and stage presence that draws in the audience. Their talent and ability to play a broad range of styles help create a show that appeals to a wide variety of musical tastes.

"They love to do this, and they're not afraid to show off," Palmer said. "It's great to have these younger guys involved. They really add to the fun."

Jordan Toman and Palmer's son, Justin, also contribute to the group's youthfulness. Together

with Palmer, the two young vocalists create a clean sound that is, well... melodious.

The group's collective skills and ability to entertain were recognized this year at the talent contest held during the Pine County Fair. The Melodious won first place in the open division of the event and went on to perform at the State Fair on Sept. 1.

They have several other gigs scheduled, including the Jesus Fest in Princeton on Sept. 16. The group is also available to perform at churches, for youth groups, community gatherings and other events. To learn more about The Melodious, listen to their music or download songs, visit their website at www.TheMelodious.com.