

# 'Oregon Stories' jazz and history come to Liberty Theater

ASTORIA — The 12-piece Portland Jazz Composers Ensemble announces its most ambitious project ever: a musical triptych that tells the stories of three Oregonians who triumphed over racial and gender discrimination to achieve inspiring, notable success.

"Oregon Stories" features original compositions by famed film composer and guitarist Mark Orton ("Tin Hat," "Madeline Peyroux"), Darrell Grant, celebrated pianist and music professor at Portland State University, and ensemble Executive Director Douglas Detrick, an award-winning composer and trumpeter.

KMHD-FM host Jessica Rand produced the audio interviews which comprise the foundation for this musical chronicle of living history. Radio broadcast of a studio recording is scheduled for late 2016, when the "Oregon Stories" album will be released.

Live performances are scheduled April 1-8 in the

## Oregon Stories

8 p.m. Saturday, April 2

Liberty Theater

1203 Commercial St., Astoria

\$20 general admission, \$15 seniors, \$5 students w/I.D.

Tickets at [ticketswest.com](http://ticketswest.com)

communities where the stories originated, Hood River, Astoria and Portland:

Astoria's performance is 8 p.m. Saturday, April 2, at the Liberty Theater. Astoria is where Deborah Dempsey was the first woman river pilot to guide oceangoing vessels over the Columbia River Bar. Dempsey tells her own story.

The Hood River event is Friday, April 1, at The Columbia Center for the Arts where George Akiyama was threatened with violence, and a fellow citizen stepped forward to support him when he came



Submitted Photo

Portland Jazz Composers Ensemble.

home from serving in World War II. Told by historian Linda Tamura

Portland's version is Friday, April 8, at The Old Church

where DeNorval Unthank, a Portland African-American physician, became a civil rights leader. Told by his daughter Lesley Unthank.

"The 'Oregon Stories' project makes a powerful statement: jazz is an inclusive art form that can tell the stories of many communities, not just of

the elite urban audience often associated with the music," Detrick said. "The project will allow the PJCE to reach across the conventional boundaries of our field and participate in one of the most important conversations of our time—equality."

The Oregon Stories project was funded in part by the Fred W. Fields Fund of the Oregon Community Foundation, and by the Regional Arts and Culture Council, and is sponsored by the Oregon Historical Society and Oregon Humanities.

The Portland Jazz Composers Ensemble is dedicated to the performance of new works by Portland and Oregon-based composers. Its exclusive commitment to new music, its unique instrumentation and its conductorless performances (since 2014) set it apart from traditional big bands and small jazz groups in Oregon. These qualities, combined with the record label and community roundtables, makes it a unique organization.

# 'Bad Boys' to serve up 2016 volleyball tourney

Story by EVE MARX

For EO Media Group

SEASIDE — Deng Thepharat was in Seaside mid-March to introduce himself to members of the Seaside Chamber of Commerce. One of three new directors of the Seaside Beach Volleyball Tournament, he hopes to bring more streamlined play, more teams, more dates and more age groups to the event.

Thepharat even told chamber members that new smartphone technology can provide hours of free time for competitors — time that can be spent browsing, dining or shopping in Seaside.

"You'll be able to find out when you play, where you'll play and against who," PT Thilavanh, the tournament's co-director, said. "All this will

be in the palm of your smartphone, your tablet or your laptop. You'll be able to tell your friends and family when you're playing so they can cheer you on."

## Laos to Seaside

Thilavanh and Thepharat have been friends since childhood. They came from the same small village in Laos to the Pacific Northwest as child refugees during the war in Vietnam.

"Our sponsor was from Seaside, so that's how we got here," Thepharat said. "We played volleyball in our village and when we got to Seaside, we played volleyball here."

In partnership with fellow volleyball enthusiast Mike Griffin, these three are the new NWAS/Bad Boys Open Vol-

leyball tournament directors for the 35th annual Seaside Chamber Beach Volleyball event Aug. 12-14.

NWAS and Bad Boys Open Volleyball are two Portland groups operated by Thepharat, Thilavanh and Griffin, active members of the volleyball community and former players at the Seaside tournament.

Last year 1,509 teams competed on 134 courts.

The Seaside Chamber has hosted the event for three decades.

## Funding charities

An all-charity event, funds have been raised to benefit the Children's Cancer Association, Wounded Warrior Project, Big Brothers Big Sisters (Columbia NW) and Doernbecher Children's Hospital, among other charities.



Submitted Photo

Deng Thepharat, Mike Griffin and PT Thilavanh.

Thilavanh, an information technology professional at Nike World Headquarters in Beaverton, said the tournament is an asset to Seaside because it brings people out to enjoy what the community has to offer.

"It's a tradition for many people and a great start of new one, not to mention the

revenues it generates for local businesses," he said.

Thepharat, a professional software developer, said he and his partners put in their bid to direct the tournament because they believed they could improve the game overall.

"We're introducing music and we are addressing our pet peeve that the tournaments be run on time," Thepharat said. "In some tournaments you don't play for hours. We've also added an extra day and more for juniors."

Griffin, founder of Bad Boys Open Volleyball, which got its start in 2000, and a police officer for 20 years in Washington County in Beaverton, said he met Thepharat and Thilavanh when they were practically youngsters and playing in his tournament.

"I've been playing the Seaside tournament since 1989 or '90," Griffin said. "It's a tradition for a lot of people. PT, Deng and I threw our names in the hat when we found out the chamber was looking for new directors. Nothing against the guys who ran it before — they're great guys — but we've got some new ideas we'd like to see happen."

Griffin said he's really excited to be part of this tournament. "Volleyball is a big part of my life, just as it is PT and Deng's. I've made a ton of friends through the volleyball community. We know it's a big venture to put on the 35th annual tournament. There will be expectations and we hope we do a good enough job that everybody will be happy. We're ready for the challenge."