



# coastweekend.com

The GO & DO guide for the north Oregon & southwest Washington coasts

Thursday, March 13, 2008

## THE ARTS: Music players, music lovers revel in orchestral renaissance

Story and photos by DAVID PLECHL  
For Coast Weekend

Thursday, March 13, 2008



Collin Heade was hired to conduct the North Oregon Coast Symphony with its inception in 2005. Heade has brought a level of professionalism and skill previously unseen.



Steven Maize, left, a senior, and Kamilla Swerdloff, a sophomore, are two of the Astoria High School students who have found a place in the North Oregon Coast Symphony. The symphony provides the students with a professional musical environment and sometimes scholarships.

After the sun has set and Cannon Beach has grown quiet, from a church on the hill, cymbals crash, strings wail and flutes and trumpets seem to speak. It's a single world of sound, born of many instruments.

The North Oregon Coast Symphony is rehearsing for an upcoming series of concerts, and just as the music soars to dizzying heights, it is gently tugged back to earth by the voice of one man.

He interrupts their quest to perfection without hesitation or apology.

"No, no, no," he says abruptly. "Fill the room!"

Once again, as if from an unseen launching pad, the music takes sudden flight. This time it resounds. It fills the room. The orchestra continues to play for several measures. The music rises and falls, then once again yields to the voice of one.

The voice belongs to Collin Heade. In college, Heade dated the guitar but fell in love with the cello. Almost without realizing it, he spent the next 30 years in concert halls living his dream.

He is the principal cellist for Oregon Chamber Players as well as Willamette Falls Symphony, two of the Portland area's premier orchestras.

However, long before Heade discovered the cello, he studied conducting at Portland State University.

"I did well in the class," Heade remembers. "The instructor took me aside and said, 'You should really think about doing this.'"

Heade thought about it, but side-stepped a career as a conductor to continue his love affair with the cello.

But the bug never really left him.

It started itching again one afternoon three years ago when a student of his mentioned there were plenty of disbanded musicians out on the coast, "just floundering about." They needed a conductor, and they needed one bad.

The little bug grumbled again, and Heade applied for the gig. He was selected by a group vote.

### 'A Late Winter Concert: Music of Scandinavia'

7 p.m. Friday, March 14  
Clatsop Community College  
Performing Arts Center  
588 16th St., Astoria  
(503) 325-2473

3 p.m. Sunday, March 16  
Bay City Arts Center  
5680 A St., Bay City  
(503) 842-4995

The North Oregon Coast Symphony's late winter program includes Edvard Grieg's 'Old Norwegian Romance with Variations,' Carl Nielsen's 'Helios Overture' and three works by Jean Sibelius, 'Lemminkainen's Return,' 'The Swan of Tuonela' and 'Finlandia.'

Admission is \$10 for adults, with children 12 and younger admitted free when accompanied by an adult. Tickets are available from any symphony member and at the door.



From left, Rollie Lindstrom, of Chinook, Wash., Joe Pecore, of Rockaway Beach, and Scott Wagner, of Nehalem, bring up the trumpet section of the North Oregon Coast Symphony

He hit the ground running, and is clearly a capable and inspired conductor.

"It's about putting the sound out here," Heade says, shooting his arms wide into the space around him. "It's the job of the conductor to interpret the piece of music in the same realm as the composer wrote it. It's his job to bring the music to life."

In other words, Heade interprets the story the composer has written. He translates the music for the orchestra, which recounts the story with all its drama, subtlety and power fully intact.

"It's a huge team effort. Everyone has to work together," Heade says. "They all contribute toward presenting what the master has written. That's the job at hand."

As he runs through several sections of music with the orchestra, Heade pauses only briefly to push for more enunciation here, or a finer balance between sections there. His authority is respected among players both relaxed and ready.

Then again, he doesn't need to hesitate. Heade trusts the ability of his musicians.

It's late. The church social hall that just served as a rehearsal space is almost empty. As Heade packs up his gear for the long drive back to Portland, he reflects on the road just traveled.

"You can hear it," Heade says. "I've been here three years and I can hear the improvements of every player that's started with us. Everyone is growing. Three years ago, there's no way we could have gotten the sound we just got."

### The players: Cheri Walker and Lauren Dalton



Cheri Walker travels from Long Beach to rehearse once a week in Cannon Beach with the North Oregon Coast Symphony. She is impressed with her cohorts' level of play. "You have a core group of people that are just really dedicated," says Walker.

Cheri Walker plays the harp. Each note falls right where it should be. The sound is well-articulated, poignant like a voice and vast like a wave that recedes slowly and thoughtlessly before it disappears into oblivion.

The harp is a wonder of craftsmanship in its own right - a graceful yet resonant instrument designed to be played with a big orchestra, in a big hall. Walker has played in a few. She was even a harp major in college.

She travels from Long Beach, Wash., once a week to rehearse and is impressed with her cohorts level of play.

"You have a core group of people that are just really dedicated," says Walker.

Among the 50 or so musicians, teenagers, schoolteachers and retirees strong into their 70s work side by side, marching toward the same goal.

Heade says community support and contributions to the symphony are a huge part of that team effort that makes the symphony possible. Donations for scholarships assure the dream won't fade.

Last year, five area high school seniors were awarded funds for lessons, instruments and travel. The Sandra Stromquist Memorial Scholarship is available to any high school student who plays with the symphony for one year or more and displays all the qualities of an serious student of sound.

"Music is not an age thing. It doesn't really matter how old you are," explains Heade. "You'd be surprised at how good some of these young people are."



From left, Dennis Hale, of Gearhart, plays the tuba, Jerry Pederson, of Cathlamet, works his upright bass, and Lauren Dalton, an Astoria High freshman, also plays bass in the North Oregon Coast Symphony.

Lauren Dalton, 15, an Astoria High School freshman, has played in school orchestras since fifth grade, but counts her place in the upright bass section in the North Oregon Coast Symphony as her first professional gig.

"The music is really challenging," Dalton says, "but it's helping me to grow as a musician."

Dalton also appreciates the hard-won experience of those around her. She plans to continue with the symphony through high school and beyond.

"I would really like to make a career in music and I think this is going to help me do that," she says.



## Related Links

---

Content © 2008 The Daily Astorian  
Software © 1998-2008 1up! Software, All Rights Reserved