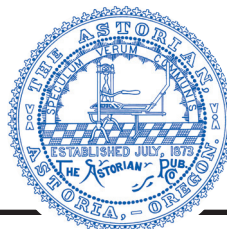


OPINION

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the Astorian

Founded in 1873

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WRITER'S NOTEBOOK

Astoria festival will feel weight of war in Ukraine

War in Ukraine has forced a new generation of Russian artists into the toughest choice of all. Do they defy the lies of their nation's leader by telling the truth, or do they join in the dictator's Big Lie?

This happened to German musicians and conductors some 80 years ago when they fled the moral stain of Adolf Hitler and the Third Reich and headed to America. Those who stayed behind have been tainted in the history of classical music.

The stakes were high during World War II, as they are now. "War Brings New Iron Curtain Down on Russia's Storied Ballet Stages," in the April 15 New York Times reported that Vladimir Putin's war in Ukraine is decimating the fabled Bolshoi Ballet. A number of the company's principal dancers have fled to other companies in other nations.

The highest visibility casualties in Russian music and opera are the conductor Valery Gergiev and the soprano Anna Netrebko. They watched their global careers evaporate suddenly several weeks ago, when they refused to disavow or criticize Putin.

Most recently, Gergiev's protégé, an American named Gavriel Heine, has walked out of his conducting position at the prestigious Mariinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg. Appalled at the Ukraine war, Heine will take his wife and son to America.

The arts — particularly literature, music and dance — are much more than entertainment in Russia. Names such as



Bolshoi Theatre

Russian artists are under pressure because of the war in Ukraine.

Pushkin, Tolstoy and Tchaikovsky are as hallowed as any others in the Russian pantheon.

In 1977, I had the opportunity to see performances of Russian works in Moscow and St. Petersburg. I will never forget the enthusiasm in the huge hall where the Bolshoi troupe dances. The emotion of the crowd was akin to what goes on at a football field when the home team is winning. I attended with a tour group out of New York City.

My seven days in Russia were not uplifting. Being in Leonid Brezhnev's Soviet Union was a downer. I came away with contempt for a people who put up with Communist dictatorship.

However, seeing the Bolshoi dancers and seeing Prokofiev's opera "War and Peace" were unforgettable. Seeing Verdi's opera "La Traviata" at the Maly Kirov theater in St. Petersburg was

a time warp. The Maly Kirov was built in Czarist times and its proscenium was once emblazoned with the double eagle of the royal family. That icon was supplanted with the hammer and cycle. As I watched Verdi's classic love story, it occurred to me that the performers were Russian comrades playing French aristocrats for an audience of Russian comrades in a theater built by royalists.

Following that trip, I read a historian who made the point that the transition from the czars to Communist dictators did change the form of Russia's government, but not the nation's endemic traits of secrecy, spying on citizens and suspicion of foreigners. Simon Morrison, a Princeton music professor, echoed that observation in the Times article about the conductor Heine's exodus from Russia. "Russia is just going to be more and more closed," said Morrison. "It's going

to revert more and more to its own true self, harsh as that may seem — a sealed-off, angry, paranoid and resentful feudal realm."

Astoria's Liberty Theatre will soon become emotionally involved in the bind that Russian artists find themselves. The star performers of the new Third Dimension Music Festival — beginning June 11 — will be Sergey Antonov, Ilya Kazantsev and Misha Keylin. These Russians have made careers in America, and they have denounced Putin's war.

Over many Astoria festivals, Antonov's story has become familiar — his Russian background, his family in New York and also in Russia. Keylin's wife is Ukrainian.

"We have hundreds if not thousands of friends in Ukraine. We're all connected," Antonov said in an interview.

Audiences bring their own emotions to a concert, and so do the performers. Antonov spoke of how the weight of this war affects a musician.

"For me that is one of the most precious aspects is that we are not machines. We transpose what's happening inside of us and in our relationships. We transpose it on the instruments. That's what's so meaningful to me in this art. I'm trying to bring the audience into a story.

"The events like this are a huge weight on us. Our desperation is that we can only hope and pray that it will stop immediately. The biggest weight is that we have no control over what's happened or will happen. And it is on top of the COVID situation. We were silenced for a year and a half."

Steve Forrester, the former editor and publisher of The Astorian, is the president and CEO of EO Media Group.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Yes or no?

Yes or no? Yes means a modern, efficient and earthquake resistant Gearhart fire and police station. Yes means placing critical infrastructure on high ground, out of the likely tsunami inundation zone. Yes means adequate space for equipment storage and first-responder training.

Yes means decontamination areas and adequate changing facilities, in compliance with today's standards. Yes means secure storage for police evidence and private spaces for victims reporting crimes. Yes means providing basic infrastructure and tools for our fire and police to do their jobs.

Yes means supporting our volunteer firefighters, who sacrifice time with their families to respond to our emergencies. Yes means safety and security for residents and visitors. Yes means coming together as a community to do good things for the good of Gearhart.

What does no offer? Nothing. Join me in voting "yes" on Measure 4-213 for a new Gearhart fire and police station.

BEBE MICHEL
Gearhart

Falls short

In 1958, the current Gearhart fire station was built from concrete block that was not reinforced.

Now this facility falls far short of serving the community's needs. There is only one unisex bathroom, and decontamination showers and equipment for hazardous waste exposure are not available. A ventilation exhaust fan system is not available to protect firefighters.

It is clear that a new fire station in a tsunami-safe location is necessary for our community. We can pass Measure 4-213 now, or it will be on the ballot again in two or four years. What will the cost increase be at that time? Double, 50% more?

We are fortunate to have both male and female volunteers. They deserve the dignity to be safe and well cared for while protecting us.

Vote "yes" to protect us all.

JUDITH REDEKOP
Gearhart

Exorbitant bond

There are about 1,550 registered voters in Gearhart. We are being asked to finance an exorbitant bond of \$14.5 million to build an extraordinary expensive fire station and police station.

Vagaries persist throughout this demand thrust upon the voters. Where are the hard costs for this? Is a new location secured?

Why the need for dorm rooms, kitchens, exercise rooms and other features?

Camp Rilea is an excellent resource for training, and has plenty of dorm rooms as well as a motel. It also offers a substantial rubble pile, mimicking earthquake damage to train on.

As for the land swap in question, if the city chooses to pursue this, it will be put before the Land Use Board of Appeals in Salem.

I agree there is a need for a new firehouse and police station. I also believe that grants should have been pursued years ago. It is regrettable that the city did not have the expertise.

Please join me in voting "no."

NORALEE TAYLOR
Gearhart

Location is everything

Some recent letters to the editor and postcards have been critical of the proposed Highlands Lane station location and its impact on Gearhart Volunteer Fire Department response times to traditional downtown Gearhart.

The fire department is not only responsible for fire protection and emergency medical services to the 1,900 residents living within the city limits, they are responsible for another 2,000 residents living in the 26-square-mile rural fire protection district, which extends north to Warrenton and east to the Lewis and Clark River.

Many factors effect response times: Where volunteers live and work; distance from the station; traffic and road conditions; time of emergency call; and communication effectiveness with dispatch.

The proposed new station is only 1.7 miles from the existing one, and with easy access to U.S. Highway 101, response times for most residential homes will be better, or unaffected.

The fire department constantly trains with other agencies within the county in order to provide effective mutual aid. We are able to combine forces, and go anywhere when needed, even responding to state conflagrations.

The suggestion of merging with our mutual aid agency in Seaside would make no financial sense without closing our station. A combined station would be 2.8 miles away from downtown Gearhart, and on the other side of a non-earthquake resilient bridge.

Delaying a new station only increases the cost of materials, labor, interest rates and safety code requirements.

Please vote "yes" on Measure 4-213.

RANDALL C. COMO
Assistant fire chief, Gearhart

Nate will show up

Nate Pinkstaff will bring a renewed vitality and integrity to the Clatsop County Board of Commissioners. His willingness to dig deeper into the issues

our county is facing and weigh the facts is refreshing.

He admits he does not have training in law enforcement, accounting, planning, public health or engineering. No board member can have a background in all these areas of expertise. We employ our county managers and staff to run the county. All board members receive extensive training on ongoing projects when seated on the board, regardless of diplomas, or years of experience in any field.

Nate will show up! He knows we have work to do to fulfill urgent housing needs, facilitate more child care, mental health care and streamline the building permit process. He seeks a more transparent county government responsive to you, the taxpayer. He will make current serious issues priorities of the board.

Nate knows the North Coast and its economic and geographical uniqueness. Nate's common-sense approach to the job will be to represent you, the taxpayers.

Nate appreciates this county's natural resources that make the North Coast a great place to live and work. He desires to keep our area livable, while encouraging responsible growth. He deserves your vote as your new District 3 county commissioner.

LINDA BRIM
Astoria

Built by many

Do agreements matter? The "Water Under the Bridge" section of the April 19 edition of The Astorian pictured state Sen. Betsy Johnson and retired professor Duncan Law, among others, in 2012, gathering for the groundbreaking of the Garden of Surging Waves.

While the site of mixed housing has now been slated for a to-be-arranged place, no effort seems to have been made to address the egregious neglect of what was dedicated as a historical and cultural park to honor the contributions of the Chinese, not only in Astoria, but in all of Oregon.

Hundreds of people contributed to the development of this park, whether monetarily, with time or with art. Once the park opened, it was lauded as a place of peace and contemplation by both tourists and residents alike.

Now it is a place that many walk around, rather than through. Once again, the contributions of the Chinese have fallen by the wayside. Addressing our current socioeconomic dilemmas does not give us license to ignore commitments our city made in the past.

The Garden of Surging Waves reminds us that Astoria was built by many. Let us continue to honor that work, and honor our commitment to the garden.

MARIAN DERLET
Astoria

Never leave

Homelessness in Seaside has drastically changed in a negative way. The camps the city has provided for the homeless goes against citizens' rights and duties.

The homeless are allowed to live on properties they do not own, and they are allowed to put their waste in places that people who are not homeless would get heavily fined for.

The city's plan to help the homeless has just given them an opportunity to never leave. This does not help the homeless succeed.

ELLA JONES
Astoria

Programs of pride

Iam writing to support the good work of Erin Carlsen and Osarch Orak at LiFEBoat Services.

I have known Erin for over 13 years, and have always seen her to be an amazing person, committed to walking her talk. She has integrity and honesty, and cares for people.

When I met Osarch, more recently, I saw that he, too, worked tirelessly to help others, knowing firsthand what's needed to support the folks who need it most.

People are losing their homes all over this country. In my work as a midwife, I encounter more and more families here on the coast who are struggling to find housing that they can afford.

Any one of us could have a friend or family member who falls on hard times, or struggles with substance abuse or mental health challenges. I say this to stir up our compassion for others with the knowledge that we are not separate from one another.

Erin and Osarch's work with Filling Empty Bellies and Beacon Clubhouse should be considered programs of pride. As a community, we need to be thanking them for their good work.

What are the ways that we can help, too? Volunteer? Offer financial assistance? Find the best location for their services? Let's pull together with compassion and support for those who are working to make our community a loving place.

JENNIFER CHILDRESS
Nehalem

Never seen

In my years driving in our area, I've never seen so many more chuckholes on our highways and main streets. Why are the highway and road departments so slow this year with proper road patching? Les Schwab is loving you guys, and selling new tires much faster.

BOB WESTERBERG
Astoria