

# Red Lodge Music Festival



## Reeds Rock

"I'm a firm believer that if it's not fun, it's probably not worth doing," says bassoonist Carl Rath. "I certainly enjoy what I do, and teaching is great fun."

For 30 years Rath has graced the Red Lodge Music Festival with his remarkable approach to teaching, taking joy in his students, fellow faculty, and the Beartooth Mountains.

"Two things I really believe in are creativity and discovery," says Rath. "That's what a teacher has to do. You can't just force feed things."

Rath leads his students down the path of discovery by writing arrangements from a wide variety of music and musical genres for double reed instruments. He writes regularly for his Sooner Bassooners ensemble back in Oklahoma City. Past offerings include the greatest hits of *Chicago* and music from Rath's all time favorite band *The Beatles*.

"We (bassoon players) don't have a lot of stuff," notes Rath. "It's not like the string literature where there's a tremendous amount to do. So I transcribe rock and roll, heavy metal, psychedelic music, the 50's and all that. It's just fun."

Behind this fun is personalized teaching. Rath writes for his students to address their needs.

"If there are certain things a person needs to learn to do, like articulation or high notes, or tone or whatever it might be," says Rath, "I'll write it. They are really pedagogically written."

Every year Rath personally prepares for his Red Lodge students, getting a heads up on who will be returning and what new faces to expect. He grins excitedly as he talks about planning his "shows" for the student recitals.

"Last year we did *Phantom of the Civic Center*. Ken Gilstrap swooped down dressed as the phantom," says Rath. "I love that music."

The previous year saw *Heavy Metal Reed*, a favorite of the students who reveled in dressing the part to play AC/DC, Aerosmith and Led Zeppelin on their bassoons.

"I do Mozart and all those classical composers," says Rath. "But let's face it. They are at summer camp right after getting out of school. They want to have a good time. So I try to do that, but I sneakily make it into a learning experience."



Perhaps not so sneakily, notes Rath, as now the students are making requests. He credits a great deal of his teaching philosophy and musicianship to his summers in Red Lodge.

"The students have influenced me the most," says Rath. "Not only do they inspire me to perform at a high level, they inspire me to develop new teaching techniques that I use throughout the year. They are never without their own ideas."

Rath takes these ideas back to the University of Oklahoma where he is an Associate Professor of Music, holding a Bachelor of Music Education with Distinction in Performance from Lawrence University Conservatory of Music and a Master of Arts in Performance from University of Denver Lamont School of Music. He is Principal Bassoonist with the Oklahoma City Philharmonic and plays with the Brightmusic Chamber Ensemble, the Oklahoma Wind Quintet and the International Bassoon Quartet. On the side he is the drummer for his band MidLife Crisis.

His performance career has led him to many corners of the world, but his heart, along with three time shares, resides in Red Lodge.

"I wish I could work year round with this faculty. We are a family," says Rath. "And the kids . . . I always tell people I love Montana kids. They're so refreshing."

Rath has already set his mind to his "show" for next year's crop of students, anticipating their interests, discoveries and creativity.

He gives a conspiratorial smile. "Wait until you see what's coming here next year."

# Camp Veterans Tune In

Five and six year students Webster Crist, Devin Gilstrap, Jared Masin, James Rubich, Kenneth Taylor, David Cerotzke, Zoe Contreras, Greg Dykstra, Nathan Fritz, Laurel Myers, Corie Neugebauer, and Christopher Unruh meet to reflect on their years at the festival.

"It just feels kind of magical," notes violist Christopher Unruh, "coming to a place where you have all these great musicians your age that you can just go up to and talk to. I feel really welcome, like I can just come back whenever I want."

Bassoonist Webster Crist concurs. "Coming back for friends is a pretty big priority."

These five and six year veterans are in tune not only with their instruments, but each other, favorite faculty, personal growth and the encompassing rhythm of the Red Lodge Music Festival.

Trombonist Greg Dykstra of Billings and French horn player Laurel Myers of Bridger have been in the same small brass ensemble four of the past five years. Greg notes, "We've really learned how to play together. We've learned to read each other and play off each other."

Laurel concurs. "It's interesting looking at your abilities from year to year, like sight reading. When I was a freshman I was terrified that I couldn't play any of the rhythms. Now it's so much fun, and performing gets better."

Webster agrees. "You're not that nervous (to perform) because you know everyone else in the crowd has to go through the same thing – either that day or the next."

Working towards the small ensemble concerts on Thursday and Friday nights are a highlight for many. Clarinet player David Cerotzke of Great Falls notes that back home good ensemble players are harder to find.

Chris, from Casper, Wyoming, agrees. "It's really awesome to be in a top notch group."

"One thing about playing in small ensembles," David stresses, "is that you have to have that part down. The faculty expects you to know what you're doing, but they help you get there."

Greg agrees. "Instructors here connect with you on a musical level. They kind of nitpick, and they point out really little things that make a big difference."

Webster adds, "They pull so much out of you."

David credits Greg Gatien with teaching him the foundations of jazz, enabling him to run a jazz ensemble back home. Webster recalls Carl Rath correcting his embouchure. Greg learned how to read alto cleft in a day from Loren Marsteller. The list of lessons and accomplishments large and small is endless.

All agree with Webster that working with John Harmon is one of the "coolest experiences of this camp."

Flutist Zoe Contreras and clarinetist Corie Neugebauer chime in. "John Harmon is so cool. We love his music."

Webster: "It's really neat playing his music. Last year . . . the goose song!"

David: "Yeah, I loved that."

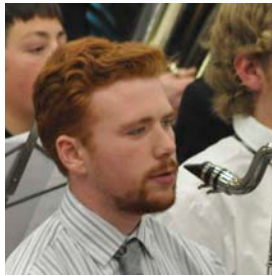
Greg: "It was such a pretty song."

Someone shouts out "Remember when we played that spirit song?"

Another chorus of agreement: "Oh that was great."

Their enthusiasm emanates from more than instruction. Webster recalls the faculty concert of the previous night. "The brass quintet was great. They were so tight. It was awesome."

Corie elicits a round of approval when she notes, "Greg Sauer was really inspirational."



David: "It means a lot when you know the people on stage."

Chris: "I always come home more inspired."

Zoe enthusiastically agrees. "I practice so much when I get back from camp."

David: "Yeah it's so cool. You're in the zone and you're ready to get going."

"I think you don't realize what you take away until you start band the next year," says Greg. "Then you realize how much farther ahead you are than the kids that didn't go."

Webster agrees. "They compress in this one week the same amount you would get in like six months of school."

The names of favorite faculty dropped in the course of conversation are too numerous to list, but Gordon Johnson and the orchestra experience are a universal favorite, in part because of the complexity of music and the depth of quality of players, especially for students who come from smaller towns and may not have access to orchestra.

Chris notes, "To have a full complement of every instrument in the room . . . to have a good percussion section and a really strong brass section and great French horn players . . . it's just awesome."

Everyone enthuses over the strong French horn section this year. Then Webster recalls a camp highlight. "Last year was probably one of the best."

Greg chimes in, "The music selection was fantastic and everybody was balanced."

"We did 'The Montagues and the Capulets (from Serge Prokofiev's 'Romeo and Juliet')," continues Webster. "Everyone loves it. There's this huge tuba part, and we had a really good tuba player who just nailed it!"

Heads enthusiastically nod.

Lessons learned at the festival encompass more than just the musical variety. These students have learned to manage their time, space and behavior, living independently on campus with their friends, old and new, under the watchful eye of dedicated counselors, staff and faculty. They note some of the pitfalls to avoid.

Lack of sleep and too much junk food top the list.

Greg adds too much caffeine. "I drink like six espressos a day. It takes me three weeks to wean myself of it."

Webster adds, "Letting the room be a mess is a big mistake. That last Saturday night when you're so tired . . . keeping the room clean makes packing up so much easier."

Someone mentions not bringing enough warm clothes. A bike is a must for guys.

Percussionist Jared Masin notes with a mischievous grin, "There are a lot of rules that are now in place because of us."

No swimming in Rock Creek.

No long boarding or biking down airport road.

No playing music on the corner for money.

And, although this is not an official rule, don't heat up your Pop-Tart on an iron.

"The main thing about all this," Chris says, "it builds character."

That character includes growing maturity, a work ethic, and an enduring appreciation of the joy of music.



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Our fiftieth anniversary is only two years away! We anticipate a warm celebration, reflecting on half a century of the rich musical heritage of the Red Lodge Music Festival. While many will bask in memories of treasured moments past, the Board of Directors must ever look to the future. Our endowment is a critical part of that future. The economic downturn of the past few years presented us with challenges. We could not have met these challenges without your help.

### Thank you.

We look to our endowment to help sustain this wonderful tradition to its hundredth anniversary. The Board of Directors and all associated with the Red Lodge Music Festival are most grateful for the following contributions and pledges to the endowment and to all individuals who have helped **Grow the Passion**.

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## Flexible Tradition

by **Leonard Garrison** | Artistic Director | Red Lodge Music Festival

After forty-eight years, an organization establishes certain traditions, and the Red Lodge Music Festival has many. The camp has always been held in early June, when the mountain air is sweet and the weather vacillates between snow and pleasant sun. We always have a picnic at Wild Bill Lake on the last Saturday, often in defiance of the elements, and there is always a water fight. Since the early days, there have been five evening faculty concerts of a diverse repertoire and instrumental colors, two evening student chamber recitals, and a final Sunday student band and orchestra concert. Since 2000, the final faculty performance has been an eight-hand, four-pianist, two-piano extravaganza with a corps of faculty actors that leaves the audience in stitches. The student percussion ensemble also fishes for laughs, and now a contest of one-upmanship between oboes and bassoons has invaded the Red Lodge Civic Center. Faculty concerts have been collected in a playbill for decades, and the cover is the beloved Red Lodge Music Festival logo. This also adorns the official T-shirt, which appears in a different color each year. Some of us have a large collection of RLMF shirts and enjoy wearing some colors (forest green) more than others (lime green).

An organization based solely on tradition cannot flourish, and the Festival has been willing to experiment. The emphasis has always been chamber music, a unique strength. In its first season it was called the Red Lodge String Festival. The camp quickly added winds and percussion and for a time voice, but eventually focused on instrumental music. Jazz came much later and is now an integral part of our offerings. For the last few years we have held a one-hour class focusing on rhythm but have decided to devote this time next year to an additional master class. We will continue to tweak the program while respecting its underlying strengths.

In 2013 we have an opportunity to celebrate this flexible tradition during our fiftieth season and hope many of our alumni can join us. If you have suggestions for how to celebrate this milestone, please contact me at [Leonardg@uidaho.edu](mailto:Leonardg@uidaho.edu). In the meantime, thanks so much for your support of the Red Lodge Music Festival, and may it live another fifty.



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