

By KATHERINE LACAZE  
FOR COAST WEEKEND

In a performance about the fate of life on earth that unites music and the spoken word, writer/philosopher Kathleen Dean Moore and concert pianist Rachele McCabe deliver a message designed to “open hearts without breaking them,” Moore said.

Their production, “A Call to Life: Variations on a Theme of Extinction,” will be the centerpiece of an Earth Day Ingathering hosted by Clatsop Community College and held at the Liberty Theatre.

The free community event — “Astoria Call to Life” — begins 6:30 p.m. Friday, April 20, and includes the 45-minute performance, as well as a poetry reading by Robert Michael Pyle, activities to engage the audience and socializing with light refreshments.

From 7 to 8 p.m., during Moore and McCabe’s performance, a Columbia River Maritime Museum field educator will host a Life Cycle of the Pacific Salmon program designed for children 6 to 12. The event will end with a sing-along.

The apolitical event includes no formal call to action, but the audience will have access to information guides that raise awareness and provide ideas for practical behaviors to adopt.

“The vision is, one would leave the event feeling more committed to the importance of taking action surrounding all sorts of issues,” such as clean energy, green living, conservation, local food and more, said event organizer Nancy Cook, a writing and literature faculty member at the college.

### Message of hope

“A Call to Life” knits the reading of Moore’s written word on the global extinction crisis with McCabe’s performance of Sergei Rachmaninoff’s “Variations on a Theme of Corelli.” Through this synergy of words and music, “we’re trying to reach a particular audience with a particular method,” Moore said.

“It’s difficult for words to have the impact that words and music have together,” she said.

Cook agreed. “There is something really amazing about the power of music and the power of the heartfelt word in a live audi-



COURTESY CLATSOP COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Rachele McCabe and Kathleen Dean Moore have collaborated on a project that brings music and philosophy together and explores the urgency of saving plants and animals from extinction.

ence that opens the human heart,” she said.

McCabe and Moore have been collaborating for decades. When McCabe first heard Moore speaking on climate change at an event, the pianist told the writer, “When you speak, I hear Rachmaninoff,” and they partnered to pair words with that music, Moore said.

McCabe and Moore, who both live in Corvallis, have performed “A Call to Life” about a dozen times since 2015 in locations across North America, from Honolulu and Juneau to Flagstaff, Ariz., and Alberta, Canada. This will be the first time it’s presented on the North Coast, and then they head to Scotland.

Although the themes of climate disruption and mass extinction are troubling, weighty topics, and McCabe and Moore don’t shy away from accuracy and truth-telling,

they also want the message to be hopeful.

Their narrative travels through celebration, sorrow, bewilderment and resolve. It begins with a recognition of the extraordinary and diverse world humans occupy, and then warns of the planetary emergency caused by climate change and other environmental disruptions that threatens plants, animals and other living things.

“Then it moves to resolve, where hope gets transformed into a kind of courage and yearning becomes transformed into a kind of moral resolve, where we will take a stand against the disappearance of these beautiful creatures,” Moore said. “I believe hope is something that you choose, and it is expressed in action.”

Her task, as an environmental writer, is to present dense information, packed with scientific data, in

a way that appeals to emotions and is accessible to lay persons. She is less concerned with doling out a lecture than she is with creating a piece of art that leads to “a moment of total emotional involvement.”

“It makes you want to lift your head and do what you need to do,” she said.

### Broadening the imagination


Cook, who also coordinates the college’s Ales & Ideas lecture series, developed the idea for the Earth Day Ingathering, as she’s “definitely into bridging the college to the community,” she said. Cook has worked with Moore in multiple capacities over the years and wanted to bring her, along with McCabe, to show their project in the area.

“It is interesting how climate change can be a hard issue to wrestle with, because it can bring great amounts of despair,” Cook said. “One of the beautiful things about Kathleen is that, without indulging in denial, she goes beyond despair and empowers the individual to realize their actions matter.”

During the gathering, audience members will be introduced to numerous actions they can take as individuals, members of groups and citizens to help mitigate the problem. To illuminate how Moore and McCabe’s global message relates to local efforts in coastal communities, representatives from various partner organizations from the Columbia Pacific area will be present with materials and other resources.

While a full reversal of climate change is unrealistic, Cook said, “there’s a lot we can do to be part of the solution.” Both conscientious individual habits and strong policy are needed to mitigate the damage done to other species, she added.

One of the first steps to addressing the global climate crisis and other environmental issues is to open the imagination and adopt creative responses, Moore said.

“There are so many false dichotomies,” pushed by those with special interests, she said. “It’s a failure of imagination if we go with one of two terrible solutions. ... That’s how the program ends, with an invitation to imagine a better way to live.” 

### IF YOU GO

**What:** “A Call to Life: Variations on a Theme of Extinction,” an Earth Day Ingathering

**When:** 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Friday, April 20

**Where:** The Liberty Theatre, 1203 Commercial St.

**Cost:** Free

### ABOUT THE EVENT

**The Astoria event is made possible** by a grant from the Oregon Humanities Responsive Program and co-sponsors Columbia River Maritime Museum, Cannery Pier Hotel, Fort George Brewery & Public House, Pacific Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, Blue Scorcher Bakery, Astoria Cooperative, and Three Cups Coffee House.

**Groups that will provide** Earth Day-inspired outreach and education in the Liberty Theatre lobby prior to the performance include North Coast Watershed Council, Astoria Library, Indivisible North Coast, Haystack Rock Awareness Program, Columbia River Estuary Study Taskforce (CREST), Citizens’ Climate Lobby, North Coast Wildlife Center and SOLVE.

**After the event,** audience members are invited to enjoy a no-host happy hour with small plates and drink specials at the nearby Carruthers Restaurant.

**For more information** on McCabe and Moore’s project, visit [musicandclimateaction.com](http://musicandclimateaction.com). For information about the Astoria event, contact Cook at 503-338-2335 or [ncook@clatsopcc.edu](mailto:ncook@clatsopcc.edu).