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[00:00:04] **Speaker 1** Oh, right.

[00:00:06] **Speaker 2** You get in there?

[00:00:07] **Speaker 1** Yeah. You ready to go? Okay. This is fun.

[00:00:12] **Speaker 2** Oh, sorry.

[00:00:14] **Speaker 1** So I hope we could do multiple takes because I like when.

[00:00:17] **Speaker 2** I edit everything down. I'll take parts of your sentence, too.

[00:00:20] **Speaker 1** Oh, this is. This is the three good words he said. Yes. Awesome. Because, like, I sometimes become a blubbering idiot on camera. I don't know what it is.

[00:00:31] **Speaker 2** So you'll just look right. And of course, I will ignore the dude behind me. Yeah.

[00:00:38] **Speaker 1** Jump up and down.

[00:00:39] **Speaker 2** That's right. That's right.

[00:00:41] **Speaker 1** Yeah. Great. Oh.

[00:00:46] **Speaker 2** Okay. Cool. Um, but I.

[00:00:55] **Speaker 1** All right, good.

[00:00:56] **Speaker 2** All right, John. So tell me, are you excited for what's about to take place here?

[00:01:01] **Speaker 1** Oh, yes. This is our 49th Annual Claire Holiday concert here at the Pablo. Let me back up. Yeah. Yeah. Like I said. Mm hmm. So, yes, we're very excited. As far as the music and theater arts department goes, this is the 49th annual holiday concert here at the public center at The Confluence. It's a great showcase of all the musical efforts across our department.

[00:01:24] **Speaker 2** Tell me how many students are involved this year?

[00:01:27] **Speaker 1** They're about 350 students between the Wind Symphony, which is our concert band that's involved, the University Symphony Orchestra. And we have five choirs.

[00:01:35] **Speaker 2** That's that's going to go out to coordinate.

[00:01:38] **Speaker 1** It does. We we start planning early at the end of this this season. We will meet the conductors of the all the ensembles will collaborate and start talking about, well, what do we want to tweak for the next year? And then going into the summer we start thinking about what the repertoire choices might be for the next year. So that early in the fall semester we can start putting our program together so that and coordinating it. So we're not all doing the same kind of slow music or there's no repeats across the instrument to the vocal music, etc.. So.

[00:02:13] **Speaker 2** They say that bust stretches, for Pete's sake. Are you in? Yes. Okay. Yeah. If you could just talk about that last part, about trying to make sure your coordinates, you know, overlapping. Okay. Yeah. All right.

[00:02:25] **Speaker 1** Um, so, yeah, we at the end of the summer, we collaborate, we start sharing music ideas with each other so that we don't. Aren't all programing the same type of music or the same music with the same titles or the same themes? Just so we can get a good variety of music for the audience.

[00:02:44] **Speaker 2** How much? Tell me about the students and their their attitude toward it. How how excited are they to be able to bring this concert to the public?

[00:02:52] **Speaker 1** Yeah, The students, I think, look forward to this each year because it's the one opportunity where you get to have all the the two instrumental ensembles and the choirs together for the first time. We all get really busy kind of living in our own band world or orchestra world. And so they get they enjoy getting to hear each other and go, Oh, I didn't realize. Sometimes I hear I didn't realize that my friends could do this, or just to realize that some of the students also will perform in Wind Symphony and then go perform with the Singing Statesmen or the Women's Concert Chorale. So there are we do have some overlap of students that will do multiple performances throughout the concert in a variety of the groups.

[00:03:33] **Speaker 2** That's going to be really cool for them to be able to really understand and appreciate the other the other music ensembles on campus.

[00:03:40] **Speaker 1** Mm hmm. Yeah, There's a large respect for each of the ensembles. They they they appreciate each other. They're really supportive. And again, it's just nice for us to be able to come together and celebrate kind of what we do across campus and for the community.

[00:03:57] **Speaker 2** If you were trying to describe this concert to somebody who's never been to before, what would it be? How would you describe it?

[00:04:04] **Speaker 1** Well, historically, we've called it a gift to the community. When it started 49 years ago, that's essentially what it was when it was over in the zoning arena. It was a free concert at that point. But, you know, things have changed with the production value of what we do now that we're no longer on campus and we're over here at the publlo. We do have some expenses that are involved, but now we still treat the programing side of it as a gift to the community to kind of kick off the holiday season. There is some very specific holiday music that we do perform on this concert, but then there's just a good mix. There's just it's uplifting and joyous music.

[00:04:44] **Speaker 2** What do you hear from the public and from them are coming in and seeing the concert? What are some of the things you've heard?

[00:04:51] **Speaker 1** Well, like any concert, you get sometimes mixed reviews. But the the the we've got a loyal group of patrons that come every year. I was just talking to my wife today about it, and one of her friends is like, yes, I have not missed a holiday concert since her kids were little when they were crawling around on the bleachers at Zorn. And now her kids, I think, are off in college. So for 20 plus years, they've been coming. So we do have some that have come ever, you know, for for most of these events. And our alumni that performed in this park even back in the 70s and 80s, will come back to to support the students and get back in the holiday mood. And it's just it's kind of one of the one of the events that everybody puts on their calendar to make sure they come back to.

[00:05:38] **Speaker 2** That kind of sense of tradition is going to be really important to the department, I would think, to be able to bring this kind of events here.

[00:05:45] **Speaker 1** Yes, it is. It's it's from the community building standpoint within the department, it's nice. But also just again, for the patrons and our alumni to get that sense of community to come back together. You know, when we did move to the Pablo, we we've changed some things as far as the repertoire goes, and I think we can talk about that a little bit with the finale because we used to do a piece by Ross Hastings that was called The Joy of Christmas that involved when Symphony, the Symphonic Orchestra and all the singers at one time. But with the transition here, we can't fit all those musicians on stage at one time. So we've commissioned a new work by Kyle, New Master, one of our alumni from 1999, to write a new finale for us that just celebrates the winter seasons. Then roll back a little bit, please. For you? Yeah. Right there.

[00:06:38] **Speaker 2** Out the hallway or.

[00:06:43] **Speaker 1** You can come a little closer. I was hoping I could roll on. You're not that lucky.

[00:06:52] **Speaker 2** Are you seeing my hands and reflection? I will. I will also take the white pick. Roy? The better. Yeah, a little bit. Okay. A little bit. You know. A little bit. So let's talk about this really cool theater and space that you're in now. What has this been like to have this new space? Yeah.

[00:07:20] **Speaker 1** The Pablo Center at the confluence is although the second. Thing that's going to drive me nuts fennel scratch it okay. So yeah the Pablo Center at the confluence is a it's in its sixth season here in Eau Claire. It's a it was a joint venture between the university and the public. We were in on the ground floor, so to speak, with the planning and the design process. There was a committee of faculty members from the university that were on artistic planning to do with the designs of the building so that we could make sure that we have a multi-functional performance. Hall That's like the art theater where this takes place. Works really, really well for acoustic ensembles like the bands and the choirs and the orchestras. But then they also do musicals here, Broadway shows, etc. Our university does its its opera every other year here in the RCU. Plus, there's other spaces in this building. There's the Champ Theater, which is a black box theater. There's three rehearsal rooms within the building, and there's a Clearwater recital hall up here on the third floor that overlooks the confluence of the Eau Claire and the Chippewa Rivers that our faculty do. A monthly is called a First Fridays series for recitals. That's a very popular event within the community. But for us as an institution, you how about and for our students, it's become like the professional venue for them as we're trying to prepare them to be professional educators or professional musicians. They get a mix of the concerts that we have over on our concert and in our concert hall, Gartner over on campus. But then they get this new state of the art facility here, and we do about half of our performances a year across the department here in this building and the other half over on campus. And I will say this, the public center also has a state of the art recording studio up on the third floor. And we have as part of our recording arts certificate, the students get to work with that and do real recording projects here. So for the university, it's been a huge asset for us for our performances. And our theater department now lives in this building, which is a great thing for us. So they're seen Shop is here on the first floor so they can build all their sets for the musicals and then just wheel them out through the garage door onto the stage. So it's allowed them to open up possibilities with what they can do. And especially like the Black Box theater has really opened up opportunities for our theater department as well.

[00:09:51] **Speaker 2** You talk a little bit about how that name came about center at the conference?

[00:09:55] **Speaker 1** Yeah. Well, it was I don't know what the original name was, but it was something always at the Confluence. The Pablo Center is named after the naming sponsor, which is the Pablo Group here in town, which is again built on a local community and some community members who are influential in helping make this space happen with, you know, obviously they invested in the naming rights, but then they've also helped get things like the grand piano that's in the stage. And Jamf is one of the local businesses in town that is also, again, an alumni was built by an alum who really wanted to come back and put his roots in Eau Claire and wanted to help make this event happen in this venue happen.

[00:10:38] **Speaker 2** That seems to be a lot of activity, a lot of like energy happening downtown. Now. Can you kind of talk about how that feels like the downtown has changed a little bit in the last number of years?

[00:10:49] **Speaker 1** Oh yeah. So I've lived here 11 years, and during this time I've seen a lot of kind of revitalize revitalization of the downtown area. There's been some articles written that says, you know, there's this artistic renaissance that's happening in Eau Claire. So the Phenix Park area, which is right across the way here, across the at the Confluence, there's an annual weekly farmer's market in the summer. There's all kinds of events and outdoor music that goes on in the town. You can almost go, I think it's six nights a week now. There's jazz somewhere in town at some one of the local venues. A lot of times it's community members, but then it gives provides this place for our students who are also interested in the jazz or in the jazz area. The opportunity to go and play and learn how to be a jazz musician. So small combos do different things, or students have formed big bands in the summer and perform at local places right down here across the street called The Plus, or just various venues like that. So cool.

[00:11:50] **Speaker 2** Yeah. Let's talk about this finale number that is is kind of new to you folks and you kind of get the background of what that is.

[00:11:58] **Speaker 1** Yeah. When we moved to the the from Zoran to the Pablo, we knew that we had to make a change because the, the stage, you know, it was not a gym floor anymore, which is what we were at in Zaun. And so we talked about a lot of different ideas and brainstorming like do we want it to be in the same flavor as what we had, which was The Joy of Christmas, which was a very kind of traditional Christmas, two Christmas carols, sacred music all around the one holiday. And we wanted to make the event more welcoming to our broader community. So during the process we were brainstorming and we're like, Well, we want somebody to be connected to the university. So we talked to the composer Kyle new master, who's one of our graduates, I believe it was from 1999 who got his composition career started at UW Eau Claire by doing a composition contest for the university orchestra. And he won that. And Nobu, you should have performed that with his piece with the University Orchestra. So we commissioned Kyle. This took us a couple of years to come to fruition because the pandemic got in the way and slowed everything down for us. But then we were talking about themes and how to make that work, and we said, Yeah, let's just make it about winter and about the seasons or about the community. And so Kyle started working and found the poetry of Max Garland, who was a faculty member in the English department, and at one point Wisconsin poet laureate. And he settled on three poems from Kyle New Master, and he said, Those poems are.

[00:13:38] **Speaker 2** You settle on three Petal from action. Max.

[00:13:40] **Speaker 1** Yes, from Max. Yes. I cut myself. Yeah, Yeah. So Kyle settled on three poems from Max Garland and set those to music. So it's an a three movement suite. The second and third movements are continuous, so there's no real break between those two two moments. But the first movement starts with the kind of this cool breeze, like the first signs of winter coming in, and it's like this cool breeze to the choir singing oohs and aahs with some, you know, thin sounds and the strings and the woodwinds. Then it becomes more energetic where we're going to accept the we're excited about winter, we're excited about the new snowfall. We're going to get out, we're going to celebrate, we're going to play and it's going to be joyous. The second movement is a little bit more somber, Winter said. And it's getting the day are getting shorter, so it's a little bit, okay, when is this over? There's a little bit that longing for the longer days. And then the last movement is the last movement works on is a little bit more joyous and a little bit more celebration leading us to, Hey, the winter's kind of over. We're not starting to see spring temperatures are getting warmer and the days are getting longer. So it really takes us kind of on this journey of what it's like to experience winter through music.

[00:15:00] **Speaker 2** It's very cool that you've been able to have that connection to the university from both the words and the music. Mm hmm. Yeah. How did the students approach this piece?

[00:15:12] **Speaker 1** Well, it's tricky. It's it's different than anything else that's on the program. One, because it is it does involve all five choirs and the university orchestra. So as opposed to, you know, earlier in the show, you'll see and experience the work symphonic choir performing with the university orchestra in a normal traditional setting where the orchestra is on the stage and the choirs on risers behind them. But then you'll for the finale, we actually bring two of the choirs because of the stage size. We bring two of the choirs out into the audience. So it creates a surround sound effect. So for us, it's a challenge to coordinate because you've got, you know, maybe 40 or 50 yards between some of the singers that are in front and behind you as the conductor. Some of the parts in the first movement are quite challenging to sing, which is a good challenge for the students to be able to step up to and perform. And I think overall, when they when they get to the point of we get our rehearsals, they're just an energy there. At first I'm not sure how the energy happens there, like because we're rehearsing in isolation, but that once the excitement, once they get together, I think they really, really enjoy the process.

[00:16:30] **Speaker 2** I was going to ask. That creating that sound. But that must be kind of cool for the audience to have. Both sound on stage and sound like probably right next to them.

[00:16:45] **Speaker 1** Yes, I think it is. I mean, I've never been able to experience it in the audience. This is our third year doing the entire finale. Because of the pandemic, it took us we did the first movement the first year. Then the pandemic hit so we couldn't do it. And then finally we were able to premiere it and I got to conduct the entire premiere last year. Nobody should have conducted it. And I was backstage coordinating things. And so I get to conduct it again this year, which I'm excited about. My wife has been in the audience and she says it's a really, really nice experience. Again, from a musical standpoint, it's tricky to create balances from that, but just having being immersed, it's like getting a warm hug from the music. We've talked about that with the musicians and a couple of spots in the music, but the way that it surrounds you, it's just like this all encompassing experience, which is really, really nice.

[00:17:41] **Speaker 2** I love that. What what do you hope an audience takes away when how they feel when they walk away from the concert?

[00:17:48] **Speaker 1** Well, we hope it's a positive experience for them. Again, the mix of music that we do, we because we are a state institution, we try not to create a theme that might be, you know, some of the some of the other schools in the community who are like the private Lutheran schools. We'll do a holiday event and there's this is very thematic around a certain theme with Christmas generally. Ours is a more holistic approach to it. So we're hoping that there's something in there that's quiet that they're going to take away and they're going to have a nice feeling about. They're going to feel the joy and the excitement of the winter season and the holidays and be thankful for friends and family. And then a lot of it for us, too, is also, you know, because we've got the three different types of ensembles, we're exposing some of our community to ensembles that they might not have normally come to a concert for. So I know when Symphony draws a certain crowd and the orchestra draws a certain crowd or the statesman brings a different crowd. And so then now they come to hear the statesmen, the singing statesmen, or and now they get to hear the University orchestra or the Wind Symphony, or they get to hear the woman's concert Chorale. So that's a special thing for us to help expose everybody to that to the different aspects of the department. But from a feeling, you know, like I said, I hope it's an uplifting feeling of joy that they receive.

[00:19:10] **Speaker 2** I recall. Yeah. I think we're pretty well covers, and I think that you want to make sure we hit that we haven't done yet. No, I don't think so. Cool. All right.