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ASTORIA MUSIC FESTIVAL'S 16TH SEASON COMBINES STAR POWER, LOCAL VOICES, FRESH TALENT

By **WILLIAM HAM**
FOR COAST WEEKEND

The musical and cultural event of the summer is upon us once again. The Astoria Music Festival is poised to kick off its 16th season of bringing the finest of fine arts to the North Coast.

The Festival runs Friday, June 15, through Sunday, July 1, with performances all three weekends at the Liberty Theatre and smaller, more intimate midweek performances scheduled at the Liberty's upstairs McTavish Room, Clatsop Community College's Performing Arts Center and Grace Episcopal Church.

The 20 planned events represent a wide array of operatic, symphonic and chamber music, as performed by a collection of internationally renowned soloists and relative newcomers, as personally selected and recruited by Artistic Director Keith Clark.

"I wouldn't like to say I take advantage of my friends, but I do!" Clark said.

This year's Festival promises to be the most wide-ranging and diverse yet. Highlights include a celebration of the centenary of the birth of Leonard Bernstein and the passing of Claude Debussy; the premiere of new works by a dozen Oregon composers; and, as Clark puts it, "lots and lots of Bach."

Among the many noteworthy performers are alto saxophonist Chika Inoue, violinist and conductor Monica Huggett, and two longtime favorites: cellist Sergey Antonov and pianist Ilya Kazantsev.

This last pair will perform multiple times throughout the Festival, including Kazantsev's solo recital debut and the return of "Sergey's Happy Hour," where the duo are joined by Astoria's celebrated visual artist Darren Orange, who will create a new painting onstage to their accompaniment.



DWIGHT CASWELL PHOTO

Astoria Music Festival co-founder and artistic director Keith Clark



FILE PHOTO

Deac Guidi, an Astoria resident and baritone



COURTESY ASTORIA MUSIC FESTIVAL

Cellist Sergey Antonov, left, and pianist Ilya Kazantsev

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