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teacher. His act, Possessed by Paul James (named after his grandfather, Paul, and father, James), supplements his stipend from the school district.

"To live simple, but to live with enough, you do have to have two types of income as a teacher, in Texas especially," he told me after the show. So Wert records, tours and writes music with his wife and two young sons.

But, in conservative Texas, "moonlighting, working two jobs as a teacher, is really frowned upon," he said.

His stage persona arose from a need to keep those worlds separate — not least because parents may not want to know how Mr. Wert was spending his free time.


"A parent who has a child diagnosed with cerebral palsy or a traumatic brain injury seeing their teacher getting s--faced on stage with homies (is something) they're not so keen on," he said with a chuckle.

So he lived a separate life,

drawing regular income from his Monday-through-Friday job, and a little extra from weekend shows.

Wert said he has found a kind of balance, though, since he started using his act to encourage people to volunteer in their public schools, to reach out "for families that might feel isolated, or for kids that need more avenues, and they always need more avenues" — that is, since he chose to let his professional life inform his artistic one.

After a draining day at a demanding job, he tries to find time to decompress by writing music, often about his teaching experiences — just as Arvi Ostrom spent decades sketching the patrons he served at Uniontown's Snug Harbor Tavern and the ships he observed from the saloon.

And just as, elsewhere on the North Coast, bartenders act in community theater, firefighters write poetry, restaurateurs sculpt and receptionists paint — living two lives, and, sometimes, allowing the vantage point of one life to enrich the other. 

Open auditions for 'Peter and Wendy'

ASTORIA — Open auditions for the Missoula Children's Theater production of "Peter and Wendy" will be held 10 a.m. Monday, July 31, at the Liberty Theatre (1203 Commercial St.).

Students wishing to audition must arrive by 10 a.m. and stay for the entire two-hour audition session.

Roles are for students entering first grade through 12th grade in the fall. Approximately 50 to 60 local students will be cast to appear in the show. There is no guarantee that everyone who auditions will be cast in the play. Casting is at the sole discretion of the directors from Missoula Children's Theater.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

The first rehearsal begins 15 minutes after the audition. Participation is free.

Auditions, rehearsals and performances are held daily, Monday, July 31, to Aug. 5.

The two final performances will be on Saturday, Aug. 5 at the Liberty Theatre.

For details about the auditions, the rehearsals, and the production, visit libertyastoria.org.

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