

The Liberty Theatre 'Astoria's Living Room'



A gem of a concert hall

DAILY ASTORIAN/FILE PHOTO

Clark Foerster, a Steinway & Sons certified piano technician, straightens and aligns hammers in the Steinway D grand piano on stage in the Liberty Theatre in 2015.

By **CATE GABLE**
FOR COAST WEEKEND

The Liberty Theatre is a community treasure that too many of us take for granted. Several years ago Keith Clark, artistic director for the Astoria Musical Festival, told a story about his first trip into Astoria.

"I still remember driving on Highway 30 and coming over the top of the hill — the water, the bridge, the town — it was beautiful. A movie set. But the real surprise was meeting Steve Forrester and walking into the Liberty Theatre." Clark

continues, "The acoustics were amazing. The great advantage was that the Liberty Theatre had never been restored. There was no mucking it up, even the seats were still original. I knew immediately — it was a diamond in the rough."

It was a labor of love to save the theater, to polish that diamond. So, many years later, after our fine theater has been lovingly restored, it needs only visionary management to broaden its appeal and reintroduce it to a wider audience.

Under new management

Enter Jennifer Crocket, theatre director, and Ber-

eneice Jones-Centeno, artistic director. This young accomplished duo understand the passion for music because they are musicians themselves. Crocket is a clarinet player who has performed in many of the Pacific Northwest's best concert halls. Jones-Centeno is an opera singer and music educator. They are bringing new sounds into our grand hall.

Crocket and her husband were living in Portland before moving to Astoria, but as she says, "we were unhappy with a lot of the direction Portland has gone. It's so huge, you feel you can't really make

Continued on Pg. 9