

CONTACT US  
Lucy Kleiner  
lkleiner@dailyastorian.com

# WEEKEND BREAK

FOLLOW US  
facebook.com/  
DailyAstorian

## Holiday music's power

An annual source of warmth, community and joy



Christmas music has the power to elevate our spirits.  
Jo Pomeroy

By DENISE REED

**H**oliday music brings us together. We all like to hear and sing the music of the season.

### It begins with the notes

Music has the power to take us to another place — to create order out of chaos. This order is communicated by musical notations — symbols written on the musical staff.

The way music makes you feel is not accidental.

The different ordering of musical notes was originally established as “modes” to evoke a particular emotion. Most people, even those with no musical training, can tell you when music makes them feel happy or sad. The composers of carols and holiday songs chose to order the notes to make you happy, nostalgic or warm and fuzzy inside. Technically, it’s the distance between notes in a scale that produces the different emotional effects of the sounds.

### Good vibrations

More importantly, Christmas music makes us feel amiable toward fellow humans — we like each other more and send out good vibes.

Actually, the word “vibes” is

derived from the musical term “vibrations.” In the book, “The Secret Power of Music,” David Tame says all nature is composed of one basic substance or energy. According to music scholars, this energy is vibration. This is what musically connects us with each other and connects the performer to the audience.

### Come together

Many cultures have holiday traditions that revolve around music. For instance, my holiday music tradition was to play all of the records from the “Christmas at the Fireside” record. I’ve lost the record now, but my son asks about the songs without fail every Christmas Eve and his favorite is still “Masters in this Hall.”

Other North Coast residents listen to the musical rendition of “’Twas the Night Before Christmas” with their family every year. Another communal tradition, which the North Coast Chorale will renew this year, is attending “Amahl and the Night Visitors,” which was repeated for 12 years as a Christmas Eve television event in the ‘50s.

Of course, Christmas caroling is a classic holiday activity that brings us closer to our neighbors. And let us not forget the annual North Coast perfor-

mance of “Handel’s Messiah.”

### Looking back

I recall an event I attended every year in Chicago at the Moody Bible Institute. The musicians would sing and play holiday music for hours. The free event was professionally prepared and excellently performed for an audience that would come and go at their leisure but could stay for the entire show.

My family always attended, even when my son was so young he would fall asleep 39 minutes into the concert. My daughter remembers a John Rutter song she still hums today, “The Shepherds Pipe Carol,” which happens to be a North Coast Chorale favorites as well.

### Ubuntu

Music renews us. Certain rhythms are considered lullabies, and a number of holiday music composed uses these rhythms. The rocking motion these time signatures produce take us back to a safe and warm place — our mother’s wombs.

When we sing, we activate the love hormone, oxytocin, which can enhance feelings of trust and bonding.

In South Africa, there is a concept known as “ubuntu” which roughly

translate to “I am because we are.” In other words, we realize our humanity by our relationships with other people. This can be seen through singing with others, empathizing with others and caring for others. We are energized, and that energy is renewable every year during the holidays.

### Holiday game

Below is a list of popular holiday songs. Each letter represents a word in the first line of that holiday tune. Can you decipher them all?

1. HYAMLC
2. TFNTADS
3. JTTWTLIC
4. SBSBICTITC
5. SNHNAICAIB
6. JBJBJBR
7. CROAOFJFNAYN
8. JOSLYETW
9. UOTHRPOJGOSC
10. OTFDOCMTLGTM
11. ICUAMC
12. AIAMNCFAB
13. WCITWLTR
14. IDOAWCJLTOIUTK
15. ISMKSCUTMLN
16. WYWAMC
17. AIWFCIMTFT

Answers on B2

Denise Reed is the conductor of the North Coast Chorale.