



James Anderson

From left, Celeste Olivares, Annie Langa and Julia Gingerich perform a dance piece from Sparrow Dance Co.'s debut show 'FLIGHT' in January.

Continued from Page 4

Cohen serves as the company's board treasurer and administrative assistant. She also works as an instructor at Maddox Dance Studio.

The company often pairs dance with other forms of visual and performance art. Their debut production, for example, included a singer, poet and an art installation by a local woodworker.

"It's not just dance and only dance," Gingerich said. "I like to bring in live musicians

or figure out, 'How can we use this piece of sculpture because it inspired me?'"

'A passion project with benefits'

Before the coronavirus pandemic led to event cancellations, the company was consistently presenting at least one event each month.

The company rents and uses various locations for rehearsals and programs, from the First Presbyterian Church to the outdoors.

The pandemic temporarily curtailed these activities — including a May fundraiser at the



Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

From left, Julia Gingerich, Sarah Cohen and Sarah Elder from Sparrow Dance Co. perform an Irish dance outside the Columbia River Maritime Museum. The trio also performed at the Astoria Column and the Garden of Surging Waves in August.

Liberty Theatre. The lack of events, however, has created an opportunity to further develop the company's business and sustainability.

The company is a nonprofit. Currently, neither Gingerich nor Cohen receive compensa-

tion for their work, but they hope to see that change in the future.

"We're planning on having this not just be a passion project (but eventually) a passion project with benefits," Cohen said.

Continued from Page 2

building of an old pizza place that had closed on Holladay Drive. The couple turned the space into a Cajun restaurant.

A new scene

Sowa slowly introduced the life and flavor of Louisiana to Seaside.

He even brought performers from Louisiana and Chicago.

"When you go to New Orleans there's like three things you do: food, music and fun," Sowa said. "So I tried to bring that atmosphere into Seaside, and it took a

while."

In 2007, Sowa attempted to down-size and move to Cannon Beach, where he opened Sweet Basil's. Three months in, he felt like he was missing out on something.

"We were realizing people were missing the Cajun food from Seaside, so little by little we introduced the whole night scene again," Sowa said. "It became the in-thing on a Friday night. We were untouchable."

Everyone who visited Sweet Basil's would dance along to the late Maggie Kitson's band, Maggie and the Katz, Sowa said.

He misses greeting each customer.

"I miss the people," Sowa said.

The last hoorah

"There's something different between becoming a chef and cooking. There's a big difference," Sowa said. "If you want to become a chef you have to continuously learn."

At the Silver Salmon, Sowa uses his Cajun influence to transform local seafood into a new flavor for Astoria.

"With Creole and Cajun cooking, it allowed me to use a lot of the produce and a lot of the natural fish here on the West Coast," Sowa said. "We try to buy as much as we can locally."

People like the Louisiana flavor because

it's something they've never had before, Sowa said.

If he isn't buying local, Sowa buys straight from Louisiana. He buys sausage, ham and crawfish tail meat to make one of his favorite dishes, crawfish etouffee.

"There's nothing that could surpass it, it's the best in the world," Sowa said about Louisiana's meat.

Sowa said after 40 years of being a chef, he never feels like he's going to work. Rather, he's just doing something he loves.

"If I didn't really enjoy it, I wouldn't be here," Sowa said. "This is going to be the last hoorah."

LIBERTY
THEATRE
ASTORIA OREGON

1203 Commercial St.
Astoria, OR, 97103



ASTORIA'S PREMIER THEATRE FOR THE ARTS

MUSIC

DANCE

THEATRE

GET TICKETS - libertyastoria.org // 503-325-5922 Ext. 55