

PARTING SHOTS

A weekly snapshot from The Daily Astorian and Chinook Observer photographers



Steam rises from the Hampton Lumber Mill in Warrenton Jan. 12.

JOSHUA BESSEX — The Daily Astorian

Medals: Puffin is already top seller at The Wine Shack

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the email with the Platinum Wine Judging results.

I furiously read the email. There it was: Puffin Pinot Gris won a platinum medal! I jumped up and hollered to Maryann, “Pinot gris won a platinum!” We were overjoyed at the result.

How big of a deal is this? Puffin was one of only two pinot gris wines to be awarded a platinum medal. I quickly sent off an email to winemaker Ray Walsh, congratulating him for making such a delicious wine.

But wait, what about Puffin Pinot Noir? In all of the excitement about Puffin Pinot Gris winning a platinum medal, I had forgotten that our 2010 Puffin Pinot Noir was also in the competition. I was immediately disappointed that it hadn’t won a platinum medal, but I went back to the results.

There it was: Puffin Pinot Noir was the first wine listed in the double gold medal section. Yes!

Again, I shouted out the results to Maryann; we are so proud of our pinot noir as well. Double gold. I sent another congratulatory email, this time to winemaker Sean Driggers and thanked him for a job well done.

Two wines submitted, two medals won. We couldn’t have

asked for a better outcome. Those two wines that I wished good luck represented themselves and the entire flock of Puffin Wines like the rock stars they are.

Puffin is already our top seller at The Wine Shack, but since the results were released two weeks ago, these wines have flown off the shelves with even greater velocity. In fact, we are now sold out of the 2010 Puffin Pinot Noir; however we have plenty of the 2012 Puffin Pinot Noir, and it’s even more delicious than the double gold medal winner. We still have some of the platinum-winning 2013 Puffin Pinot Gris on hand, but it, too, is in very short supply now — partially because Maryann pulled three cases aside to pour at our daughter’s wedding next month, and I don’t think I can get it back from her. The good news, though, is that the 2014 Puffin Pinot Gris will be available in about 45 days.

We are still donating a portion of the proceeds of Puffin Wine to the Friends of Haystack Rock to support the great work they do on the beach.

Please remember to drink responsibly.

Steven and Maryann Sinkler own The Wine Shack in Cannon Beach.

Bulgarian soprano makes waves as stand-in

NEW YORK (AP) — Looking for a lyric soprano who can parachute into your production at the last minute, sing melodiously and then die movingly? At the Metropolitan Opera these days, they send out for Sonya Yoncheva.

Yoncheva is in New York singing four performances as Violetta, the glamorous courtesan who finds love too late, in Verdi’s “La Traviata.” It’s a role she has sung often — unlike her first two Met assignments, which she had never performed onstage. She debuted in 2013 as Gilda in Verdi’s “Rigoletto” and this past November stepped in as Mimi in Puccini’s “La Boheme” on just a few weeks notice.

“I had to learn it (the role of Mimi) in the last five days before starting rehearsals here so it was really, really rushed,” the Bulgarian soprano recounted in an interview at the Met earlier this month.

Yoncheva, who makes her home in Switzerland with her husband, conductor Domingo Hindoyan, had just given birth to their son, Mateo, in October.

“I remember myself in the night, nursing and studying Mimi, and not sleeping, and thinking about visas, papers, my son’s passport,” she said.

A flight to New York, a few run-throughs in the studio, and she was onstage.

“When you do these kinds of things, you don’t have any time to think, so it’s better,” she said. “You don’t think about the pressure, you just go for it.



AP Photo/Metropolitan Opera, Ken Howard In this Jan. 14 photo released by the Metropolitan Opera, Sonya Yoncheva as Violetta and Francesco Demuro as Alfredo in Verdi’s “La Traviata,” at the Metropolitan Opera in New York.

You’re like a sportsman, you have to play the match.”

Judging by the critical reception, she won the match easily. Zachary Woolfe wrote in The New York Times that “astorishingly, this was Ms. Yoncheva’s first staged performance of

the role. Her delicate, dreamy, detailed Mimi has arrived more or less fully formed.”

Similar praise had greeted her debut a year earlier as Gilda, and now in “Traviata” she has scored her biggest triumph to date.

Yoncheva discounts the old cliché that Violetta requires a soprano who has “three different voices” — high-flying coloratura for Act 1, a lyric line for Act 2 and a fuller, more dramatic sound for her death scene.

“I don’t have a button here or there where you go ‘ping’ and suddenly you’re singing with a certain kind of voice,” she said, playfully poking her right cheek and then her forehead. “But the approach is different of course because Verdi is representing Violetta in three different little pieces of her life.”

For her, Act 1 poses the greatest challenge. “Those vocal fireworks are very difficult for voices like mine,” she said, “because I feel more lyric and this is absolutely coloratura.”

Indeed, at her first performance last week Yoncheva struggled a bit with the runs and high notes in her bravura aria, “Sempre libera,” and omitted the often-interpolated high E-flat at the end — a note she manages successfully on her just-released Sony album, “Paris, mon amour.”

But even here she was dramatically compelling, and she came completely into her own vocally in the later acts, earning a thunderous ovation at the end.

Yoncheva’s rapid rise to fame — she’s only 33 — started in her hometown of Plovdiv, where her mother, a frustrated actress who had played bit parts in films, was determined to turn her daughter into some kind of artist.

Sea stars: I’ve never seen so many six-rayed sea stars in my life’

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“I’ve never seen so many six-rayed sea stars in my life,” Ferber said, adding that “none of the six-rayed that we have found had any signs of disease.”

Because most of the larger sea stars that eat the smaller six-rayed

species died of wasting disease, Ferber suspects that six-rayed sea stars don’t have many natural predators. “That’s just a hypothesis,” she said.

Unknowns

Last summer, marine scientists may have identified the virus responsible for the sea stars’ dramatic die back.

A disease-causing “densovirus” associated with sea stars that is “in greater abundance in diseased than in healthy sea stars” is “the most promising candidate disease agent” responsible for the mass mortality of sea stars, according to a study published in November in the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

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“Because scientists don’t know what causes the densovirus to kill the sea stars — and what caused this outbreak to happen — it’s kind of hard to say for sure why the smaller individuals aren’t affected as much,” Ferber said.

And, since the virus was already

present, the question remains: Why is the disease suddenly erupting on a much larger scale now than at any time in the past?

“We just don’t know at this point,” Miner said, adding that some environmental factors may have exacerbated the widespread wasting. “There’s still a lot to learn.”

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From left: Peter Wong, Hillary Borrud, Mateusz Perkowski