

District music contest includes tribute to Larry Maupin

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Jean Henderson, a music professor at Nebraska Wesleyan University, was a childhood friend of Larry Maupin.

Dave Klein, Kearney Public Schools orchestra teacher, was introduced to the double bass by Maupin when Klein was just a junior at Grand Island Senior High.

Both Henderson and Klein are why a piece called "In Memory" was performed in honor of Maupin at Friday's District IV Music Contest at Grand Island Senior High, the school where Maupin taught for 38 years.

Kearney High's Camerata String Orchestra played "In Memory of Larry Maupin," in a performance that featured all sections of the orchestra, including two violin solos played by Camerata concertmaster Sebastian Nabb in honor of Maupin, who played violin. (See video at www.theindependent.com/).

Henderson said she first met Maupin when they both entered kindergarten at Huntington Elementary in Lincoln. They then went through middle school and Northwest High School together, before enrolling at Nebraska Wesleyan University in Lincoln.

After graduation, Maupin went on to teach in the Grand Island Public Schools, while Henderson opened a private studio where she taught strings and piano. However, most of her professional life has been spent teaching at Nebraska Wesleyan University.

Following college graduation, Henderson stayed in touch with both Maupin and Judy, Maupin's self-described Lincoln Northeast "high school sweetheart" who ended up being his wife for 46 years.

"He and I both played in the Lincoln Symphony Orchestra," Henderson said.

Nebraska Wesleyan for a number of years has had a high school honor festival for band and vocal music students. She said some strings players might play at the festival, but as an adjunct to the band and vocal students.

"It wasn't really an honor for strings players because they didn't have to audition," she said.

Maupin, though, pressed to have a true honors orchestra for strings at Nebraska Wesleyan's festival, Henderson said. She said string instrument players had auditions and played in their first honor orchestra at Nebraska Wesleyan in 2002.

After Maupin died from pancreatic cancer in December 2009, Henderson composed "In Memory" in his honor. She sent the composition to the clinician for the 2010 Nebraska honor strings orchestra. He agreed to include the piece in the 2010 honors orchestra concert.

When Klein, who was at the concert with his own students from Kearney, heard Henderson's music, he asked for a copy of the score so his own students could play it. Klein said it will be somewhat difficult for him and his students - many of whom knew Maupin - to perform "In Memory" in the auditorium where Maupin directed so many concerts.

Klein, who graduated from Senior High in 1976, said he was playing electric bass at various "gigs" in the Grand Island area with fellow musicians Norm Sodomka and Rol Stock. Klein said Maupin came to him partway through his junior year, telling him that he needed a double bass player for the Senior High orchestra.

Although he was not initially enthusiastic about playing double bass, Klein was soon not only playing the instrument in the Senior High orchestra, but also was riding over to Hastings with Maupin to play double bass in the Hastings Symphony Orchestra. Klein also played in the Tri City Youth Symphony.

While Maupin was famous in his later years for driving a French-made Citroën, Klein remembers that his then high school teacher had another unusual car with a switch-button transmission.

Although he only had Maupin as a teacher for a year and a half in high school, Klein said, he was still able to be named to All State Orchestra as a senior. Klein attended Hastings College, where he continued to perform in the Hastings Symphony Orchestra.

Klein went into music education, so Maupin continued to be a fellow musician, a mentor and a collaborator. Klein said both he and Maupin played in the Hastings Symphony Orchestra, where Maupin served as concertmaster from 1965 through 2002.

He said both he and Maupin were huge fans of Nebraska Public Radio. (Maupin played a key role in bringing the Nebraska Public Radio signal to Central Nebraska.)

Klein said he enjoys doing woodworking in his garage while listening to Nebraska Public Radio. He said there were many times when he would hear a piece of music and then call Maupin on the telephone to discuss it.

Oftentimes, Maupin had been listening to the same piece of music. Maupin then would launch into a commentary on the music and the musical group that was performing the piece. Sometimes, Maupin would suggest that Klein listen to another recording of the same musical number performed by a different orchestra or group.

"I never stumped him," said Klein, describing the many musical conversations he had with Maupin.

Sometimes, Klein said, when he called Maupin during the summer, he would discover that his friend was not within earshot of Nebraska Public Radio because he was in Canada or some other distant location due to his part-time job as a charter bus driver for Arrow Stage Lines.

He said Maupin sometimes would drive his own musical groups from Kearney on an Arrow Stage Lines Bus to out-of-state musical performances.

Klein said that during the fall of 2009, he called Maupin, inquiring about a piece of music that one of his student groups in Kearney might play. Maupin suggested a march, retrieved the music from his musical library and began playing it over the telephone, offering commentary about how the group played specific passages in the piece.

He said he recorded both the music and Maupin's commentary on his cell phone, then played the recording for his students before they began to learn the piece. His group played the piece at Grand Island Senior High and Maupin came to listen to the performance just a couple of months before his death.

Klein said that in some ways, "In Memory" should be light-hearted, because Maupin was always making jokes and injecting humor into nearly every conversation. When Klein talked to Henderson, she said she initially tried several approaches, including something that would be reminiscent of Irish music. But then she thought, "That isn't Larry."

Henderson ended up with a composition that honored Maupin's life, but also reflected the fact that he had recently died. Klein said the result is music that's perhaps sad, but definitely filled with emotion. Henderson said she definitely wanted music filled with emotion.

That is fitting as well.

"Larry made music part of life and he gave life to music," Klein said.