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students, the band has also had doctors, two ministers, a Buddhist priest and members of the Coast Guard.

Hale remembers many trombone and some flute players from the Coast Guard who played.

“They’re really interested in playing and they get in town and the first thing they do is looking around, ‘where can I play?’”

People travel to rehearsals at the PAC from as far away as Portland to Ocean Park and Cloverdale.

Anderson was one of Stromquist’s first students when he came to Astoria to teach band in 1966.

John Hammond, a trombonist and retired band teacher from Warrenton High School, has played with the band for 16 years.

He enjoys the comradery in the group.

“You get an opportunity to perform some quality music with a lot of fellow musicians who enjoy playing,” he said.

Shatto said, “my favorite memories are the people that come through and are still in the band.”

Many musicians are also committed to the band through investments in their instruments. Some spend between \$3,000 to \$8,000 or more on them.

Community support

Hale attributes much of the band’s success to the community, though one moment stands out to him.

The band was playing a concert in Cannon Beach on the third or Fourth of July and the conductor, Jim Smith, had put a request for donations so the band could buy chimes. At intermission, a man came up to Smith and handed him his card and said ‘just go out and buy those chimes and send me the bill.’

The chimes cost \$7,000. Smith ordered them immediately and sent the man the bill which got paid.

“That’s just one of those incredible moments, you go ‘wow,’” Hale said.

Stromquist remembers when Mark Goodenberger, local historian John Goodenberger’s older brother, donated a \$7,000 marimba to the band in memory of their mother.

The band has had five long term conductors and 27 guest conductors over the years. Some of the guest conductors are former students who come back.

Picking the music

Each concert’s music is selected by the conductor who works around a theme and the number of musicians available to play



Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

Flutist Shelley Loring Barker at a recent rehearsal.



The Astoria Tuba Quartet at ‘The Nutcracker’ in 2013.



Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

Members of the brass section at a recent rehearsal.

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different parts.

Bowler estimates the band has played over 1,000 different pieces.

She said the band’s most popular pieces ever are “Stars and Stripes” and “Star Spangled Banner.”

The band grows each time they have a guest conductor.

“They always brings stuff to us that’s challenging, sometimes over challenging, and we seem to rise to the level,” Stromquist said.

For this concert, each piece is quite different from the next, Hammond said. “It’s mentally and physically challenging to play that diverse of a program and so that’s something that I really enjoy.”

The band also provides the core brass, woodwind and percussion sections for other groups like the Little Ballet Theatre “Nutcracker” orchestra. They also have a number of quartets from the band that perform before each concert. Stromquist has also helmed the North Coast Big Band, an 18-piece traditional jazz band, that does 3-4 concerts each year.

What keeps them going?

The core group of players still remain the bedrock of the band and say they don’t know what else they would do on Monday nights when they rehearse.

“We can’t sit at home and practice alone all the time so it’s more fun to play with a



Woodwind and brass players.

group,” Bowler said.

Shatto said, “All of us love music, all of us love to play. That’s one of the big joys in our lives.”

Shatto and Hammond agreed that they hope more young people and audiences who haven’t been to a concert experience the band.

“I’d like to see a lot more young people really enjoy what a concert band can do,” Hammond said.

While these musicians are still committed players, Bowler said they are hoping there are people coming up in the band who want to get involved.

“It’s up to the next generations to keep the community going,” Bowler said.