

JMU Returns to In-person Concerts

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Live performances were absent in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but on Sept. 24 a sense of normalcy was felt at one of Harrisonburg's first live musical performances in over a year.

Ian Zook, a brass professor of James Madison University (JMU) and the French horn player of the event, teamed up with Tracey Schimmel-Reed, the principal pianist of the Shenandoah Valley Children's Choir and the pianist of the evening to provide a refreshing live performance to all of the musical enthusiasts of the area.

The event was held indoors in the Recital Hall at the Forbes Center for the Performing Arts, JMU's main building for its art department. Masking was enforced in accordance with the school's COVID policies in order to mitigate the transmission of the virus. Cell phones and other electronic devices were prohibited at all times during the performance to prevent any distractions and any unauthorized video

recordings or photography.

The performers played five pieces, each varying in length and feeling, but for the most part the audience was serenaded with lush tones for the entirety of the performance. "I Threw a Shoe at a Cat" was the only outlier of the evening as the piece was more humorous than the other four. "Ballade Normande" and "Every Day an Alleluia" were more traditional pieces, played with enhanced intensity and passion demonstrated by Zook's soulful body movements and Schimmel-Reed's nimble fingers, which seemed to take over as if they had a mind of their own. For 60 minutes, Zook and Schimmel-Reed held the audience in the palm of their hands. Thunderous applause followed the conclusion of every piece, signaling the audiences' approval and appreciation for the performance.

At the conclusion of the evening, the audience stood and offered a standing ovation, sending the performers off with a clear message: Thank you for an amazing performance.



Tracy Schimmel-Reed and Ian Zook perform on stage. Photography by Yasser Perez