

## Art and death in Ogden

Last month, the web site Livability.com ranked Ogden as one of the top 10 “Death Defying Cities.” According to the web site, the cities that made the list are the best adventure cities for things like skiing, rock climbing, and other adventure sports.

Although I wouldn’t necessarily use the phrase “death defying” to describe Ogden, there is no doubt that Ogden offers a myriad of opportunities for outdoor recreation. Ogden has promoted itself as a destination for outdoor enthusiasts and received recognition in the national publications Runners World, Ski Magazine, and Forbes.

In recent years, the quantity and variety of cultural experiences available in Ogden have also expanded. Consider the numerous activities that took place on the first weekend in March. Under the direction of Tracy Callahan,

Weber State University’s Department of Performing Arts presented the play “Lion in Winter.” Victor Uzer’s Bonneville Chamber Music Festival brought artists from Brazil, Russia, Montenegro, and Italy to Ogden to perform with a talented group of local musicians. Diane Stern and the WSU Office of Cultural Affairs brought the Punch Brothers band to perform at the Perry Egyptian Theater where they played traditional bluegrass as well as music spanning from the Beatles to Bach.

In smaller venues, the guitarist Carlos Emjay performed at the Borrowed Earth Emporium. The singer and guitarist Amy Lamarr performed at Rovali’s Ristorante Italiano. Other live entertainment options could be found at many eating and drinking establishments on 25th Street and beyond.

The first weekend in March wasn’t atypical. You can find similar events on most weekends. Later this month, the National Undergraduate Literature Conference will bring the nationally renowned authors Russell Banks, Sharon Olds and Terry Gifford to Ogden for public readings.

Several interesting factors contribute

to the cultural and artistic scene found in Ogden. The Brownings, the Dees, the Eccles, the Goddards, the Lindquists, the Stewarts and other prominent Ogden families have long recognized the importance of the arts and shown their support by building state of the art venues and providing permanent endowments to support the arts. The gifts of these large donors are supplemented by the generosity of hundreds of other donors and the work of countless

volunteers who serve on boards and committees. The community members who give their time and money to the arts are key to bringing the Utah Symphony and Ballet West to Ogden.

In recent years, the RAMP funds have provided funding to support arts and culture. RAMP funds provide a critical subsidy to the arts

which makes world-class performances available to the Ogden community at astonishingly affordable prices.

Undisputably, Weber State University is a linchpin for both the visual, performing, and literary arts. WSU sponsors many cultural events, and WSU faculty and students provide an appreciative audience for arts events sponsored by others in the area.

Finally, dozens of entrepreneurs have enlivened the arts scene in Ogden. This is evident from the numerous independently-owned galleries and the small music venues in downtown Ogden.

Across the country, communities are competing to attract creative and talented people because doing so is important to economic development. The communities that are attracting creative people are culturally rich, offering an eclectic menu of contemporary music, theater, symphony, galleries, and museums.

Ogden is deservedly proud of the reputation it has earned for outdoor sports. The city would be well served to also promote itself as a regional center for arts and culture. Doing so would foster both the arts and economic development.

### Top of Utah Voices



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### Commentary

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