

Singing through a pandemic

EOU professor talks about challenges for the performing arts

By Lisa Britton
Go! Magazine

LA GRANDE — When asked about music education over the last two years, Peter Wordelman says the challenges began in March 2020 when all classes at Eastern Oregon University moved to an online platform for spring quarter.

"We got through that. Then it came to the next year," said Wordelman, music professor and Chamber Choir director at EOU. "You don't want to teach theater, music or art online."

The EOU faculty planned during the summer of 2020, and started with on-campus classes of limited size. Using special singing masks, they could rehearse with 12 people in the room. McKenzie Theatre was under renovation at the time, so that large space was unavailable.

'WE'VE GOT YOUR NUMBER'

Presented by the EOU Chamber Choir and music department
Feb. 25, 7:30 p.m.
Feb. 26, 3 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.
McKenzie Theatre, EOU
Tickets: \$8 adults, \$7 seniors/students; available at Red Cross Drug, EOU Bookstore and online at www.eou.edu/music. Tickets purchased for the original dates are valid.

But the performing arts persisted. For instance, students recorded an old-time radio show, with student-designed ads, to play on a local station.

"It was really creative," Wordelman said.

In the spring of 2021, EOU Music Week was held outside Loso Hall.

"It rained two of the three days — we had to navigate that," he said.

The fall of 2021 brought per-

formances of "All Together Now" in November, and the Holiday Music Festival in December.

Which brings us to 2022.

"Then here comes January. I knew this was going to be hard, but not this hard," Wordelman said.

The music department planned a production of "We've Got Your Number" in early February. Everyone wore masks during rehearsals, and had a COVID test every Tuesday.

They had a few positive tests. Then a few more.

"We got close to the show and we had three people out for sure," he said.

They adjusted and rearranged performers.

"For maybe eight hours that was the plan," he said.

Then he heard of another positive test.

"When you lose people, every dance routine is off," he said. "And everybody sings a solo in the show."

The decision was made to postpone the production to



Alex Wittwer/EOU Media Group
EOU students rehearse "We've Got Your Number" on Jan. 26, 2022. Performances are set for Feb. 25 and 26 at McKenzie Theatre.

Feb. 25 and 26. Tickets already purchased for the original dates will be valid.

"We should have a great show," Wordelman said.

Each song is about numbers. The first one is "For the First Time in Forever."

"It was a good choice when I first chose it — now it's even better," he said.

Show times are 7:30 p.m. on Friday, and 3 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. on Saturday, in McKenzie Theatre, located inside Loso Hall on the EOU campus.

Tickets cost \$8 adults, \$7 students/seniors and are available at Red Cross Drug, the EOU Bookstore, and online at www.eou.edu/music. Masks are required at performances.

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