

carefully-chosen subset of the band, which allowed us to socially distance from each other and our clients.⁶ And that was it for the season, just 6 performance days versus 48 in 2019. We're hoping to get back in the saddle as vaccines roll out in 2021.

What about those other groups we play with?

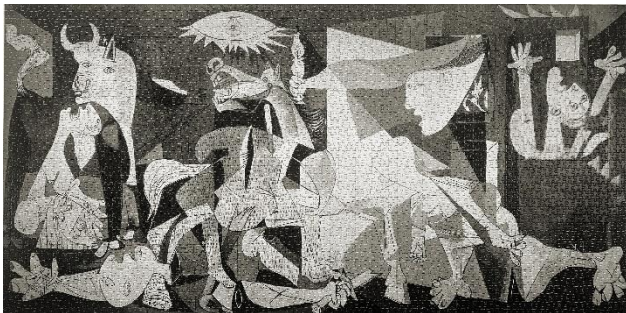
Portland Community Wind Band had one performance in March before everything shut down. Second Wind Jazz and our rock 'n' roll group (Treble in River City) both shut down in March and are still dormant. And we were just on the cusp of becoming world famous. Darn...

Pandemic Pandemonium

How many of you found new hobbies or expanded on your old ones? How many did some projects around the home or tried new recipes? Yeah. Us too.

We rediscovered the joys of hanging out on the back patio on nice summer days.⁷ Projects included cleaning anything that refrigerated or froze things, vacuuming the garage (walls, floor, ceiling). We baked our first savory clafoutis.⁸ We learned to appreciate the joys of online grocery ordering, eagerly looked forward to our outings to have the groceries loaded into the trunk of the car, and thrilled to the *frisson* of finding out which items we got, which ones we didn't, and which were semi-randomly substituted for other items. Whee!!!

Steve put together a 3000 piece jigsaw puzzle of Pablo Picasso's masterpiece condemnation of the Spanish Civil War, *Guernica*. Big sucker (47" x 33") and all shades of gray. Took about three, maybe four months.⁹ Janet didn't have the patience for that kind of insanity.¹⁰



Good thing the puzzle wasn't lifesize; in real life *Guernica* is 25 feet long.

⁶ We didn't want to find ourselves on the 11 o'clock news for all the wrong reasons!

⁷ More on this later

⁸ And learned how to pronounce "clafoutis".

⁹ It's easy to lose track.

¹⁰ Don't despair; she found her own kinds of insanity.

Together we assembled a LEGO model of the *Eagle* lunar lander.

The mini-fig astronauts are darling and it beautifully complements our 16" diameter LEGO Death Star.



The Eagle has landed

Like everyone else, we've been doing our share of TV watching. We worked our way through every episode of *Star Trek: The Next Generation* and are currently working on *Deep Space Nine*. Steve has gotten into *Doctor Who* and is watching his way through 100 episodes recorded from BBC America during the week or two before Christmas. We're currently being entertained by *The Goldbergs*¹¹ and a DVD box set of *WKRP in Cincinnati* we forgot we own. Classic television!

We both did more reading than normal. Janet decided it would be interesting to read *The Great Influenza*, about the 1918 pandemic. Based on what she read, it doesn't look like we learned much in the intervening century. The good news is that science is much more advanced (back then, they didn't know the flu was caused by a virus because they didn't have the tools to see viruses). The bad news is that humanity seems determined to repeat many of the same mistakes.¹²

In the same spirit, Steve dove into *The Decameron*, Giovanni Boccaccio's 14th century collection of 100 tales told by friends sequestered on a secluded estate outside Florence to escape the Black Death. Each day for ten days, ten young women and men spun a tale a day ranging from humorous to tragic with some considered bawdy.¹³ Actually, he only made it through Volume I (four days, 40 tales) before giving up thanks to racy, riveting plots like:

¹¹ We're just as astonished as you that this proved to be entertaining.

¹² And add a few new ones.

¹³ By 14th century standards. Today they'd be plots on *Friends*.

Third Day, Novel VIII: Ferondo, having taken a certain powder, is interred for dead; is disinterred by the abbot, who enjoys his wife; is put in prison and taught to believe that he is in purgatory; is then resuscitated, and rears as his own a boy begotten by the abbot upon his wife.

Fourth Day, Novel II: Fra Alberto gives a lady to understand that she is beloved of the Angel Gabriel, in whose shape he lies with her sundry times; afterward, for fear of her kinsmen, he flings himself forth of her house, and finds shelter in the house of a poor man, who on the morrow leads him in the guise of a wild man into the piazza, where, being recognized, he is apprehended by his brethren and imprisoned.

The Great Patio Cover Caper

After all our backyard summer hang-outing we decided it would be great to have a patio cover, so in August we hired a company to build it. In the process of digging the postholes for the structure, they found that there was a gap between the bottom of the patio and the ground underneath.



It's *almost* complete!

Sooo, that job got twice as big and—you guessed it—twice as expensive. Between scheduling delays and weather delays, it's still not quite done ... although the space heaters *might* arrive this week.¹⁴



World-class gravel shooting. Check out the video for full amazement.

One of the most exciting parts of this project was when they needed to get gravel for the patio fill from the front of our house to the back.

They lined up

this huge contraption with a giant chute at the front of the house and shot a river of gravel 25 or 30 yards to the back!!! Steve took video of it ([watch here](#)) because it was just that amazing!

¹⁴ Spoiler alert: They didn't.

Virtual Band, Actual Fun

Both TBGO and Portland Community Wind Band have been doing virtual music projects. While these projects are no substitute for in-person rehearsals and performances, they're still fun and give everyone a reason to keep playing. Each musician records his/her part while listening to a click track and sends it to the director for editing and assembly. We've learned that recording can be frustrating because it seems like there's always some dopey mistake in each take. At some point, you just pick the best one, send it along, and pretend it was perfect.



Patio construction bonus: our own TARDIS

The audio and video editing has been a learning exercise for both Steve (for TBGO) and Dr. Patrick Murphy of the University of Portland (for PCWB), but we think the finished videos turned out well. You can search for 'em on Youtube or just click here:

The Beat Goes On Marching Band Videos

- [Uptown Funk](#), Bruno Mars
- [Santa Meets Sousa](#), Mark Williams

Portland Community Wind Band Videos

- [The Thunderer](#), John Philip Sousa
- [A Very Merry Heart and Soul](#), Julie Giroux
- [First Suite in Eb \(1. Chaconne\)](#), Gustav Holst

Other Highlights

Actual highlights? Hey, why start now

In closing

We know it will be a long haul before enough people get vaccinated and we can go back to the things we love like hanging out with friends, eating at a restaurant, resuming our favorite hobbies, travel, etc. In the meantime (you know the drill), wear a mask and keep your distance to protect others as well as yourselves.

Wishing you the best for 2021!

The Beat Goes On,

Steve & Janet