

## Keep Keith Clark

In response to the editorial "Don't keep us waiting" (*The Daily Astorian*, July 23): After reading the editorial about the Astoria Music Festival, I am sad to say that the paper has presented a biased view of what has been going on inside the Festival's 13th year. The editorial puts all the blame on the Astoria Music Festival's artistic director and conductor, Keith Clark, and on the boards, not just the current one, but also the past boards of directors.

The editorial, instead, supports the paid staff, which has been in position just the current year; before that, board members did everything to support Artistic Director Keith Clark, who devoted his time fully to planning, organizing and directing the programs and musical content of the Festival, which are of the highest quality. Under his leadership the Festival has reached rave reviews, a great international reputation over the last seven to eight years, and received several awards.

Internal problems only arose after the Festival hired paid staff last year. Some conflicting ideas about the different roles of the artistic director and the managing director and the consultant came to light. This is basically what created the difficult situation: Lack of direct and honest communication, that in the end resulted in Keith Clark being pushed out as the overall director of the Festival he founded.

He never wanted to leave the Astoria Music Festival, as the editorial mistakenly concludes. The current board members kept him in the dark about his, and the Festival's, future by not endorsing him as the conductor and artistic director beyond the 2015 Festival. Even worse, someone behind the scenes is known to have contacted another conductor to take over the Festival. In spite of these difficulties, Keith Clark continued to put together another superb program of professional classical music. He has done this for a dozen years without any financial compensation.

It is important to recognize that Keith Clark, as the co-founder of the Festival, has been its key leader for the last dozen years, ever since the Festival's beginning. Board members change each year—the one constant is the artistic director. The previous boards have supported his vision and efforts fully until this year.

During my three years as the president of the board of directors, we never had any problems in communication, and with that, Maestro Clark felt that he was free to lead using his great talents and superb persuasion. He has done all this unselfishly and without asking for money. He has done it for the musicians who want to perform under his leadership, and to bring great classical music to the North Coast and Astoria.

If he is now forced to resign because of inaccurate reporting, the Astoria Music Festival will never be what it has been known as: a small town festival with great talent, world class performers and an artistic director of international stature. The small communities of Astoria and the North Coast cannot afford to lose an unselfish, accomplished and talented music director. He is the one individual who can keep the Festival alive and well for another dozen years.

LEENA MELARIKER  
Past president, Astoria  
Music Festival  
Gearhart

## 'Cinderella' is great

I want to encourage *The Daily Astorian* readers to catch a performance of the musical "Cinderella" at Fort Columbia Theater in Chinook, Wash. What a delightful way to spend an evening. With the sweeping score by Rodgers and Hammerstein, and the impressive vocal talents of the cast, we left the theater with that magical, musical lift in our steps.

I'd say the vocal talents of this cast rival any professional company. My favorite scenes were the step-family songs,

# Support the Astoria Music Festival

As I read the editorial by the managing editor, whose many writings I'd previously assumed came from some position of integrity ("Don't keep us waiting," *The Daily Astorian*, July 23). This attack on the man who gave Astoria the most beautiful music festival, by one who obviously did not even interview the maestro, is alarming.

Maestro Clark, for 13 years, has brought marvelous international musical brilliance to our little city, frequently at his own expense. He has engendered loyalty, joy, and gratitude among hundreds of volunteers during these festivals, and a tremendous sense of community as Astorians have opened our hearts and homes to his performers and family. We have come to see the month of June as "What we live for, each year!"

It was Clark who instigated the grant to fund Carol Shepherd's position, and he encouraged her to apply for the job

she'd been dreaming of, happily leaving the Columbia River Maritime Museum position. He also recommended Linda Magee as a management consultant to the festival. Hardly "hesitant and resistant" actions.

These two women began months ago to undermine our maestro, subvert his position as artistic director, and control his every move with respect to the musical operations and artistic operations of the festival. They both vied for absolute control of all functions; not the other way around, as this editorial implies.

The board, all season long, refused to discuss Clark's position for the 2016 season, leaving him to produce this year's phenomenal music, all the while in limbo regarding his future position. Who pushed whom out?

Boards do not produce ticket sales; performers do. And, when the perennial stars of our festival, who bring in the patrons, learned of the management's

dishonorable behavior they advised the board that, without Clark, they would no longer grace the stage of any future music festival in Astoria. I guess Clark's "backstage persona" couldn't be all that "repellent" to his most valuable players.

So, with end of season books still open, this "professional" board resigned, leaving all closing work undone and unbalanced. And Shepherd and Magee, and a "publicity chairperson" resigned, after pulling in the largest salaries this festival has ever paid in its history.

Yes; the ball is in Maestro Clark's court, where it belongs. His detractors all deserted when their tactics came to light. The Astoria Music Festival continues, with the love and support of Astorians, who appreciate the gift that Maestro Clark and his phenomenal performers.

ELAINE BAUER  
Astoria

and the wicked stepsisters really steal the show with their hilarious antics. I'm not really one for musicals, but this one was just fabulous.

It's being presented by Peninsula Association of Performing Artists (PAPA) through Sunday, Aug. 9. See [www.papatheater.com](http://www.papatheater.com) for tickets.

PAMELA CROMWELL  
Long Beach, Wash.

## Play is delightful

I had the privilege of attending a performance of Rodgers and Hammerstein's "Cinderella," staged by the theater company the Peninsula Association of Performing Artists (PAPA). Having worked in theater myself for over 40 years, I had traveled from Whidbey Island, Wash., for a vacation, and I was excited to see a local show.

The show takes place in a historic theatre in Fort Columbia State Park. It's rustic, and wild exposure sets you up nicely for the delights of this vibrant theatre company. Greeted at the door by the cast in costume, you feel more like family than audience members.

As the show opens, lively children flanked by a spirited godmother, played by Jane Schussman, take to the stage as ensemble actress Erin Glenn gives a luminous invitation beckoning the audience to come along on this journey with her.

As the story unfolds, I was enchanted by the gentle and innocent performance of Hope Bellinger, whose beautiful voice was perfect for the role of Cinderella. She had been well paired opposite Ron Thompson, who conveyed an earnest and sincere performance as the prince, that tugged hard on the audience's romantic heartstrings.

Added to the mix was just the right amount of humor from the stepmother, played by Pam Cromwell, and her two comedy sidekicks, played masterfully by Grace Scarborough and Zoey Powers. All of this nice casting made for the perfect recipe for a very enjoyable version of this long-time family classic.

The other standout comedic performance was given by Jonathan Cole, who played a very lively version of Lionel the Stewart. His comedic timing was flawless, and along with great facial comedy and a faultless British accent he kept the audience very entertained. An exuberant king and queen, played by Richard Babhikoff and Christina Sukadorf, were very entertaining too, and the rest of the cast drew us in with their audience participation and lively singing and dancing.

I would also like to give a nod not only to the director Barbara Poulshock, who did an amazing job of pulling all this together, but also to the costumer and prop designer, who explored some very innovative ways to overcome some of the more difficult creative challenges of staging Cinderella.

All in all this is a wonderful wholesome entertainment for the whole family. Helped along by the magical musical accompaniment of a Rodgers and Hammerstein's score, it is just the right blend for an en-

chanting musical evening of theater entertainment.

SUZANNE KELMAN  
Langley

## Enchanting show

In appreciation for the wonderful cast and crew of the Peninsula Association of Performing Artists' (PAPA) current production of Rodgers and Hammerstein's "Cinderella," I must say that it is truly an enchanted show.

There are only three dates remaining for you to also catch the magic at the Fort Columbia Theater. Each actor brings their own special touch and talent to the event and draws the audience into the experience. We are so blessed in our area to have such a wealth of talent and Barbara Poulshock has again encouraged the best from everyone involved.

It has been a personal journey for me to be associated with this dedicated group, and I encourage everyone to take advantage of the opportunity to experience this theater firsthand. Come prepared to be entertained, surprised and share the laughter and joy. Check [www.papatheater.org](http://www.papatheater.org)

for more information, tickets and to volunteer.

PENNY RIPLEY  
Ocean Park, Wash.

## Service animal facts

Well ... The Health Department is in error ("Service dogs only," *The Daily Astorian*, July 31). One may not ask a disabled person what function the service animal performs. That is confidential medical information. Businesses may require a person with a "service animal" to document that they are indeed a disabled American. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) provides this optional inquiry, and disabled Americans have identification to prove their status.

Service animals are not licensed, certified, or otherwise documented. This rationale is intended to prevent disabled Americans from being required to jump through complicated documentation hoops in order to have a service animal. These days, service animals are pretty much limited to dogs, with some specifically granted exceptions. No identification is required on the dog, although most service animals wear ID, generally a "service animal" vest.

Service animals are not to be left unattended. Owners are responsible for harm, damage, disruption caused by their animal. If the dog is barking in the mall or the movie, it is grounds for removal. Same with animal damage to lodging — lodging may not charge a fee for a service animal.

If you're not a disabled American, your pet is not allowed in stores, restaurants, or interior places where food is served.

Fred Meyer is in error in their statement that "only certified service animals" are permitted. No certification is required, but the owner must be disabled and able to prove disability if so requested. Disabled Americans can prove who they are, without exception.

GEORGE BERGERON  
Astoria

## Pursue a bypass

I have now read Cleve Rolfe's open letter to the Seaside powers-that-be regarding the Seaside bypass (or lack thereof) twice, first in *The Daily Astorian*, and secondly in the Seaside Signal ("Need a bypass," *The Daily Astorian*, July 10).

As a resident of Seaside, I have to say that I feel his observations are spot on. I have no way of knowing the actual statistics, but it seems to me on each of these incredibly traffic-choked summer Saturdays that a large portion (perhaps as much as 50 percent) of the traffic on Roosevelt Drive is passing through, with no intention of stopping in Seaside.

Why, oh why, are we forcing these folks (including Mr. Rolfe), who simply wish to go past Seaside, to endure these horrible traffic snarls? Not to mention, of course, the residents of Seaside (like myself) who hunker down in their homes during these periods to avoid getting caught up in this for even a simple trip, say, to the library.

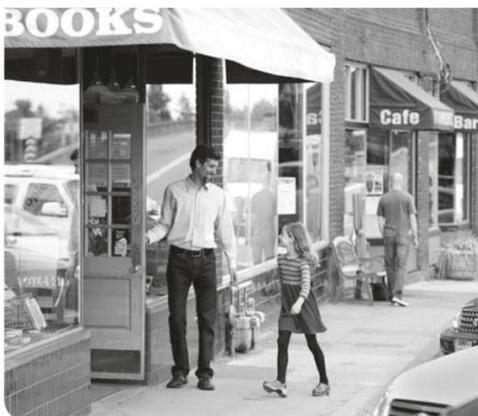
Recently I was in Beaverton taking care of some business when, in learning that I live in Seaside, the proprietor's wife described to me how, on a recent Saturday, she came out to the coast to drop of her daughter with her grandmother in Gearhart, when she came upon stop-and-go traffic some distance out on U.S. Highway 26, caused, of course, by the backup from Seaside.

Apparently, what should have been a relatively brief trip turned into one of some extra hours. All I could do was to extend my condolences and commiserate with her a bit on our city's lack of consideration for passersby, like herself, by not vigorously pursuing a bypass.

I understand that projects of the magnitude of a bypass past Seaside take years from the onset to fulfillment, with many players (the Oregon Department of Transportation, the county, the city, and, perhaps even the feds) involved. However, if we, the residents of Seaside, and our elected officials, do not seek this, and plan for it, it will never happen, and the traffic will simply get worse.

Do we really want Seaside weekend traffic to be like rush hour on the Interstate 5 bridge across the Columbia in Portland? Gridlock? That's where we are headed if we do not soon begin to pursue a bypass.

ROD DAWSON  
Seaside



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