

Bill Moeller Commentary: A Wonderful Evening in Corbet Theatre and a Memory or Two

Posted: Thursday, April 23, 2015 10:44 am

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The main drawback to reading some self-appointed critic's review of a past event is just that: It's past. Nonetheless, I'll describe my reaction to last Saturday's performance by the Northwest Wind Symphony. Now, as a critic, in a scale of one to 10, I consider myself to be somewhere in the range of seven to eight. You might be tempted to place that rating far lower, but I'm the one who's writing this column.

That orchestra — it might also technically be called a band since it's composed solely of wind instruments and percussion — never sounded better. It continues performing more and more like a single unit, rather than a collection of individual performers. The two featured soloists — clarinetist Richard Boberg and Michael Simpson playing the difficult French horn — provided a dramatic contrast to the orchestra's unity.

Dan Schmidt deserves every bit of the credit, which might be attributed to him for welding these individual performers into a cohesive unit. Of course, I can't help but think that the "smoke evacuation," which caused the cancellation of this program the last time it was scheduled, may have also contributed in a small way, since it gave the orchestra twice as much rehearsal time as previous outings have received, but I don't want to take any credit away from Schmidt.

You may have missed the enjoyment of this particular performance, but don't miss any of those scheduled for next season.

One other item I must mention about the Corbet Theatre: the removal of the row of seats that has blocked the designed — and constructed — aisle between the two sides of the auditorium. The blockage of that aisle always seemed like a safety issue to me, and I said so on more than one occasion. My thanks, and the thanks of others present on Saturday, go to the new college president, Dr. Robert Frost, for recognizing that as well.

Changing the subject, since the start of this month I've been moving slowly from my two-bedroom apartment into a slightly smaller old mobile home. I find it difficult to believe that I've collected so much "stuff" in the last two and a half years.

Downsizing means one thing: throwing away or giving away mementos and memories. This slows the procedure tremendously. Some things are sacrosanct. There's the packet of six love letters between my father and mother, written during a time when she was still engaged to a young minister in Hillsboro, Oregon. I read the first one of them, written in 1925, and said to myself that I wouldn't read any more of them, but I did. How innocent and slightly maudlin they seem today.

I found a booklet about fallout protection from the Department of Defense in case of a nuclear attack. Why had I kept it? Possibly to remind myself that a half century ago I was digging my own family's fallout shelter. I never finished it.

I came across an old manila envelope, stuffed with items I found inside books back when I had my used book store, Huckleberry Books. It's amazing what some people tucked away in books. (At least they used a bookmark instead of dog-earring the corner of a page.)

Here are a few: A small booklet, advertising a 1912 cruise of the Mediterranean and the Orient aboard the White Star S.S. Orient; Three typed pages of simple English phrases translated phonetically into Japanese; Two exceedingly well-drawn sketches of what seem to be proposed Native American symbolic paintings.

That's only a small sampling. Could it perhaps be the nucleus of another column some day?