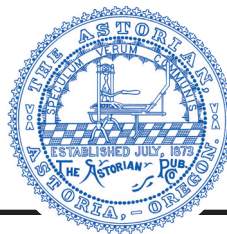


OPINION



the Astorian

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WRITER'S NOTEBOOK

Intimate music a balm for this troubled moment

Emotion filled the auditorium of the Liberty Theatre last Saturday evening as the Russian cellist Sergey Antonov approached the microphone.

"We stand with Ukraine," were his first words. Applause filled the room. Antonov and his principal musicians are American citizens, but they remain linked to Russia and Ukraine through family and friendships.



STEVE FORRESTER

This is the festival season. The Crab, Seafood & Wine Festival recently reappeared as an in-person event. Soon will be the Astoria Scandinavian Midsummer Festival. Then will come the Astoria Regatta.

The Third Dimension Festival is an entirely new iteration of the Astoria Music Festival, which ran for a decade. That festival was many things. It produced fully staged operas, orchestral and choral works as well as chamber music and silent films. The new festival is about the most intimate form of performance — chamber music, which features duets, trios and larger groups of stringed instruments.

The music festival is the youngest of our region's celebrations. It is unique in other ways. Since its inception, the festival has drawn a bevy of young musicians who were seen around town with their violin, cello and horn cases. It also attracted Metropolitan Opera stars Ruth Ann Swenson and Angela Meade. The festival's founders included a Portland State University graduate, Katherine Matschiner. Other founders were the Portland State voice teacher Ruth Dobson and conductor Keith Clark, who stayed with the festival to the end.

Like other live entertainment in the past few years, this new iteration of the

THE MUSICIANSHIP OF THE THIRD DIMENSION FESTIVAL IS THE EQUIVALENT OF WHAT YOU WILL FIND IN ANY BIG CITY MUSIC VENUE.



The Hermitage Piano Trio released a photo earlier this year showing their solidarity with Ukraine.

music festival faces mortal challenges. Jennifer Crockett, the Liberty Theatre's executive director, notes that because of COVID, "Audiences are not feeling

confident." Also, the festival's sales brochure hit customers just after Russian forces invaded Ukraine.

The musicianship of the Third

Dimension Festival is the equivalent of what you will find in any big city music venue. The cellist Antonov, with whom Astorians have a long history, was a medalist in one of Russia's major competitions. His main colleagues are pianist Ilya Kazantsev and violinist Misha Keylin. Another familiar face will be Portland pianist Cary Lewis.

Every arts organization in America has been rocked by COVID, and many have felt the spillover of Russian President Vladimir Putin's unprovoked attack on Ukraine. Two Russians — operatic diva Anna Netrebko and conductor Valery Gergiev — saw their American careers vanish overnight. Neither Netrebko or Gergiev would denounce Putin or his war.

By contrast, Antonov and his Russian American colleagues have spoken out plainly in opposition to the war.

Crockett has become the queen of theatrical resilience — shepherding the Liberty through two years fraught with financial duress. "The pandemic has taught us to be not too cozy with a decision, because you often have to step away from planned performances," she said. "You have to move ahead nonemotionally and find new avenues."

The other star attraction of the music festival is the Liberty and its marvelous resonance. String players and singers particularly love the hall's acoustics. For the relatively small audience, opening night did not disappoint. It was an all-Brahms program. The startling new addition was the deep, rich voice of mezzo-soprano Renee Rapier from Philadelphia.

More performances will follow over the next two weeks. Give it a try. You will not be disappointed.

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Legendary

Knappa High School baseball coach Jeff Miller is one of the most legendary high school baseball coaches in Oregon history, and that is public knowledge. It is no coincidence that Knappa baseball has been as successful as it is, and we all know that as long as Coach Miller is around, Knappa baseball will give any team a run for their money.

What most people don't know is that outside of baseball, Coach Miller is a fantastic teacher, coach and friend. Coach Miller is not only Knappa's head baseball coach, but he is the government, history and global studies teacher, along with being the senior class adviser.

Coach Miller's approach is the exact same on the field as it is in the classroom, he expects all of his students and players to give 100%, and in return he gives the exact same amount of effort back. Coach Miller is always there for you, whether it be school, baseball or life. He is always willing to drop whatever he is doing to help you out, and that is a rare quality in a person.

I am writing this to recognize Coach Miller outside of just baseball. Getting the opportunity to be one of Coach Miller's students and players was an honor, and I wish that everybody could get the same experience that I was lucky to have.

TANNER JACKSON
Astoria

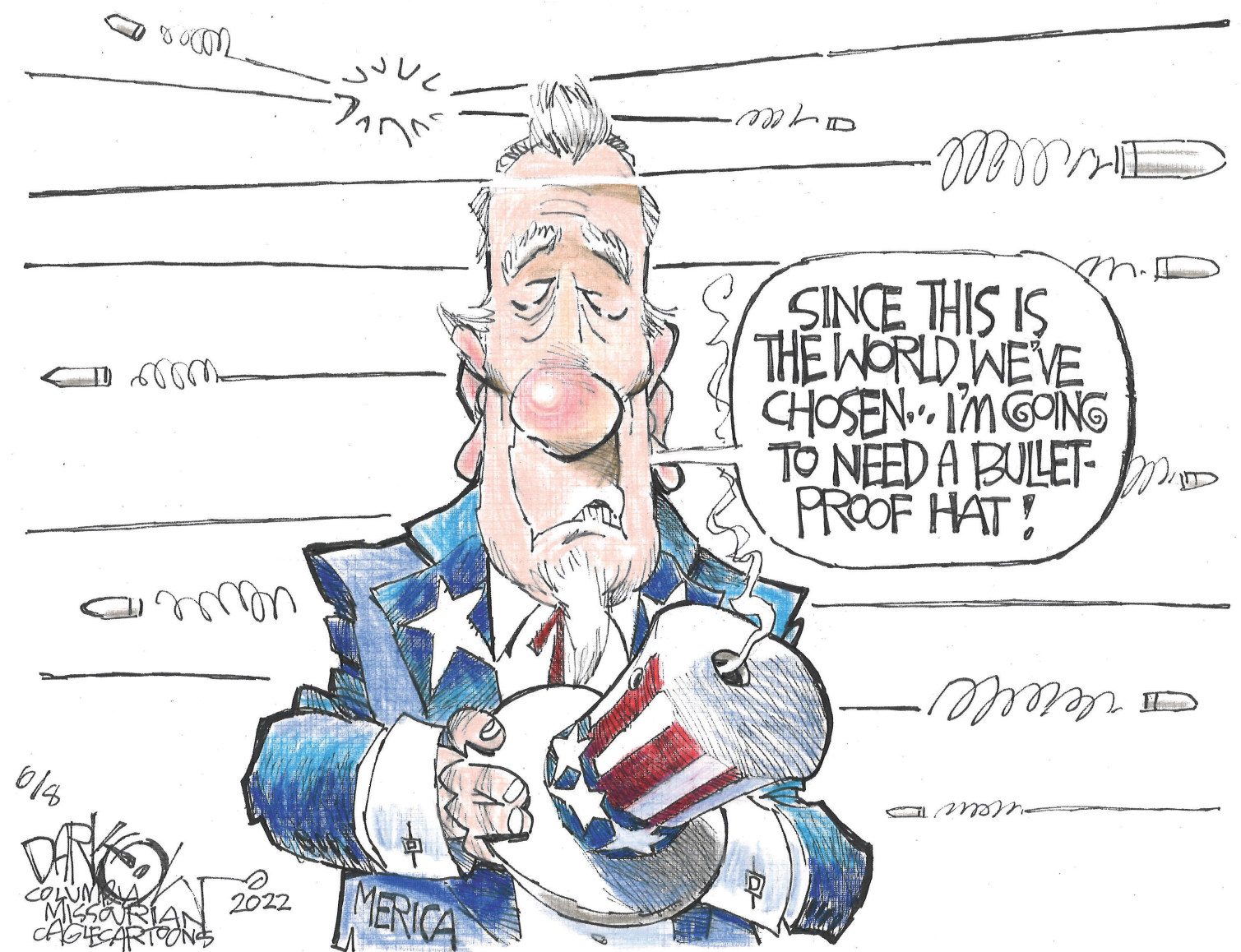
Mindful

As we all know, drunken and reckless driving is, and most likely always will be, an issue in the world.

But as a community, we should be more mindful of the people around us. In our county alone, I am constantly seeing ambulances racing to go help a person in need due to a car accident. Whether it was caused by intoxication, a true freak accident, or purely because someone wasn't being smart on the road.

Being behind the wheel is such a huge responsibility to have. Think about how many vehicles you pass on a typical drive to just about any destination — I'm sure you couldn't even count! However, those aren't just vehicles (as we know), those are all people! People who are living lives just like you. People who have families, and occupations to attend to. All of these peoples' lives are in your hands, along with your own.

In Oregon, there are around 450 fatal car accidents a year. That's not including the many different injuries, either! I personally know many people who have gotten in car accidents, due to another driver being intoxicated, and vice versa. It's extremely dangerous, and selfish! As a community, we should always have each other's best inter-



LETTERS WELCOME

Letters should be exclusive to The Astorian. Letters should be fewer than 250 words and must include the writer's name, address and phone number. You will be contacted to confirm authorship. All letters are subject to editing for space, grammar and factual accuracy. Only two letters per writer are allowed each month. Letters written in response

to other letter writers should address the issue at hand and should refer to the headline and date the letter was published. Discourse should be civil. Send via email to editor@dailyastorian.com, online at bit.ly/astorianletters, in person at 949 Exchange St. in Astoria or mail to Letters to the Editor, P.O. Box 210, Astoria, OR., 97103.

est, and try our best to be safe on the road!

AVERY BURKS
Astoria

Finding community

For some, the pandemic brought loss, pain and suffering. For others, it brought relief, clarity and peace. For me, it brought community.

I came to Astoria last July — part of my Airbnb monthly stay journey across the Western states. From Arizona, through Cal-

ifornia, and eventually to a small town at the mouth of the Columbia River.

Now a year later, I am back. For a bit longer. And I now realize what has drawn me in. The welcoming energy of this community is contagious. Maybe I view things through rosy lenses, but I don't know that I'm alone in these sentiments.

When I think about recent events in our country — Buffalo, New York; Uvalde, Texas, and, sadly, a list too long for this piece — I always think about the role of a community. I wonder what drove people to commit those dark acts of hate. How have

so many people slipped through the cracks of society?

I think as a society, we have lost community through technology, massive urban sprawl, political divisiveness and the absence of that collective spirit.

But as an individual, I have found community right here in Astoria. I have found it at the Astoria Co-op, the gym, the yoga studio, the various local family-owned businesses.

Thirty-two hundred miles from my home — but I feel right at home. Thank you, Astoria. Protect what you have here, because it is a fading aspect of society, if you ask me.

NICHOLAS MORTELLARO
Astoria

Utilize it

Do not blame President Joe Biden for Russian President Vladimir Putin's bad gas.

Also, to quote poet laureate Luis Rodriguez: "Voting is power. Utilize it. Don't squander it."

BOB WESTERBERG
Astoria