RCC music instructor creates “Sinfonia”

Rogue Community College music instructor Ted Dollarhide has written a symphony honoring the longtime orchestra conductor at one of his early alma maters. Dollarhide was commissioned to compose the piece, which will be performed May 16. It celebrates Cindy Weichel’s 10th anniversary leading the Santa Rosa Junior College Orchestra.

The premier takes place at Burbank Auditorium at Santa Rosa Junior College, with Weichel conducting a full orchestra. Originally from Santa Rosa himself, Dollarhide began his post-secondary education at SRJC. He went on to earn his master’s and doctorate degrees in music composition from the University of Michigan. As a Fulbright scholar, he studied with composer Eugene Kurtz in Paris. Over the years he’s garnered a number of grants, awards, and commissions.

Dollarhide, who joined the RCC faculty in September, began work on the 18-minute piece in July. It’s taken four to six months to compose the piece and then extract each part for woodwinds, brass, and strings, he said. The piece consists of three movements: “Awakening,” “Reflecting,” and “Dancing.”

“There are always surprises. You just hope they are good ones,” said Dollarhide, who has also composed numerous jazz pieces.

At RCC, Dollarhide teaches a range of music classes that include music theory, history, and literature, and introductions to rock and jazz. This spring he’s begun teaching a fundamentals class that’s offered late afternoons. “For high school students thinking about majoring in music, this class can give them a head start on composition,” he said. “It’s great for church choir members, too.”

Dollarhide also oversees the RCC Community Education bands and orchestra. “The RCC music program has every kind of ensemble you’d want to play in,” he said. “RCC has two choirs, two concert bands and the orchestra.” RCC also is preparing to launch a music major within the next year.

(more)
He’s also building musical alliances between RCC and Southern Oregon University, and he has become immersed in the region’s music life. Dollarhide plays in a number of local ensembles and serves as music director of the Southern Oregon Concert Band, now celebrating its 100th anniversary. The band will perform a free centenary concert at 7 p.m. May 19 at Craterian Theatre featuring George Gershwin’s “Rhapsody in Blue.”

Previously an instructor at Yavapai Community College in Prescott, Ariz., Dollarhide has taught music from grade school through university levels at sites that include a Sioux Indian reservation and locations ranging from Australia to Korea to Montana.

He encourages people to contact him with questions or requests. “I would like the RCC music program to be very active and for the community to feel like it’s theirs,” Dollarhide said.

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