

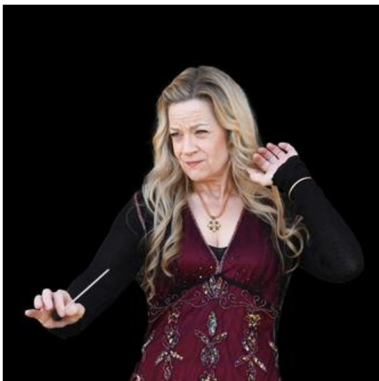
The Great Tide Pool

TALES OF PACIFIC GROVE, CALIFORNIA

by local award-winning author, Brad Herzog

SYMPHONY BY THE SEA

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For all the deserved gushing about the wondrous beauty of Pacific Grove – the rocky coastline, the Victorian “painted ladies,” the flitting butterflies, the strutting deer, the pink-purple “magic carpet” that blooms in the spring – let’s not overlook the sounds. The waves crashing on Asilomar Beach. The distant barking of sea lions near Fisherman’s Wharf. The 10 p.m. sound of “Taps” reverberating from the Defense Language Institute. The “thwack” of a solid swing at the PG Golf Links. Even the squawk of the seagulls.

Or, if you prefer, all you have to do is listen to the musical offerings of a few creative locals. Just hop onto YouTube to see and hear our little paradise’s praises being sung. Check out the heartwarming “Butterfly Town,” written and voiced by my friend and local jazz singer Julie Capili, who can sing anything beautifully (“Ne’er dare I say... have I see a man frown... on the beautiful shores... of the Butterfly Town”). Or look for “Pacific Grove,” written and performed by native musician Josh Hollinger (“And I head to the place... can’t keep a smile off of my face... just a case... of a small town full of grace”). Or, if you prefer more of a yearning love song that happens to be set in PG, Matt Costa also wrote a song called “Pacific Grove” (“Let’s go back to Pacific Grove... When the monarchs come back home... I know I won’t make it alone.”) They are lyrical tunes about a magical place.

But I’d like to point out another way to tune in to Pacific Grove – via the Pacific Grove Pops, which is in the midst of its 13th season as a local orchestra.

PG Pops is essentially a group of people who come together to play music and have fun. There are late afternoon/early evening rehearsals most Tuesdays (more than 30 per year) in the music room of the PG Middle School, behind the Performing Arts Center. Drop-ins are welcome. If you can play an instrument, you can play along. It’s a manifestation of the inclusivity of the program, which is the brainchild of artistic director and conductor Barbara Priest, who is the middle school’s music director and has served as an award-winning music educator for more than a quarter-century.

The big events for the orchestra – at the Performing Arts Center – are the winter, spring and summer kick off concerts in December, March, and late May/early June. However, while the modern and pop sounds of the likes of Chuck Mangione and Dave Brubeck might comfort the soul, the nonprofit (they accept donations!) is as much about the mission as the music. The goal: “to enrich the musical opportunities of local student and amateur adult musicians, professional artists and our community through advanced study, performance, and collaboration.” So middle schoolers are rubbing shoulders with advanced musicians; those still learning share the stage with seasoned pros – everyone working together to support all musicians and their connection to the community. The idea is that young musicians enrich the culture by becoming future patrons of the arts. A rising tide lifts all boats.

It occurs to me, in fact, that a community can be compared to an orchestra – the violin of volunteers, the French horn of families, the bass drum of local business, the trumpet of tourists, the saxophone of schools, the cello of the Chamber of Commerce. Our community’s very own orchestra is the sound of Pacific Grove put to music – the metaphor come to life. Or think of it this way: A woman named Tania Miller, conductor of Canada’s National Academy Orchestra, has described music as “both creation and perception – music and listener, orchestra and audience, one context to another.” And then she put it succinctly: “We need each other.”

