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Today's weather picture by: Chris Berry, 9, Washougal, Hathaway Elementary School

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WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 30, 2002



MIKE BAILEY
Bits 'n' Pieces

KPTV poll leaves Seahawks fans void

Sorry, Seahawk fans. You fell victim to Joeymania on Sunday.

For the handful of people in Clark County who still proudly proclaim to be Seattle football fans and care how their team fares each week, Sunday was supposed to be your day.

KPTV, the Fox affiliate in Portland, was scheduled to air the Seattle Seahawks-Dallas Cowboys game at 10 a.m. Sunday.

But television station executives decided to give its viewers a chance to do program planning and allowed them to vote on whether to air the Seahawks, the Detroit-Buffalo game or the San Francisco-Arizona game.

The online poll was conducted and apparently went overwhelmingly for Detroit and its quarterback **Joey Harrington**, a Portland native and University of Oregon grad who ranks second only to God among Oregon sports fans.

The voting is done at the television's Web site and a game to be aired is decided by the preceding Wednesday.

According to station vice-president and general manager **Teresa Burgess**, the online poll was added about a month ago and has been very popular with viewers.

"Everyone is so passionate about their team," Burgess said. "We know it's just a reflection of those who log on to the Web site, but it does give us some feedback from the viewers."

She also said the Web site is designed to allow only one vote from each e-mail address, so all those who have whined about Duck fans getting multiple votes can stop quacking.

Last week, the Detroit game received 54 percent of the vote, the Seahawks piled up 34 percent and those 49ers could muster only an embarrassingly low 12 percent.

Ultimately, the decision to air the regularly scheduled game or the one picked by the online poll voters will be made by Fox officials in Los Angeles.

"We have to give them a reason for the change," Burgess said. "As it turned out, they thought the Detroit game was a good choice for us. Plus, the person making the decision happened to be a big fan of Joey."

Harrington played well despite losing to the Bills 24-17.

That's no consolation for Seahawk fans.

To rub a bit of artificial turf into the wound inflicted last Sunday, the Seahawks beat Dallas 17-14 for only their second win of the season and Cowboy **Emmitt Smith** set the NFL career rushing record in the process.

Auction will help Bolivians

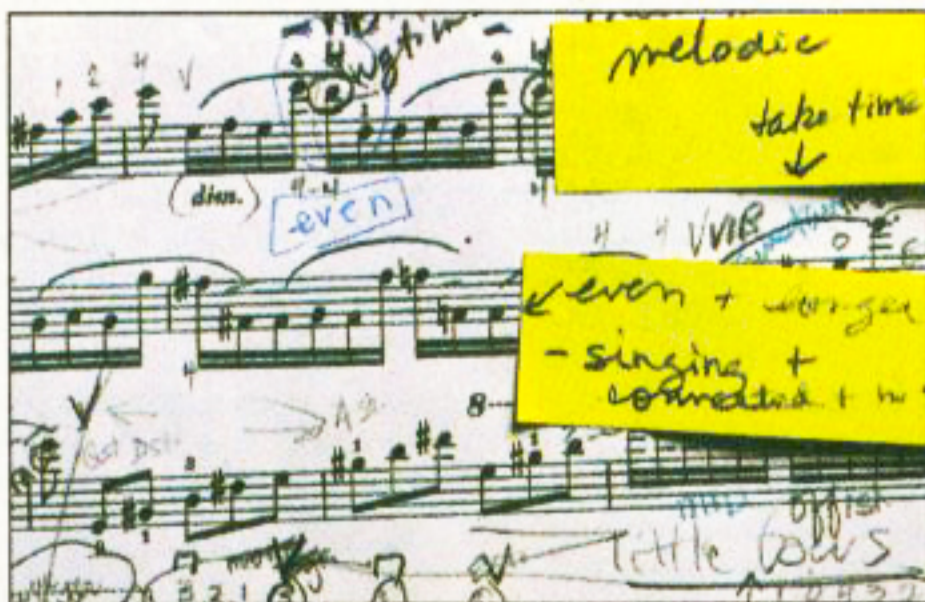
An auction of Bolivian art will be held at 7 p.m. Nov. 2 at the Vancouver First Friends Church, 2710 N.E. 65th Ave., Vancouver.

Included among the 30 items on the auction block will be alpaca sweaters, ponchos, Andean stocking caps and handmade women articles.

Proceeds from the event benefit leadership training and organizational strengthening in rural farm communities in Bolivia through work by the Christian organization World Concern. Admission is free.

MIKE BAILEY'S column appears Mondays and Wednesdays. If you have an item of interest, call Mike at The Columbian at 360-759-8050 or send a fax to 360-699-6033 or send e-mail to mike.bailey@columbian.com.

Practice of each piece for Andy Liang includes a gradual refining of technique and expression, guided by notes from his teacher.



Even though the 12-year-old is the youngest of the more than 100 members of the Portland Youth Philharmonic, Andy Liang, front left, already has one of the prime positions in the group's string section.

When adolescence meets adulation

As pressure mounts to reach potential, Vancouver violin prodigy vies to keep life simple

IF YOU GO

WHO: Vancouver violinist Andy Liang.
WHEN: At 1 p.m. today, Andy will play for the Vancouver Rotary Club in the Red Lion Hotel at the Quay, 100 Columbia St., on Nov. 9, at a time to be announced, Andy will perform in the Oregon Music Teachers Association competition at Lewis & Clark College; at 7:30 p.m. Nov. 16, Andy will play with the Portland Youth Philharmonic at the Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall, 1037 S.W. Broadway.
COST: Tickets to the Portland Youth Philharmonic concert range from \$8 to \$25 and are available through the organization's box office at 503-223-5939. Admission is free to the other recitals.



Photos by TROY WAYRYNEN/The Columbian

Andy Liang just has begun experiencing the places his talent with a violin can take him — and at what costs to his childhood.

By **BRETT OPPEGAARD**
Columbian staff writer

Standing alone in his sparsely decorated upstairs bedroom, Andy Liang whizzes through the tough passages of a complex Saint-Saens piece on his violin. Downstairs, his older brother Kuang plays a Rachmaninov concerto on the living room piano while their father and mother, J. and Ray, eat breakfast to the music. Sunrise gradually illuminates the scene. It's just after 7 a.m.

Per daily ritual, the brothers (both with perfect pitch) will practice again that afternoon, getting the hour in the morning before school and about a 90-minute session later in the day. Other rehearsals, private lessons and performances add to the training regime throughout each week. Kuang might be superb with his instrument, but Andy appears to have a rare talent. He

seems to be a legitimate prodigy.

Andy Liang has entered four regional violin contests since he started competing less than a year ago, and he's won them all, including the Young Artists competitions sponsored by the Vancouver Symphony, KBPS (FM-89.9) and the Oregon Symphony this year. He just turned 12 a couple of weeks ago.

Already one of the most promising young violinists in the Northwest, he is beginning to understand the pressure of such potential and the difficult choices and sacrifices that have to be made to excel in this art form.

Because of conflicts with his violin rehearsals, for example, Andy had to quit the soccer team for which he loved playing. He spent a year at the Vancouver School of Arts and Academics, but he asked his parents to transfer him

ANDY, page D6



Ray Liang, right, diligently makes sure her gifted sons, Andy and Kuang, are taken care of properly.

Slocum House regroups over finances

Company will offer more shows, longer runs — on budget

By **BRETT OPPEGAARD**
Columbian staff writer

The Old Slocum House Theatre Company gradually had built up about a \$10,000 cushion for its operations in the late 1990s, only to watch that dwindle by 80 percent during the past couple of years.

The unsettling financial trend caused a mini-crisis within Vancouver's oldest troupe this summer. It forced a reorganization that includes

expanding the next year's offerings from five shows to eight, extending most of the runs from three to four weeks and keeping tight control over budgets.

"We really have to watch what we spend now," vice president Art Greene said. "In the next year, we have to try to get our finances under control. If we go broke, we're going to shut the doors. We don't want to do that, but we really wouldn't have much choice. We can't spend up that \$2,000 (that's left in savings)."

The theater company hopes the turnaround starts with its version of the Gilbert & Sullivan musical "Ruddigore," opening Thursday and contin-

uing through Nov. 17 in the historic house in downtown Vancouver's Esther Short Park. It's a witty piece entwining a love story with the tale of a baronet suffering from a family curse that requires him to commit a crime each day or die an agonizing death. Intended to be a crowd-pleaser, "Ruddigore" is a comedy with a big cast and dance numbers — but without an obligation to pay royalties.

Slocum House seriously had considered doing the darker, more-difficult-to-appreciate musical "Sweeney Todd" in this slot. The company opted against that at the last

IF YOU GO

WHAT: The Old Slocum House Theatre Company presents Gilbert & Sullivan's "Ruddigore"
WHEN: Thursday through Nov. 17, with performances at 8 p.m. Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays as well as 2 p.m. Sundays
WHERE: Slocum House 605 Esther St., Vancouver
COST: \$7, \$5 for seniors and children; \$6 and \$4 for matinees
INFORMATION: Call 360-696-2427

SLOCUM, page D8

Halloween information on page D7

Looking for the most frightful way to spend Halloween? Interested in finding alternatives to trick-or-treating for kids? Suggestions for both, as well as tips on where to find some of the best-decorated homes for the howl-iday, can be found on page D7. The listings show activities, some free and others requiring admission, planned for today and Thursday.

Andy:

From page D1

back to Alki Middle School this term, so he could be closer to his friends from his Felida neighborhood. At his birthday party last weekend, Andy invited eight kids to go swimming with him and spend the night at his house. None of those friends are involved with his music. Much of the time, he seems totally unconcerned with the greatness of his gift.

During an afternoon practice session on a recent day, Andy's father asked him to work on a specific piece with his brother.

"Do I have to play the Mozart? I don't like the Mozart," Andy said.

J. Liang said, "I like the Mozart."

Andy shuffled around a bit, then said, "Do I have to play the cadenza?"

J. Liang chortled.

A muffled yell from Ray Liang came from another room, "Yes!"

The brothers played the Mozart, with the cadenza.

"It's not easy for a boy this age to play at this level," J. Liang said later. "But he still has a long way to go, a lot of room to improve. The gap between a leisure player and a professional player is pretty big. ... There's no question about it that Andy could be a musician. But that's up to him. He certainly has that talent. The area he really needs to improve is his desire."

Mei-Ann Chen, conductor and music director of the Portland Youth Philharmonic, gave Andy one of the prime spots in the prestigious orchestra's strings section this year, even though he's the youngest of the more than 100 performers in the group. Chen said, "He's really a mature player."

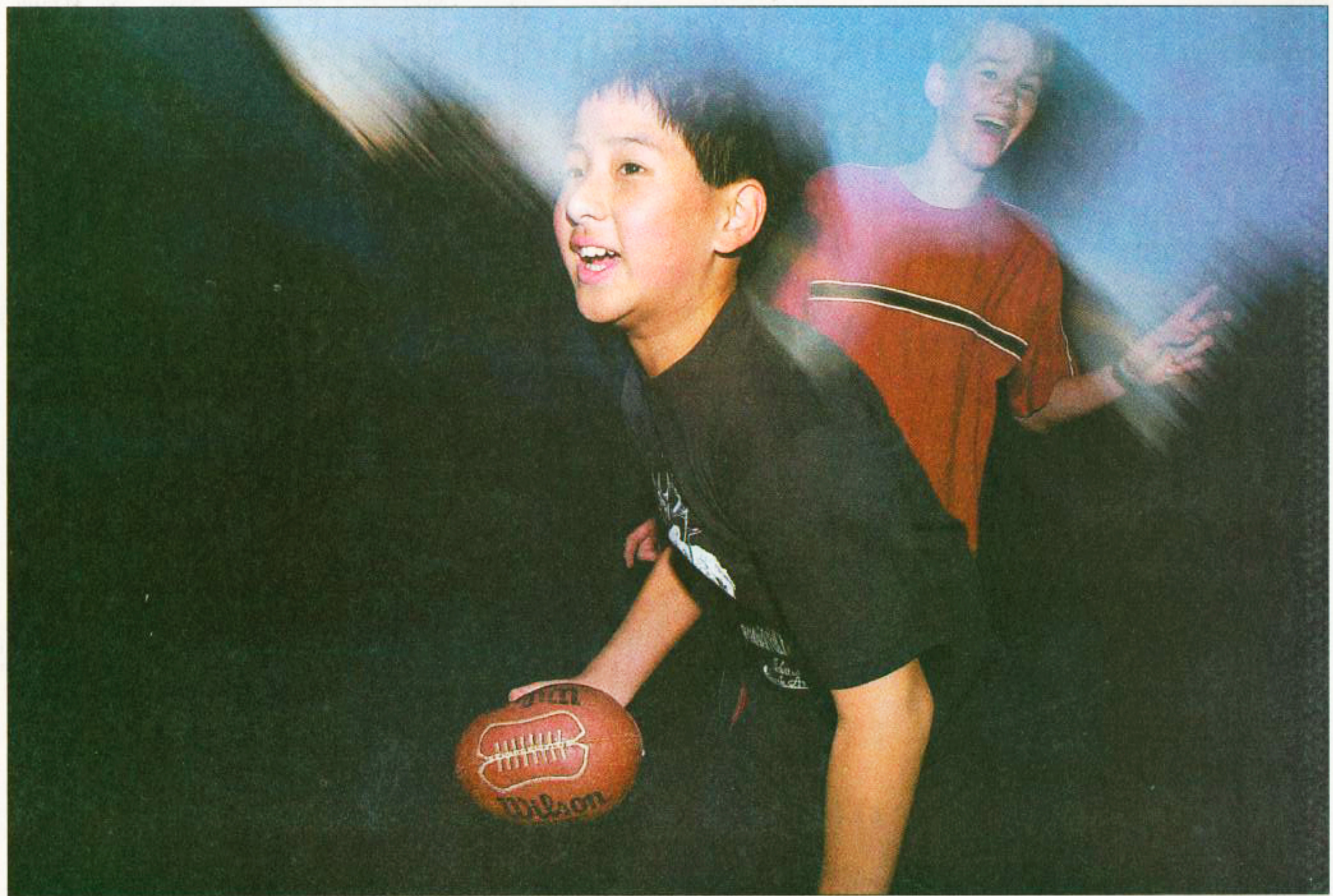
Chen said she was shocked to see such an unassuming young child come from behind the screen after Andy's blind audition for the group, during which he was shielded from the judges until after he performed and was scored.

"I never would have guessed he was going to be (an 11-year-old) boy," Chen said. "I have no doubt that he could make it in music. He's so good at expressing what he's playing. He puts a lot of soul into it, and that usually comes from age and experience. ... To be successful in the music world, though, sometimes it takes more than just ability."

Carole Sindell, professor of violin at Portland State University, said she had never taken a student as young as Andy when she worked with him five years ago.

"I made that exception because he had such a good sense of rhythm, a good sense of pitch and made such a nice sound," she said. "He's already playing like a professional. He's definitely of that caliber. It's all conveyed by the way a person moves with their instrument, plus he's a really sweet kid, and smart, too."

By all accounts, Andy appears to be a model child. His grades are excellent. He gets



Photos by TROY WAYRYNEN/The Columbian

Andy's parents, J. and Ray, consciously try to keep balance in their son's life, including time for goofing around and friends.

along well with schoolmates. He's respectful to adults, kind to strangers.

"He's just an enormously talented young man. He has a lot going for him on all levels," said Kathryn Gray of Portland, who has taught violin to Andy privately for the past two years.

"He has quite a gift in his hands, yet he's not boastful of what he can do, or overly proud, or conceited. ... But he's also a typical little boy. He likes to do boy things, play soccer, computer games, read.

"He also has very nice, supportive parents," Gray said. "They are helping him keep things in perspective. They do a very good job of walking the line, not killing the talent or killing the childhood, either. When you have someone this gifted, part of the issue is how hard you push them without running the risk of burning them out."

J. Liang, a recreational violinist himself, introduced Andy to the instrument at an early age, then began playing duets with him, starting about 5. "In the next couple of years, we'll find out if my kids have the passion or not," he said. "They both are pretty serious right now. But we don't know how this is going to turn out. ... In the beginning, I just tried to get them into music. It seems like they are getting pretty good now. We are very happy to see them play at this level. It's OK, though, if they end up just playing music for fun. That would be fine with us."

Andy says that most of his



For his Oregon Symphony performance, Andy played a \$125,000 violin lent to him.

friends at Alki are aware that he plays the violin but don't have any idea to what extent. When contemplating the school's talent show in the spring, Andy says he's leaning toward showing off a three-ball juggling routine, rather than his latest mastery of a piece by Bach.

Andy says playing music makes him feel good. It makes him proud. But when asked if he thinks he might want to make his living as a musician, Andy simply shrugs his shoulders in ambivalence. He isn't ready to — or interested in — predicting his future. He merely knows that tomorrow he will get up early, well before many other kids his age, and practice the violin, and he will keep on that routine until the day he decides not to anymore.



Even though he doesn't play in the Alki band, Andy enjoys the school's physical education.



After a year at the Vancouver arts school, Andy transferred to Alki Middle School to be closer to neighborhood friends.

"He's just an enormously talented young man. He has a lot going for him on all levels."

Kathryn Gray
ANDY'S VIOLIN TEACHER

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