

Grand's visiting composer looking for storytelling students

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Staff photo by Connor Cumiskey Composer Peter Michael von der Nahmer sits at the piano on the second floor of the Grand Center for Arts & Culture. He says composes music, either in his head, on the piano or with electronic equipment.

NEW ULM — Teenagers interested in theater, writing and music are needed

at The Grand Center for Arts and Culture.

Resident Composer Peter Michael von der Nahmer would like to see more teenagers to get his project *“Growing Wise”* moving. No experience with playwrighting is necessary, only an interest in storytelling.

“I will teach them how to write musicals, the basics of creating musicals,” Nahmer said.

Nahmer wants to teach young people so they can tell the stories of their heritage and lives in New Ulm.

He hopes to host a workshop with many people (both young and old) before he leaves June 12. The workshop would be an opportunity for scripts to be read through by other writers involved in the project.

“I always like these workshops because they bring a lot of ideas into your mind and they are a very good point of communication between people,” Nahmer said.

Nahmer, who recently earned an honorable mention from the New York Philharmonic Orchestra, has worked on similar projects and is fully confident he can help even the most inexperienced writer tell a compelling story.

The project concludes at the end of his two, nonconsecutive month stay in New Ulm. He returns for the second month in July.

The conclusion will be a performance of the musical stories written by New Ulm teenagers and senior citizens.

The performance is expected during the weekend of Aug. 25. The Grand is hoping to secure a stage from State Street Theater Company.

In the mean time, Nahmer has been meeting with many seniors for his project *“Growing Young,”* which features senior citizens telling stories of

their youth.

“It is fascinating, you cannot get this in any books or any movies,” Nahmer said. “They are so honest when they talk to me and they tell me all of the histories of their families.”

He spends most of his days in meeting with seniors, talking through what they might want to write about.

Some have already decided, such as one who would like to create a dialogue with her mother. Many are still working on getting to the specifics.

Nahmer’s worst-case scenario, if they cannot make musicals from the stories, he could make a production directly from their conversations with him.

He particularly enjoys his conversations with seniors, in part because they share a similar wonder at why their family emigrated.

“It is almost like I have the opportunity to talk with my grandparents all the time,” Nahmer said.

His great-great-grandmother moved from New York City back to Germany. That has left his family as a strange cross between multiple cultures.

Nahmer’s heritage as a German-American born in Munich, Germany, with ancestors from Cuba has helped him identify strongly with New Ulm.

“I have never experienced a place that felt so much like the place that I was always looking for,” Nahmer said. “The connection between German and American. Because even in Germany the American part is missing, but here everything seems to be strangely together.”

The one downside Nahmer has found in New Ulm is a seeming lack of fresh bread, especially German bread.

Potential playwrights (and bakers) can contact the Grand at (507) 359-9222

or email Nahmer directly at mikyvondernahmer@gmail.com.

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