



# Backstage

April 2020

“Music gives a soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination, and life to everything.”

- Plato

## ETHEREAL EXPRESSIONS

Those of you who arrived early for our March 1 concert were treated to a pre-concert exhibition by the Union High School Brass quintet (pictured above; Chase Williams, Steven Nguyen, Anthony Felix, Scott Stevison, and Rhys Peerinboom) which qualified for the State Solo & Ensemble Contest sponsored by the Washington Music Educators Association. Unfortunately this competition has been postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic so competitors will now have more time to practice. Good luck to all!

## WIND BAND MUSIC

The SWWS mission includes the statement "to educate the audience and community on the cultural, historical, and musical significance of the symphonic band." Performed at our March 1 concert, the Julie Giroux composition "In My Father's Eyes" fulfills that purpose. It was originally written for The Alabama Winds and memorializes the 4 young girls who were killed in 1963 during the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing in Birmingham in an act of racial

terrorism. The church was a gathering place for Martin Luther King, Jr. and other leaders of the civil rights movement. The arrangement includes 4 female voices, representing the 4 girls, and a cello. While SWWS has had vocal soloists in the past, this concert was the first appearance of a vocal ensemble.



Vocalists: Jan Boulé, Kimberly Claassen, Amanda Dickenson, Sheli Morrell,



Guest Conductor: Mark Lane, Celloist: Karen Schulz-Harmon

## WIND MUSICIANS & LUNG FUNCTION

Do wind-instrument players and singers have better pulmonary function (simply put, measurements of lung volume capacity and velocity of exhaled or inhaled breath) than others? This is an intriguing topic of casual discussion among wind-band musicians. A study attempting to address this appeared in the medical journal *Chest* in 1985. Investigators compared pulmonary function tests in 48 wind instrumentalists and 34 singers with a control group of 31 string or percussion instrumentalists. There was no significant difference between the groups even when corrected for age, sex, height, weight, years performing, smoking, and presence or absence of cough. This study was unable to show that years of practice improved pulmonary function because it did not have test measurements earlier or prior to the start of musical training for comparison. Training does improve control of respiratory and throat muscles and probably (hopefully) delays deterioration with advancing age. <https://doi.org/10.1378/chest.88.2.201>



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July 2021

A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity. An optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty.

- Sir Winston Churchill

## PANDEMIC THOUGHTS

✍ The March 2019 Backstage newsletters described how computer-based videoconferencing allowed Gerard Morris to co-conduct rehearsals while in Tacoma with Sam Ormson who was in Vancouver. With the pandemic-lockdown restrictions, that technology continues to develop rapidly impacting all areas of our lives - education, entertainment, business, virtual travel, and more. Perhaps that's too much time interacting with a video screen and becoming more nearsighted.

✍ What is a Covid Cover? Is it a facemask, a protective single-use paper gown, or?? It's a fabric cover placed over the bell of a wind instrument. To determine if it decreases aerosol generation, we first need baseline information on how much aerosol and/or droplet is generated by a wind instrument without a covered bell. Thanks to a study involving the Minnesota Orchestra, scientists studied aerosols generated from different wind instruments. The tuba produced fewer aerosols than normal breathing. Bassoon, piccolo, flute, bass clarinet,

French horn, and clarinet produced aerosol in the same range as normal breathing and speaking. Trumpet, oboe, and bass trombone generated more aerosol than speaking. Musicians also potentially produce aerosol and droplets when buzzing on mouthpieces, emptying their instrument's spit valves or tone holes, and from leaking embouchures or forceful breathing through their nose and mouth.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaerosci.2020.105669>

## BEST COMMUNITIES FOR MUSIC EDUCATION

The Vancouver Public School district and Evergreen Public School district were recognized in 2021 for their ongoing commitment to music education for a third consecutive year. The Best Communities for Music Education award, given by the nonprofit National Association of Music Merchants Foundation, recognizes outstanding efforts by teachers, administrators, students, and community leaders who commit to making music education an integral part of a well-rounded education. This year, the foundation recognized 686

districts throughout the US, including 5 in Washington state, with this honor.

## MISSING BUT NOT GONE

"That you don't know what you've got Till it's gone"

- Big Yellow Taxi by Joni Mitchell

The lack of live musical performances during the pandemic has been depressing. The SWWS website has links to high quality videos of prior performances on YouTube for those of us experiencing withdrawal.

Meanwhile, the SWWS board of directors is actively working to restart rehearsals in preparation for future performances. One of the most important determinants of future rehearsals and concerts will be the Union High School policy on usage of the concert hall and band room.

There is light at the end of this long tunnel - the sooner a greater percentage of the community becomes fully vaccinated, the sooner we can experience live performances with a full in-person audience. Please share that message with your friends and family who enjoy live music.

