



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED BY DAVE GIBSON

A performance of the Inland Northwest Orchestra and Chorale.

INLAND

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“It’s challenging,” Ketchersid said. “I’m probably one of the newest people with the group.”

R. Lee Friese is the founding conductor of the Inland Northwest Musicians. The group began in 1999 when a number of instrumentalists and vocalists were interested in forming a classical music organization that held central core values, including that music is for everyone.

The nonprofit organization has three paid positions, the music director, office manager and program operations administrator. Otherwise, all the musicians in the ensembles — which also includes the Inland Northwest Chorale and the Wallowa Valley Orchestra — are volunteers. At any given time, the four ensembles include upwards of 200 participants, from ages 10 to 89.

Friese said the group doesn’t hold auditions. People are invited to participate and are encouraged to increase their skill level as they perform.

“We try to find a place for anyone that wants to perform,” Friese said. “We find a place for them to participate because they are interested.”

The groups take music to a service area encompassing seven rural counties in Eastern Oregon and two counties in southeastern Washington. There’s no charge for concerts, although they do accept donations.

The organization also solicits sponsorships and support for its programs. In addition, they submit grant requests from a number of foundations.

“If we didn’t have any sources of revenue, we couldn’t possibly exist,” Friese said.

After the first year of Inland Northwest Musicians’ existence, Dean Mason got involved through word of mouth. Mason, who plays trombone and sings baritone/bass, is a retired music teacher.

“I enjoy the variety of music,” he said. “Also, the camaraderie with the musicians is a lot of fun.”

RaNiel Dunn, who has been singing with the group since its beginning, also likes the idea that the program offers students another opportunity to perform.

Responsible for program operations, Dunn also gives a thumbs up to the outreach aspects of Inland Northwest Musicians.

“We are a unique organization that takes the music to the people.”

Mason views music as a good hobby that provides a release from everyday stress. It’s an activity, Mason said, that can be enjoyed throughout one’s life. Ketchersid agreed.

“I honestly don’t know what my plans are for the future,” Ketchersid said. “But, I’ll stay with music — orchestra is a hobby.”

For more information, contact 541-289-4696, inwm@machmedia.net or visit www.inlandnorthwestmusicians.com.



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