

Film award surprises composer

Short movie came to life far from Hollywood for former Pendleton resident

By KATHY ANEY
East Oregonian

BEND — At the Hollywood Music in Media Awards ceremony, nominees normally spend the evening at the Avalon, walking the red carpet and steeping in Hollywood glam.

This year, however, the ceremony on Jan. 27 was virtual. Nominee and film composer Chris Thomas stayed home in Bend wearing pajamas, wrapped in a blanket. He sat with his wife, Brigitte, their cat between them on the couch, waiting for the winner of the Outstanding Score short film category to be announced.

When Thomas's name appeared on the screen as winner, he threw his arms into the air and grinned happily. Brigitte snapped a photo.

Thomas, who grew up in Pendleton, insists he didn't expect to be nominated, much less get the win. The short film, "Imagination Symphony Live," was produced far from Hollywood in Central Oregon. When the nominees were announced, it was so far off his radar, he didn't even look at the list.

The film composer, at 38, has snagged other awards for his movie soundtracks. One of his scores, for a documentary called "Woman Rebel," was shortlisted in 2010 for an Academy Award, and he won Best Film & TV Music in 2011 at the eWorld Music Awards. His television work includes work for "Lost," "House," "Vice" and "CSI:NY." His most recent movie "Haymaker" came out this month. That kind of put the cherry on top for Thomas. He couldn't be happier that two such differ-



Composer Chris Thomas directs members of the Oregon East Symphony Youth Orchestra during a visit to Pendleton High School in June 2020.



Composer Chris Thomas talks about his life to members of the Oregon East Symphony Youth Orchestra during a visit to Pendleton High School in June 2020. Orchestra director Zach Banks smiles in the background.

ent projects collided in time.

Both projects, though poles apart in subject matter and scope, leaned heavily on Thomas' composing

talents. Normally, composing comes last after a film is shot. In both "Imagination" and "Haymaker," however, composing came earlier and

the film was often edited to match the score.

The seven-minute "Imagination Symphony Live" follows a young boy as he attends his very first symphony. As the music envelopes the boy, his mind roams. He paddles a canoe across a lake serenaded by an oboist and scampers through high desert and forest, musicians playing all around him. At the conclusion, he ends up back in the hall next to his mother as the audience applauds.

One of Thomas's friends, Evan Signaldsen, who plays with Thomas in the cello section of the Central Oregon Symphony, proposed the short film in the spring of 2019. It didn't take much arm twisting for Thomas to agree to compose the score.

"Count me in," Thomas recalls saying to Signaldsen,

who directed and produced the film.

To pull it off, the men needed the cooperation of Central Oregon Symphony Conductor Michael Gesme and his entire orchestra.

"We made a pretty big ask," Thomas said. "We said we're going to need some rehearsal time with this piece and we're going to need three concerts to film live. So we'll take up the first 20 minutes of three shows in a row. And the audience is going to have to listen to a click track we're going to play live in the room."

Gesme and his musicians agreed. At the beginning of each concert, Thomas got up in front to explain to the audience what was happening. No one seemed overly bothered by the metronome clicks "carefully tailored so the music will land on the film properly."

The outdoor shots, which involved drones and trekking to isolated spots, required musicians to play without sheet music while the music came at them through speakers, complete with metronome clicks to keep them on track.

"People just kind of jammed with their part," Thomas said. "They knew what the music sounded like, but they didn't know what their notes were. It was a cacophony of nonsense. We told them to 'play it like you believe it.'"

An electrical fire at Bend High School, where the orchestra performs, altered plans for final filming. The film crew had spent the day rigging and testing a camera that would fly over the audience and stop above the conductor's head. The concert was quickly switched to another venue and complicated filming plans.

Thomas then needed to record soloists, something that COVID made more difficult. He arranged virtual solo sessions with musicians and singers around the country.

"Haymaker" tells the story of a retired Muay Thai fighter who serves as bodyguard for a glamorous trans woman pop star, Nomi Ruiz, who plays herself in the film. Director Nick Sasso told Thomas he needed something more like a violin concerto than a film score, something with "soaring violin solos and big ocean of strings." Thomas obliged.

"It's probably one of my best scores," Thomas said. "I had a lot of freedom. The director, Nick Sasso, really let me off the leash."

"Haymaker" is now streaming on Amazon Prime and other digital platforms. To see "Imagine Symphony Live," go to youtube.com or the Imagine Symphony Live website.

Media Sales Professional

EO Media Group is looking to hire a full-time Media Sales Professional to work in NE Oregon. Do you have the drive and determination to succeed? Would you like to take your sales career to the next level in a fast-paced multi-media sales environment? If so, please read on!

This exciting position is commissioned with guaranteed income. We offer excellent benefits including insurance, paid time off (PTO), a 401(k)-retirement plan, a Roth IRA, and expense reimbursement. If this sounds like the right business development opportunity for you, apply today!

ABOUT EO MEDIA GROUP

EO Media Group is a family-owned Oregon media company with deep roots in the Pacific Northwest. Our NE properties are located in Pendleton, Hermiston, La Grande, Baker City, John Day and Enterprise, Oregon. Our newspapers, websites and magazines provide credible, fair, and timely reporting about the people and issues impacting the communities we serve as well as a comprehensive suite of marketing solutions for local businesses.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A MEDIA SALES PROFESSIONAL

As a Media Sales Professional, you play a crucial role in the success of our clients, community and company by assisting local businesses in achieving success through advertising in our diverse suite of products, including everything from the daily newspaper to our digital services and beyond. The primary focus of your position is territory development — use your interpersonal skills to build business relationships with key decision-makers as you help them get the most out of their advertising dollars.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR A MEDIA SALES PROFESSIONAL

- Business development and contract negotiation skills
- Two years of sales experience

Proven success in media or digital sales and a degree in marketing are highly desirable but multiple factors will be taken into consideration. Do you have excellent communication skills? Are you organized and goal-oriented? Can you work independently with the support of a solid team behind you? Do you thrive in a CRM-driven environment? Are you known for following through consistently? Do you have outstanding proposal and presentation skills? If so, you might just be perfect for this Media Sales Professional position!

While COVID-19 restrictions are in place, this position will work from home after initial training. In our offices, we practice social distancing and masks are required. After COVID-19 restrictions are lifted, you will have the opportunity to join teammates at one of our offices and frequently see customers in person.



READY TO JOIN OUR TEAM?
www.eomediagroup.com/careers

FREE Colorectal Cancer Pre-Screening Kits Available March 15th & 29th

Colorectal cancer, the **2nd leading cause of cancer death**, can be detected early through screenings such as a colonoscopy or a Fecal Immunochemical Test (FIT).

The Tri-Cities Cancer Center will provide free Fecal Immunochemical Tests (FIT) that are FDA cleared to screen for colorectal cancer at our satellite office in Hermiston. FIT is a simple, self-administered test that checks for hidden blood in your stool and provides quick results.

FREE Colorectal Cancer Screening Kits Available

Where:

Good Shepherd Medical Center,
600 Northwest 11th Street, Suite E-23, Hermiston, OR

When:

Monday, March 15th & 29th, 9am-2pm

- Open to anyone ages 45+
- Instructions on FIT
- Receive FREE FIT for at-home screening

TRI-CITIES
Cancer
Center

Hermiston, OR/Kennewick, WA
(509) 783-9894 • TCCancer.org

March is Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month

