"This is a once-in-a-lifetime kind of concert for a community orchestra, to perform with an artist of this caliber in a new work."

Don Appert, music director and conductor for the Clark College Orchestra, on the visit from former Boston Symphony player Ron Barron.

Music director Don Appert conducts a Clark College Orchestra rehearsal for a Wednesday concert with trombonist Ron Barron.

Clark College Orchestra to play with the Barron

Longtime trombonist for Boston Symphony taught group's conductor

By BRETT OPPREGARD for The Columbian

Even though Ron Barron retired recently from the Boston Symphony after more than 30 years as the principal trombonist, he still wanted to make music. So he sent out a broadcast e-mail offering his services as a soloist that eventually crossed the country and reached one of his former New England Conservatory students, Don Appert.

Besides being in charge of Clark College's music department, Appert also serves as the music director and conductor of the Clark College Orchestra, which blends the school's students with musicians from throughout the community.

In that role, Appert has been able to bring many talented performers to Vancouver, including students from the Oregon Symphony. Working with Barron, though, is a prominent player from one of the top orchestras in the world. Appert acknowledged, would be unprecedented territory.

Yet, he also thought, it wouldn't hurt to ask.

The conversations between the two that followed led the Clark College Orchestra to not only feature Barron in its free concert Wednesday night in Vancouver's Royal Durlston Theatre but also to have on that program the world premiere of the orchestral version of Eric Ewazen's "Palmetto Suite." Ewazen, who has been a faculty member of Juilliard School in New York since 1980, originally wrote the piece for Barron and a pianist. Barron asked him to expand the tune for this Vancouver show, and Ewazen is expected to attend the premiere as well.

"This is a once-in-a-lifetime kind of concert for a community orchestra," Appert said. "To perform with an artist of this caliber in a new work, I was really surprised. I imagined he would do something with just strings, but he's using the full orchestra."

Barron said Ewazen was inspired to write the original piece while walking on a beach during a vacation to South Carolina, in the Charleston area. The movements reflect the setting, the wild dunes, as well as the sensuality of a woman he noticed sitting on the side of the road, weaving baskets.

Appert said, "It's not an avant-garde piece at all. It's very tonal. The second movement is even kind of jazzy and bluesy."

Barron said he and Appert had kept in loose contact over the decades, and he appreciated the interest from his former pupil enough to find a way to make the concert work into his schedule. That included expanding his nationwide touring plans to package together a mini-swing through the Wire.
The Clark College Orchestra practices for a world premiere that will feature trombonist Ron Barron.

Barron:

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Northwest that combined the Clark show with performances this month at Portland State University and the University of Oregon.

Music in the home

"I really want to do everything I can to help people find joy and happiness and comfort in music," Barron said. "You don't have to be a professional musician to make that happen. Over the last 100 years, there has been a great distance put between performing in the home and just being consumers and listeners. People feel inadequate if they can't perform like a pro. That's a bad thing."

He added, "Many homes used to have pianos. Music was in the home. People sang. People went to church and sang. That's been disappearing. So instead of them coming to me, I want to take this opportunity to bring music directly to people and try to encourage them to be active as performers. Too often, people get jobs and put their instruments in the closet. I want them to stay invested, at whatever level."

Appert said, "He's not coming here with something to prove. This is someone who has played with world-renowned conductors and as a soloist. It's certainly not for the monetary reward. It's purely for the musical reward. He just loves to play."

Clark baseball sweeps Seattle

The Clark College club baseball team swept a doubleheader Saturday at Seattle University. The Penguins (3-4) beat the Seattle club team 10-1 and 7-4.

Ryan Ecalbarger pitched a complete-game victory in the opener, striking out four and scattering nine hits.

Fort Vancouver grad Ben Madison went 2 for 4 with a double and 5 RBI.

Mountain View grad Blake Kellams recorded the complete-game victory in the second game with no earned runs and three strikeouts and three hits allowed.

Battle Ground grad Kori Brede went 4 for 7 with a triple in the doubleheader.

Clark plays at George Fox in Newberg, Ore., today in a doubleheader beginning at noon.