



U-B photo by GREG LEHMAN

Flautist Leonard Garrison and clarinetist Shannon Scott play a concert Friday at Walla Walla General Hospital.

Music by famed composers provides healing comfort to WWGH patients and families.

By SHEILA HAGAR
of the Walla Walla Union-Bulletin

As people entered the sliding doors of Walla Walla General Hospital's lobby, they inevitably turned their heads left.

You could set your watch — first their eyes took in Shannon Scott on clarinet and Leonard Garrison on flute. Next their heads tilted toward the melodic blending of the instruments at the moment their brains registered a concert happening in an unexpected place.

In the next second — for most — shoulders relaxed in delight and grins spread across faces, even as folks had to hurry past for tasks and appointments.

Like clockwork and exactly the sort of response concert organizers hoped for.

The Friday performance was the first of five presentations planned for the "Heart Beat" concert series, a partnership between the hospital and Walla Walla Symphony. The musical interludes taking place in General Hospital's seasonally bedecked lobby "are aimed for the

IF YOU GO

The next Heart Beat concert is scheduled for 12:30 p.m. Feb. 11 in Walla Walla General Hospital's lobby. For more information, call the Walla Walla Symphony at 529-8020.

ONLINE VIDEO

See video of the performance at ubna.ws/1whQ3zi

heart," organizers said.

Music can have a deep effect on patients, their families and caregivers, said Leah Wilson-Velasco, chief operating officer for the Walla Walla Symphony.

That's especially true of on-site performances, she said.

"While a recording of Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata might lower somebody's blood pressure, my gut feeling is that live music is tremendously more impactful than a recording ever could be."

Wilson-Velasco said "Heart Beat" evolved organically. In working with General Hospital on other matters, the mini-concert idea seemed like a natural fit. After she and others learn from the five-session pilot season, the Symphony hopes to take the concept to assisted-living and retirement communities.

Scott and Garrison live in Idaho, commuting to play at Symphony concerts here. The couple teaches at University of

Idaho and Washington State University, and their educational backgrounds showed at Friday's performance.

With the lobby's fireplace burning briskly, the duo started the concert with a little information about the works of classical composer Johann Sebastian Bach before moving into the territory of Duke Ellington's jazz.

"I never learned to play the saxophone," Scott told the small group gathered. While the clarinetist regrets that, it turns out jazz standards can come from woodwinds, too. She and Garrison launched into a trio of Ellington jazz standards.

Other compositions were also played before Garrison and Scott settled into what had to come next — a menu of Christmas tune selections. Nearby at least one reception desk employee sang along in deep bass, his eyes never leaving his paperwork.

Walking through the lobby, chief executive officer Monty Knittel paused to enjoy the music. Music and medicine fit well together, he said.

"We have a few of these concerts planned over the holidays," he said. "I'd love to have a piano out here and have someone play it every day during the lunch hour. That's one of my dreams."

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