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on the cover

Kenndra Lispie, age 10, proudly displays her very first catch—a 15-pound Chinook salmon caught aboard the Katie Marie, a charter boat operated by Pacific Salmon Charters out of the Port of Ilwaco, Washington.

Photo by Lynette Rae McAdams

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Out & about

NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

A night at the 'silent' movies

By REBECCA SEDLAK

When I told people I was attending the Astoria Music Festival's Night at the Movies: Classic Film with Organ concert last Thursday, I got the same response from everyone: "Did you go last year?"

I hadn't seen the silent film with live organ music last summer — 1926's "The General" — but it got rave reviews. So on Thursday, I eagerly entered the Liberty Theater and waited for the show to begin.

And what a show it was. In a concert sponsored by Rodgers Instruments, LLC., world-renowned theater organist Bob Salisbury played the score for the 1927 film "Wings." Starring Clara Bow, Charles "Buddy" Rodgers and Richard Arlen, "Wings" tells the story of two young men from a small town who are in a love triangle (well, really, a love rectangle) and serve as fighter pilots in World War I.

"Wings" won Best Picture at the first Academy Awards ceremony in 1929 — the only silent film to win Best Picture until 2011's "The Artist."

Before the show began, Salisbury encouraged the audience to add their own sounds. "You can

boo the bad guys and scream and cheer the good guys — don't just sit there; be a part of it," he said.

With that, Salisbury began to play, his concentration moving between the magic his hands created on the keyboard and the action on screen. Light and bouncy music cued the idyllic, getting-to-know the main characters beginning scenes. The audience cheered at Clara Bow's appearance.

But we were reminded the film wasn't just about romance. The word "WAR!" leapt across

the screen, the music changing dramatically: The dark, ominous tones of Salisbury's organ filled the theater, signaling alarm.

The soundtrack was front and center, music communicating emotions and drama that the actors and film can't quite translate without sound. The musical themes — 21 in all — heralded different characters and moods, including a merry melody for Clara Bow, patriotic tunes, and a military beat for marching soldiers.

Foreboding horns and deep bass accompanied the Gotha, a massive German plane sent to bomb a French village. As torpedoes hit the buildings, drums and symbols from Salisbury's organ marked each explosion.

In 1927 when the film was released in New York City, a full orchestra accompanied it, Salisbury said. In Los Angeles,

film composer Gaylord Carter wrote a score, which became the accepted music. Salisbury performed Carter's score Thursday and improvised during the air battle scenes

In the second half of the film, the horror of war was on full display. The different technologies and modes were side by side: infantry, cavalry, trenches, barbed wire, bayonets, machine guns, open-cockpit biplanes, tanks. The sheer number of extras — thousands — was impressive during the shots of long marches and the climactic Battle of Saint-Mihiel. The U.S. Army Air Corps even provided 300 pilots and planes for the film.

Without dialogue or sound, without color or enhanced camera work, the war's horror was vivid, and Salisbury's organ music was relentless and emotive, hitting you right in the gut.

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