

Life

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Listen With an Open Mind



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Flautist Lesley O'Donel takes a break while performing along Tower Avenue during Girl's Night Out last Saturday afternoon in Centralia. The duo is part of the Northwest Wind Symphony, which will be playing a concert at the Corbet Theatre at Centralia College at 7 p.m. on Saturday, Nov. 1.

NORTHWEST WIND SYMPHONY: Season Addresses Prejudices in Musical World

By Carrina Stanton
 For The Chronicle

When Dan Schmidt was at the Cincinnati Conservatory earning his doctor's degree, he met a fellow musician who opened his eyes to his own prejudices about different types of music.

During a conversation, the musician asked Schmidt his opinion of several types of music, and to many he found himself answering, "I don't like that." Then his friend suggested a new way of looking at it.

"He said, 'Rather than saying "I don't like it," why not say "I haven't developed an appreciation for that yet,"'" Schmidt recalled. "That taught me not to be too arbitrary or judgmental about other music but rather strive to build an appreciation for it."

That is exactly what conductor Schmidt has planned for this season of the Northwest Wind Symphony, which kicks off Nov. 1. The theme for this year is "Prejudices" and will feature music that will not only likely be new to audiences, but will likely stretch the musicians who play it.

"I think audience members will definitely be surprised," said Franji Mayes, Centralia, who plays flute in the symphony. "I'm not familiar with at least half of the pieces we're playing this season."

Schmidt said each of the 24 seasons for the Northwest Wind Symphony has had a theme. He said the idea behind this year's theme came to him when he began thinking one day about how classical musicians can have a tendency to look down on music such as jazz, blues, funk, rap and even music written by women or minorities.

"People don't think musicians have prejudices, but we do just like everybody else," Schmidt said.

NORTHWEST WIND SYMPHONY 2014-15 SEASON "PREJUDICES"

Nov. 1 – Just Different
 Jan. 24 – All That Jazz
 April 18 – Girls Night Out

All concerts take place at 7 p.m. at Corbet Theatre in Washington Hall on the Centralia College Campus. Tickets are \$12 per person at the door or \$30 for a pass to all three concerts.
 Info: <http://northwest-windsymphony.org> or (360) 304-0784.

So Schmidt built a season around pieces that might normally be dismissed by classical musicians and classical music followers. The first concert on Saturday, Nov. 1, is titled "Just Different" and features music that pushes the boundaries. Selected pieces include: "The Spheres," by Ola Gjeilo; "Festival Variations," by Claude T. Smith; "Variations on America," by Charles Ives; "Symphony No. 1," by Richard Saucedo; "Arctic Funk," by Torstein Aagaard-Nilson; "Short Ride on a Fast Machine," by John Adams; and "Medley from Porgy and Bess," by George Gershwin.

"We'd like to get people talking about, 'What is music?'" Mayes said. "That's what musicians and artists like to do. We have to kind of look around and notice where we're coming in with preconceived notions."

The other concerts are: "All That Jazz" Jan. 24, featuring compositions with jazz components; and "Girls Night Out" April 18, featuring four pieces written by female composers, of whom there are very few.

Besides providing top-notch entertainment, the Northwest Wind Symphony is a unique entity because of the makeup of its roster. Many players, like Mayes, live locally, and the wind symphony is a good musical outlet for them. But the symphony also counts among its ranks several



Flautists Franji Mayes, left, and Lesley O'Donel perform along Tower Avenue during Girl's Night Out last Saturday afternoon in Centralia. The duo is part of the Northwest Wind Symphony which will be playing a concert at the Corbet Theatre at Centralia College on Saturday, Nov. 1, at 7 p.m.

semiprofessional musicians who travel from Seattle and Portland to take part in the concerts. "They'll give up three days a year to play wind music and they'll do it for free because they want the challenge," Schmidt said. "But their caveat is that it has to be good music we're playing."

And this is no ordinary community band, Schmidt said. The musicians only gather to rehearse their pieces together the morning of each performance. That means each player must take personal responsibility to prepare in advance and commit to knowing their pieces well. Schmidt said it is that additional challenge, and how the musicians meet it, that has kept him



Lesley O'Donel, left, and Franji Mayes walk across Tower Avenue as they change performance spots during Girl's Night Out last Saturday afternoon in downtown Centralia.

coming back every season.

"When we assemble on Saturday morning everybody is prepared. Everybody has prepared. Nobody is looking for notes," Schmidt said. "Everybody knows their parts, which is the way a professional orchestra does it."

Carrina Stanton is a local freelance writer specializing in pieces for the Life section of The Chronicle. She and her husband are raising their two daughters in Chehalis.

