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The beginning of a coastal symphony

Pederson co-founded the Columbia River Symphony with his wife, Angela Calvin-Pederson, in 2008. After the couple moved to Warrenton and found jobs teaching music in local schools, Calvin-Pederson noticed that her orchestra students lacked extracurricular opportunities to play music. She suggested to Pederson that they start a local youth symphony, Pederson said.

Both Pederson and Calvin-Pederson have had long careers in music. Aside from conducting local ensembles, Pederson plays the trumpet and works as the music teacher for Jewell School District. Calvin-Pederson plays the violin and teaches music in the Astoria School District.

When the musical couple started the symphony, it only had nine youth members. At their first concert, for which they performed simple tunes such as “Turkey In The Straw,” Pederson recollected having an audience of only four.

But the low initial numbers didn’t dissuade the Pedersons from moving forward with their new youth symphony. In fact, adult community members began to express interest in joining the symphony alongside the youth players.

“We started to realize that there was a need for community members who maybe weren’t at the most prestigious level that some of the other ensembles are looking for,” Pederson said. “There was a need for people (to become involved in music) without having the pressure to play so perfectly.”

Today, the symphony includes 60 musicians ranging from talented middle schoolers all the way up to performers over 80 years old. The symphony’s all-skill level inclusive nature has attracted members who come all the way from Portland, parts of Washington state and Pacific City.

“One of the biggest points (of the symphony) is that everyone needs to feel safe and welcome,” Pederson said. “It’s such a positive vibe compared to a lot of the ensembles I’ve done in my life.”

Keeping sights set on the finale

Despite not being able to hold in-person concerts, Pederson said he chooses to view the challenges that COVID-19 has presented as a glass half-full.

He and the symphony’s board have learned more about how to use technology and the virtual sphere for the sym-



The Columbia River Symphony performing in 2018 at the Liberty Theatre.

phony. Pederson said that the gains they have made on social media and YouTube will not go away after the pandemic ends. Instead, they will be crucial to improving the symphony’s community outreach going forward.

Pederson also hopes to continue establishing collaborations with local organizations. He said that most recently the symphony has been discussing a potential collaboration with the Columbia River Maritime Museum.

Most of all, Pederson hopes to engage as many people as possible with the symphony’s music.

“The ultimate goal is get as many people involved, whether it’s helping out or playing,” Pederson said.

Interested individuals can contact crsmusicians@gmail.com to learn more about joining the Columbia River Symphony. Donations and volunteers are also welcome, Pederson said.

“This virtual concert will be a good way to get people listening and tuning in,” Pederson said.



The Columbia River Symphony and choirs from Warrenton High School and Warrenton Middle School perform at the Liberty Theatre in December 2019.