

## All About “Home Stays”

As you know, donations are crucial to the success of the Mid-Columbia Symphony (MCS). Are you able to donate a few hundred dollars during every concert? No? We understand! But, if you can host a traveling musician, you will save the MCS the cost of a hotel room for 2 to 4 nights—as good as donating that amount of money!

The MCS provides lodging for musicians who travel more than 50 miles to play in our concerts—“remote” musicians. When we use commercial hotels for lodging, it amounts to tens of thousands of dollars over a concert season—income we could put to much better use! A common solution among symphonies such as ours is to provide “homestays”—rooms in private homes.

We need to meet certain conditions on behalf of the musicians. They need a private room and private full bathroom, a chance to practice some music in their room during waking hours, and a place to park a car, which can be on the street. That much will save us the cost of lodging.

Remote musicians are financially responsible for their own meals. However, many musicians enjoy eating with their hosts if the hosts offer. It is not a requirement for a “home stay” to offer board, but it is an opportunity enjoyed by many musicians and hosts, and we encourage hosts to make the offer if it is not too inconvenient. Often, not all meals are sought and not all are provided—each case is unique. The actual needs and offers should be decided in advance by contact between musician and host so the musician knows what to expect, and the host knows what to prepare. The process is natural once contact is made.

For the musician a homestay is a chance to feel more at home while away from home, and a chance to meet new (and obviously friendly and nice) people. For the host a homestay is a chance to meet some very accomplished and committed musicians, and a chance to make new friends.

Remember, each case is unique. There are minimum standards we need to meet, of course, but the musicians are unique, the house is unique, and the hosts are unique. It is possible that the needs of a musician or the provisions of a host do not match. In that case we want to try a different match. The MCS will never “push” an uncertain match on either a musician (a commercial room is always a backup) or a host (we try to find more hosts than are needed, or some musicians go without homestays).

***Make a difference!*** Host a musician—or two—and help fund the MCS while you enjoy meeting fascinating people!

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### ONE HOST’S EXPERIENCES:

Our home allows us to host either one or two musicians. We have a bedroom and nearby bathroom in a daylight basement that provides very good privacy. The bathroom has a shower. We also have a spare bedroom on our main level, which is next to our family bath. We are “empty nesters”, so our “family bath” is a guest bath that we can make private for overnight guests.

We began by inviting a musician I wanted to get to know because he is autistic and has used that to his advantage both in studying and teaching his musical specialty. He has become a good friend and we look forward to hosting him whenever he is here, although that is always our mutual choice to make.

We hosted a very good bass player who happened to travel with a well-behaved dog and a wonderful bass made some 200 years ago. While practicing he brought it out to our kitchen to play it for us. It was spectacular! We learned a lot about the realities of learning to play at a very high level.

We hosted a violinist and a violist on different occasions, and learned a lot about the nuances of playing that matter constantly in string sections in an orchestra but which we probably would never imagine, not being musicians ourselves. And we learned a lot about the lives of professional musicians, most of whom teach in some form to make ends meet as they pursue artistic passions.

Our most fun time hosting, so far, was an opportunity to host a family of five. They live in Western Washington. The wife plays in our orchestra and her husband works in a company headquartered in Eastern Washington and he needed to visit headquarters on the same weekend as our concert, so they decided to make it a family trip, and took the three kids along, ages something like 6 to 13 years old. They were looking for lodging that would accommodate a family and assumed that it would be a hotel somewhere. We read about their situation, and considering our basement room situation and extra room upstairs and grandparent's ability to host children, we proposed to host them. They liked the idea but checked a few times to make sure "we knew what we were getting into," and then decided to join us. What ensued was a delight for everyone, especially two retired folks who became honorary grandparents during their stay. They left a thank you card that melted our hearts.

So, please do consider being a homestay host. At worst (not likely), it will be a manageable chore that amounts to a significant financial donation to your Symphony. At best, it will be more than you hope for and a lifetime memory that you share with a new friend.