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show-must-go-on circumstances.

“I saw her walking out in the rain with an umbrella — singing,” she recalled. Thompson was a natural choice when the committee planned its latest event.

Whyte, who was nominated for Grammy Awards in 1999 and 2009, is equally excited. “I’m thrilled to be coming back to this wonderful annual event,” she said. “I have great memories of performing at the Jazz & Oyster(s) festival years ago. The band was so well received by the community and the hospitality was incredible.”

She noted that her band sold more albums at the event than any other in its history.

Years ago, watching Whyte helped prompt Thompson to become involved. Now she’s recruiting others to join her. “We have got some new people who have stepped up to be on the committee. The meetings are great fun. There’s something about this group. We are loud and we just pick on each other. Everybody talks at once, but we get a lot done,” Thompson said.

Zeal

All members of the group savor jazz and embrace support for local schools. The group donated funds to help send student musicians from Ilwaco High School to perform in Florida this spring, having supported a similar trip in 2018.

“I love music and I love helping the schools,” Thompson said. She especially admires an Ilwaco music teacher’s zeal for encouraging student musicians. “Rachel Lake takes these kids and gets them involved. There’s cases where it helps keep them in school,” she added.

Other donations have provided ukuleles for Naselle schools and paid for appearances by visiting troupes, including for the Obo Abby drummers, who entertained at Long Beach and Ocean Park elementary schools in 2018.

At the festival, Thompson believes jazz fans will like what they hear. The Mel Brown B3 Quartet will conclude the afternoon. “People like them and they draw a crowd,” she said.

Ranger and the Re-Arrangers, based in Washington, is the only group that hasn’t previously appeared. “I love brass, and they do music from the ’20s and ’30s,” Thompson said.

Whyte, whose styles cover blues, jazz and ballads, is similarly enthused. “The peninsula is one of the best-kept secrets in the Pacific Northwest,” she said. “It has the feel of an art colony. We love the people of this community and are looking forward to having another great musical experience.”



Attendees and cooks do the oyster dance at a previous Jazz & Oysters.

Water Music Society



Portland-based musician Ellen Whyte is an enthusiastic returning artist to the annual Jazz & Oysters event.

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