

# Live local performances impress and refresh

Writer invites readers to make just one New Year resolution

By **PATRICK WEBB**  
FOR COAST WEEKEND

**W**ith Christmas literally under our belts, and the New Year approaching, I suspect many Coast Weekend readers are making resolutions.

I gave up tying those anchors around my neck in the mid-1980s while living in Washougal, Washington. I had pledged to run around my neighborhood every morning. All was going well until the 11th day, when it rained.

While I have learned my lesson about setting unattainable goals, I do believe this time of year is appropriate for reflections and looking ahead.

The year 2016 was ghastly in the number of musical stars who died. I was not a particular fan of David Bowie, Merle Haggard or Prince, but when their obituaries were published during the first few months I decided to take action.

For me, 2016 became the year to see the giants — just in case it was the last time. I embarked on a seven-stop Portland-Seattle concert tour that embraced Patti Smith, Bruce Springsteen, Arlo Guthrie, Paul McCartney, The Who, Bob Dylan (with wonderful Mavis Staples) and Dead & Company.

I had seen The Who and Dylan multiple times over the past four decades, but the others had always been elusive. Growing up in England, I was too young to attend any Beatles concerts, but had caught up with Ringo while living in Indiana, my last home before moving to the North Coast 20 years ago.

Having exhausted my bank account, 2017 became the stay-at-home-and-buy-the-cheap-used-CD year. That was OK, I heard the music, but it lacked the live concert flavor.

To this day, I am somewhat doubtful whether it is possible to properly embrace the music of the Grateful Dead without consuming mood-altering substances (which I abhor). But the heightened experience of Mickey Hart and Bob Weir grooving 50 feet away from my seat in the Moda Center was considerably more spellbinding than putting one of 36 “Dick’s Picks” on the home CD player and relaxing with a teacup of PG Tips.

Two live shows toward the end of this year — much closer to home than Portland’s Rose District, Seattle’s Moore The-



PATRICK WEBB PHOTO

If you discover longtime professionals Eric Tingstad and Nancy Rumbel playing a concert nearby anytime soon, the writer advises North Coast people to get tickets right away. The duo delighted an audience of 150 in Ilwaco, Washington, earlier this month with their instrumental skills and charming presentation. Their “Acoustic Garden” won the Grammy Award for Best New Age Album in 2003.

ater or the Chateau Ste. Michelle winery in Woodinville, Washington — reminded me of the joys of live entertainment. And I hereby resolve to enjoy more in 2018.

The crowds at those two experiences couldn’t be more different. One was a performance of “Carmen” shared with an audience of just 125 at Astoria’s Liberty Theatre. The other was a terrific low-key seasonal concert by instrumentalists Tingstad and Rumbel at the Inn at the Harbour in Ilwaco, Washington. Organizer Diane Marshall of the Water Music Festival told me attendance was close to 150. The auditorium was packed, with a spillover crowd in armchairs in the festively decorated lobby; still others were turned away.

Tacoma Opera brought a truncated version of Bizet’s opera to the Liberty, a building that can seat 700. With just five actors and a pianist, it was skillfully trimmed to raw basics; the two divas sang each aria as if their lives depended on it.

Longtime professionals Eric Tingstad and Nancy Rumbel played pipes, finger-style guitar and double-reed woodwinds,

demonstrating admirable charm in their introductions to cleverly arranged Christmas favorites, plus original works that evoked the scenery of our beloved Northwest.

I left enthralled, impressed, satisfied and refreshed.

Now I am marking my calendar for 2018.

## Entertainment in the new year

Those enthusiastic musicians from Brownsmead Flats will be taking the Performing Arts Center in Astoria by storm Sunday, Jan. 7.

The Liberty Theatre has a Classical Series that features six shows between now and Friday, May 25. The next is Thursday, Jan. 4, when Project Trip will perform works by Brahms, Bach and Charlie Parker, as well as “Peter and the Wolf,” Prokofiev’s delightful work that introduced me to the orchestra during my grade-school years.

The Liberty’s schedule brims with promise. Receiving my strong recommendation are cellist Sergey Antonov and pianist Ilya Kazantsev, popular from the Astoria Music Festival, performing a “Russian Old New



FILE PHOTO

The Liberty Theatre

Year’s Eve” concert Saturday, Jan. 13. Two Portland talents, brilliant violinist Sara Kwak and pianist Cary Lewis, the true unsung hero of the annual Astoria Music Festival, will follow Saturday, Jan. 20.

For those who like amateur theater, the Astor Street Opry Co. — which delights us every year with “Shanghaied,” “Lewis & Clark” and “Scrooged” — plans to stage “Peter Pan.” Kids will audition next week, and the show will open Saturday, Feb. 17.

Multi-talented Mick Alderman (remember his brilliant Macbeth some years ago?) is gearing up to direct the comedy “Noises Off” at the Coaster Theatre in Cannon Beach. It opens Friday, March 16. Edward James, one of Astoria’s most experienced theater directors, is readying the ever-so-amusing “See How They Run” for Friday, March 30 at the Astoria Opry.

All this is right here at our doorstep.

The ushers at the Liberty Theatre are among my favorite people. After “Carmen” last month, while the exhausted/elated singers graciously posed for iPhone photos in the lobby, we all expressed disappointment that so few had shared the rich experience.

In contrast, I was delighted that so many had wedged into the hard pews of the former Presbyterian church in Ilwaco on a Sunday afternoon to savor Tingstad and Rumbel’s delightful and skilled instrumental offerings.

So as the New Year beckons, let’s all raise a glass to toast the live musicians and actors who will entertain us in 2018.

We just need to get out of our armchairs and go out to see them!

I fully suspect — indeed, I almost guarantee — that we will not be disappointed.

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