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a difference. When I visited the Liberty Theatre I saw that I could use my background to champion the arts. For the first time I've been able to merge my business life with my music life."

Crocket, originally from Franklin, Pennsylvania, was schooled in Michigan and DePaul University in Chicago. She has a very inclusive vision for how the theater can support our community.

"We are Astoria's living room, not an elite venue. Bereniece and I have a goal of one free event a month, and every time we do that, we pack the house."

She adds, "But over and over I hear people saying 'I've never been inside the theater before' which seems amazing to me. So that's part of what we're doing — we're programming a wide scattershot of performances to see what stick, we want to see what people like. We have such a rich love of classical music in this area, but we also need to remember all the musicians on the stage started somewhere, like me — I was a public school kid."

### Music and education

Which leads to one of the other goals of this new management team — partnering with the schools to encourage a younger audience to participate in music. That's where Jones-Centeno and her expertise come into play. As she says, "It's an exciting time for the theater in Astoria! It's a time of discovery, creation, dreaming, planning, trial, failure, restarting, and analysis, with the hope that we can begin to have a really long-term love affair."

"This community is filled with lovers of culture," Jones-Centeno continues, "from abstract painting, to contra dance, to heritage preservation, to opera, to plays, to DIY crafts — everyone can find something that interests them. We want everyone to feel that the theater is open to their expression of culture. As Astoria grows, the theater has something of a responsibility to be the cultural hub for the area."

"Jennifer and I have hearts for education and this is driving some of our programming for the 2017-2018 season and beyond. We are



DANNY MILLER/THE DAILY ASTORIAN

Evening sunlight casts upon The Liberty Theatre as two people walk by in Astoria. The downtown venue is experimenting with different events to grow the audience and build support.



DAILY ASTORIAN/FILE PHOTO

To inspect the quality of the finished print, director Richard Donner showed "The Goonies" in the Liberty Theatre before its official release in 1985.

scheduling programs with educational opportunities for school-aged children in the schools, and for lifelong learners. We'll be providing lectures, workshops, talkbacks and more."

To begin nurturing a closer relationship between the theater and the schools, Crockett and Jones-Centeno offered the theater venue to the band director at Astoria High School as a fundraiser.

"There were 100 kids involved and 100 people in the audience —

and they brought in \$2,500," says Crockett. "We'd like to be able to do this once a year, not only for Astoria schools — we'll do Ilwaco next May, and Seaside and Warrenton after that."

### International offerings

As an example of the broad range of programming this dynamic duo is bring to the theatre, two weeks ago there was a fantastic performance of the a cappella quartet, Women of the World.



Jennifer Crockett

tionally known musicians.

April 20 is another example of the creative offerings Crockett and Jones-Centeno are scheduling.

On stage will be Scottish fiddler Alasdair Fraser and U.S. Juilliard-trained cellist Natalie Haas. Fraser and Haas started playing together 17 years ago. As Fraser said in his distinctive brogue after their performance at the Sisters Music Festival last summer, "Natalie was 11 when she came to one of my fiddle camps. So we've really been performing together for more than two decades."

They bring a hybrid combination of traditional folk fiddle and classic musical acumen. They illustrate how music changes as it enters other cultures: one of their popular medleys is a ringing version of the same tune — The Highlander's Farewell — as it traveled the globe from Scotland, to Spain, to our own Appalachia.

"There's not a culture on this planet that doesn't express itself with an instrument like the fiddle," Fraser says.

### World-class theater

Crocket and Jones-Centeno are hoping to build on their initial calendar of performances this year as they grow the audience for the Liberty.

As Crockett says, "We'd like to be able to schedule musicians two or three years out. That's the way to get the top-notch performers. To do that we'll need community support. Come listen and tell us what you like!"

And let's not forget the quality of our theater. Clark again, "The Liberty Theatre shares many of the same characteristics as the Musikverien in Vienna, one of the four or five best concert halls in the world: nooks and crannies and little filigrees, murals and statuary, materials of wood and plaster. Even the chandelier. These all have the tendency to give the sound little chances to hide for a millisecond so it doesn't hit you right in the face. It bounces off various things and makes for a world-class venue."

Many view these older concert halls of moderate size as the best in the world. Our Liberty Theatre is a gem that is now paired with an ambitious, talented management team. Buy a ticket (<https://libertyastoria.showare.com>) and go see what all the fuss is about.

They charmed the audience with tight harmonies, compelling rhythms and international sounds. As part of their performance they also answered questions from the audience. Someone asked how to introduce music to young children. Their answer? — "exposure kids to music, the more kinds, the better."

The Liberty Theatre management team is doing just that; they've featured everything from local indie-rock to more interna-