

Concert celebrates former music professor

Musicians and former colleagues gathered to honor John McManus' passion for music and teaching

BY THOMAS MUNRO
FREELANCE REPORTER

Professor Emeritus John McManus, considered by many the greatest music educator in Oregon

history, was honored at Friday's Homecoming Concert at Beall Concert Hall.

At McMinnville High School in the 1950s and '60s, McManus set

and met standards far beyond those of other high school bands. Yet his concern for the music never overshadowed his concern for his students. In 1965 he was named Oregon Teacher of the Year and was one of five finalists for the National Teacher of the Year.

When he found that his students were becoming better players than

they were musicians, he turned his band into a teaching lab to help further their musical education.

"John's greatest legacy is his unselfish desire to open musical vistas to students," said Professor Emeritus Steve Stone, a long-time colleague.

This teaching lab led to the Manhattanville Music Curriculum Program and McManus' return to academia. During his 15 years at the University, which ended in 1983, he taught band, education and woodwinds; served as undergraduate coordinator; and played clarinet in the faculty quintet.

Opening comments by Stone and Associate Professor Emeritus Dave Doerksen were followed by a concert tribute to the principles that have driven McManus' career.

The Oregon Jazz Ensemble began the concert with a wall-shaking performance of the show tune "I Hear a Rhapsody," arranged by Bob Mintzer.

"We try to have a lighter program for this concert," conductor Steve Owen said. "We're just getting the year started."

Yet, just four weeks into the year, the group's ensemble playing is already crisp.

"It's great to have a concert this early," said tenor saxophonist Hashem Assadullahi, who soloed in the opening number. "It forces you to listen to each other and get together as a band."

After the intermission, the Oregon Wind Ensemble offered two contrasting works. Eric Whitacre's "October," conducted by Tim Paul, was a warm pastoral piece that highlighted the ensemble's pure intonation and horn section.

Paul, who is new to the University faculty, said the skills and attitude of his players made his transition easy.

"It's a great bunch of young musicians that really bond together to make music their priority," he said.

Aaron Copland's angular, often-aggressive "Emblems," conducted by Robert Ponto, was a surprising choice to end the concert.

The theme of the evening was music education. Linda Wilson's son Collin, first chair in the saxophone section of the Wind Ensemble, has been a music student since fifth grade.

"It began as the niche he found in school," said Wilson. "Now he's very well-rounded. The experience of many different people and places has broadened his horizons."

As McManus pulled the ribbons from a book of photographs and memories collected from friends and colleagues, the dignified yet jovial man described the evening with modesty.

"I am very surprised and very honored. I owe them all a great deal," he said.

Thomas Munro is a freelance reporter for the Daily Emerald

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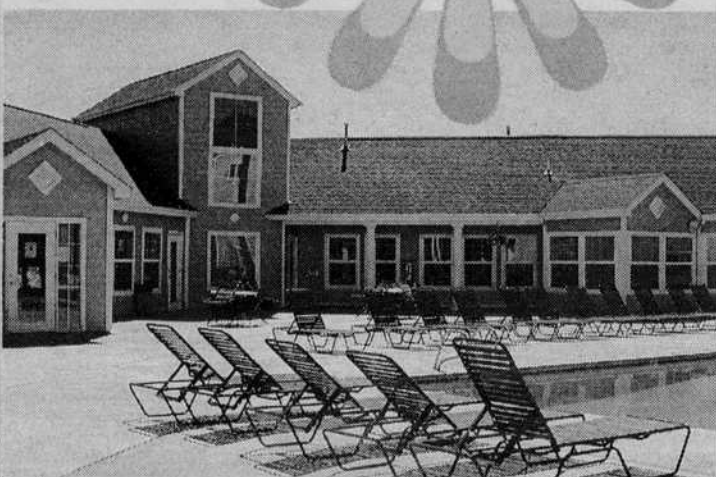


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