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SEASON'S GREETINGS
Nothing stops tuba musicians

Can freezing cold, rain or hail stop a band of 200 tuba players from belting out Christmas carols? "No matter what the weather is, we're going to play," said John Huenink, president of the Oregon Tuba Association.

Although nearly half of the concerts have been plagued by difficult weather conditions, Huenink said that nothing will stop the annual TubaCarolConcert scheduled for Dec. 11 at 1 p.m. on the Eugene Mall. Each year the event draws about 200 tuba players of all ages, sizes and shapes and more than 1,400 eager listeners.

One year, faced with the prospect of dreadful weather, Huenink said the association decided at 11:30 a.m. to forego changing the concert location.

At 12:59, the weather was mild and fair.

"Then at 1:00, when the director's downbeat started, the skies opened, and we had a horrendous downpour of stiff rain - it was almost hail - and we kept playing," Huenink said. "People thought we were crazy."

Yet a deep love for their instruments and the music they create keeps the players' lips pressed against their mouthpieces through all kinds of weather.

"As children, most of us learned ... that you don't stick your tongue to a doorknob or a frozen flagpole," Huenink said, "and here we get older and wiser and sit there with 30 to 50 pounds of frozen brass in our laps, and we voluntarily stick our lips on it."

Despite the sometimes trying conditions, Huenink said that the TubaCarolConcert, the "annual low-blow to the citizens of Eugene," is a fun, "all-comers" event whose primary purpose is to get people together to come and play rich traditional holiday music in low-brass harmony.

Having had participants of all skill levels and ages ranging from seven to 80, Huenink welcomes and encourages anyone who plays a tuba instrument - like a sousaphone, euphonium, baritone - to join and play in the 15th annual concert.

The Oregon Tuba Association and Downtown Eugene Inc., joint sponsors of the event, send out thousands of flyers each year to people in Oregon and its neighboring states to draw the 200 participants, making it one of the



FILE PHOTO
Musicians assemble with their instruments for their annual TubaCarolConcert.

largest tuba concerts in the nation.

Because of the strength and resonance of the tuba notes, Huenink said that the TubaCarolConcert's audience always extends past the borders of the Downtown Mall.

People have approached Huenink to tell him that they've never seen the concert but have heard it blocks and blocks away because the sound seems to "reverberate across the canyon." Even people who are profoundly deaf and seriously visually handicapped have been known to enjoy the concert, he says. The instruments are "big and bright and shiny, and even if they can't see us, they feel us."

One of the concert's highlights occurs as the tubas play "Jingle-Jingle," an up-tempo version of Jingle Bells.

According to tradition, Huenink said that "people reach into their

coats and pull out bells or start shaking their keys." To have 1,500 people jingling bells and 200 tubas playing is just awe-inspiring, he said.

The concert program features music from "Carols for Low Brass," which are arrangements of traditional hymns like "Deck the Halls," "Joy to the World" and "Silent Night" done by a former University student, David Grasvenor.

Huenink is also a pastor of the Peace Presbyterian Church and co-founder of the TubaEnsemble, the core of the Oregon Tuba Organization. It is a group of a dozen tuba players who perform once a month for rest homes, races and other events.

Huenink said that although "we come from a variety of backgrounds and political persuasions

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