

OPINION

editor@dailyastorian.com



THE DAILY ASTORIAN

Founded in 1873

KARI BORGEN
Publisher

JIM VAN NOSTRAND
Editor

JEREMY FELDMAN
Circulation Manager

DEBRA BLOOM
Business Manager

JOHN D. BRUIJN
Production Manager

CARL EARL
Systems Manager

OUR VIEW

Fire season is here, be safe

It's that time of year again. Fire season officially kicked off last week in northwest Oregon. For most residents of the state, fire season started weeks prior.

Northwest Oregon typically gets a good dose of rainfall during the spring, and that delays the start of an active fire season. But this spring was drier and warmer than usual, and that means the environment is more flammable.

Last year, the Northwest Oregon District, typically one of the last in the state to declare the start of fire season, didn't do so until July 10. This year it was June 21.

Just because we're on the wet side of the mountains doesn't mean we're not at risk. Wildfires in the Tillamook State Forest — collectively known as the "Tillamook Burn" — charred more than 350,000 acres of old-growth trees from 1933 to 1951; debris reached ships 500 miles at sea.

When fire season is declared in a district, it means that the Oregon Department of Forestry and related agencies impose certain restrictions on public and work-related activities in the state's forests.

Early signs suggest that we can expect a fire season that could stretch into September: Already, more than 156 square miles are burning in central Oregon, the largest near Maupin.

As of last week, more than 200 wildfires already have been reported on Oregon Department of Forestry lands. More than 80 percent of them were caused by humans, the department said.

Which brings to mind another bit of timing surrounding fire season: It's not at all unusual to have the start of the season roughly correspond with the stretch of time during which fireworks legally can be sold in Oregon. Fireworks stands in Oregon opened on June 23 and will continue sales through July 6.

In the wake of last year's Eagle Creek fire, started when a teenager dropped a smoke bomb onto extremely dry ground in the Columbia River Gorge, we probably don't need much of a reminder about the potentially dangerous combination of fireworks and tinder-dry forest lands. But here goes anyway: Oregon law prohibits possession,



Ryan Brennecke/The Bulletin

A helicopter drops a bucket of water along the leading edge of a wildfire as it burns along Montgomery Road near Lake Billy Chinook in Oregon last week.



Tristan Fortsch/KATU-TV

A wildfire burns in the Columbia River Gorge above Cascade Locks in 2017.

use or sale of any firework that flies into the air, explodes or travels more than 12 feet horizontally on the ground, unless you have a permit issued by the Oregon State fire marshal. Bottle rock-

ets, Roman candles and firecrackers are illegal in Oregon without a permit.

All fireworks are prohibited on all Oregon beaches, in state parks and campgrounds and on all federal

public lands.

Officials can seize illegal fireworks and charge offenders with a class B misdemeanor, which could result in a fine of up to \$2,500 per violation and a civil penalty of up to \$500. People who misuse fireworks or who allow fireworks to cause damage may be required to pay fire suppression costs or other damages — witness the Washington teenager who started the Eagle Creek fire, now saddled with a \$36 million restitution bill.

Here's something else to keep in mind as we approach the heart of fire season: If you're responsible for starting a blaze, you put firefighters at risk. They began training at Camp Rilea last weekend (see photo gallery on Page 5A); 400 National Guardsmen are slated for pre-training in early July.

Those firefighters will have plenty to do this summer; lightning strikes will keep them busy. There's no need for you to add to their workload. Act with care this summer while you're enjoying our wildlands.

GUEST COLUMN

For live music in June, Astoria offered it all

Astoria Music and Scandinavian festivals connected musicians and listeners

When I finish teaching a music history class, I always ask my students: What did you think of the class, and what would you change if you were the instructor?

This spring one of my students responded: I wouldn't make the live concert review a requirement — it should only be for extra credit.

Well, that's one change I have no intention of making. Live music is something humans respond to on a deep level. It contains aesthetic elements that connect performer and listener.

Music expert John Shepherd, paraphrasing composer L. B. Meyer, said "A competent listener perceives and responds to music with his total being ... Through such empathetic identification, music is quite literally felt ..."

Live music takes us back to experiencing music as it was originally intended.

Astoria Music Festival

The Astoria Music Festival, which runs through July 1, has been the place to be for classical enthusiasts.

The festival offered everything from solo



Scott Docherty/redhare.com

Sunniva Brynnel, left, and Sara Pajunen perform at the Scandinavian festival.

and chamber ensembles to large symphony pieces and opera, beginning with Renaissance work and extending to pieces from the 20th and 21st centuries.

Opening night at the 16th anniversary gala recital brought us some of the finest classical instrumentalists around — world-class performers such as cellist Sergey Antonov, violinist Maureen Nelson and pianist Cary Lewis, director of AMF Chamber Music. You see the music in their faces and body movements, and hear and feel it in the way they

caressed their instruments.

In my book, you can't beat live opera for its emotional content, and the AMF's production of Puccini's "Tosca" was just magnificent. I cried with Tosca and sighed with the lovers' plight. I'm still not able to suppress extraneous sounds as I feel the emotion in the music. (I apologize to those around me whose concentration might have been disturbed by my clasped hands and anxious breathing.)

Even with several leadership changes and financial crises, the festival has consistently

entertained and inspired classical music buffs throughout the Northwest.

Scandinavian Festival

If you were looking for music that opens up your world to different cultures, then it's the Astoria Scandinavian Midsummer Festival that you want to experience with excellent Finnish, Swedish, Norwegian and Danish, composers and performers.

Astoria visitors can't help but recognize the influence of Scandinavian culture on the city. This 51-year-old festival is a reminder of this influence with its arts, crafts, food — and, of course, the music that connects us.

While listening to the Pajunen/Brynnel duo, an act of Swedish-Finnish American ancestry, I began to imagine myself in the environment that influenced these composers and musicians. Both received classical training at the New England Conservatory, but they have roots in large Scandinavian communities in the Midwest.

The festival's folk musicians inspire centuries-old dance movements — dancing that looks natural and uncomplicated, with the musical vibrations flowing through listeners and performers, resonating through their entire bodies.

Long after the festival's conclusion, I found myself humming the tunes, moving with the rhythm of what I'd heard, even hearing it in the wind. This is what live music does: It haunts you for days.

Denise Reed is conductor of the North Coast Chorale and a member of the Oregon Humanities Board of Directors. She teaches at Clatsop and Tillamook Bay community colleges.