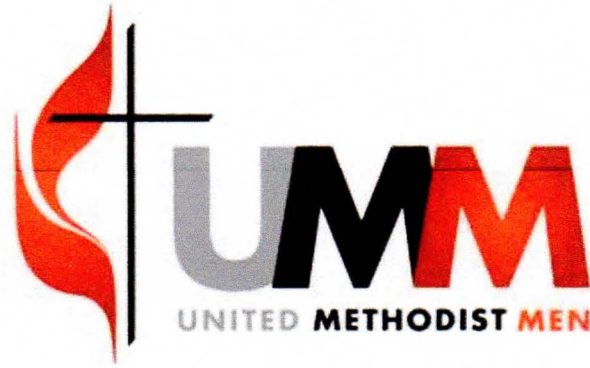




## United Methodist Men

Methodist Men has been an organization for all adult men within the church since at least 1925. The men have always shared fellowship and food but primarily they have sponsored projects. Annually they have various fund raisers to support these outreach projects. They are the charter organization for Boy Scout Troop 596 and Cub Scout pack 596. They support annual ministries such as Vacation Bible School, Youth Mission trips, Scout fund raisers, meals for our church family at Easter, and many other local charities. They enjoy preparing a steak dinner once a year for the Mount Airy High School football team. A recent gift to the Mount Airy community was a silent movie evening complete with full live orchestra led by Central's music director. The organization is for adult men of all ages.

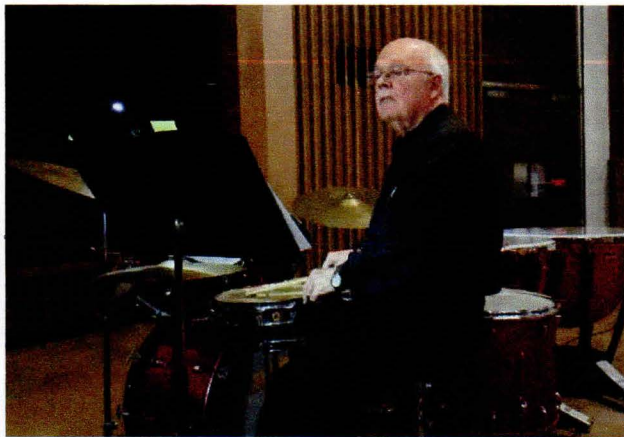
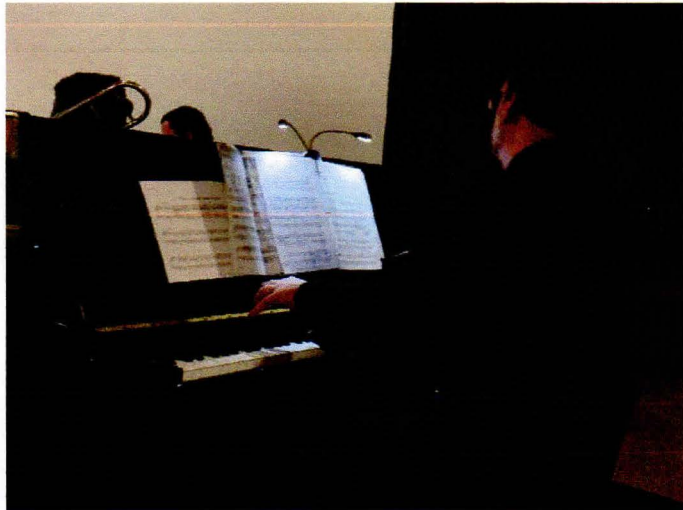
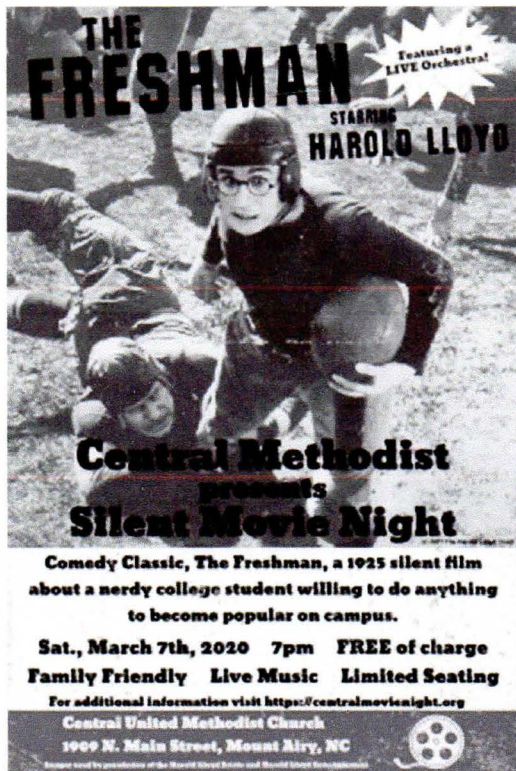
Central Methodist Men of 1925



Feeding the Football Team



## Silent Movie Night – The Freshman



# A (silent) blast from the past

March 3, 2020 John Peters II Arts, News, Top Stories 2

## 1925 movie to feature live music

By John Peters - [jpeters@mtairynews.com](mailto:jpeters@mtairynews.com)



This isn't exactly your father's night at the movies.

More like your great-grandfather's.

That's because the family movie being shown Saturday at Central United Methodist Church of Mount Airy is Harold Lloyd's 1925 comedy classic "The Freshman."

Yes, you read that right — 1925. A silent movie.

Intense focus is the order of the day for musicians rehearsing to play during Saturday's screening of the silent film "The Freshman" at Central United Methodist Church in Mount Airy.

- Jeff Linville | The News

While the auditorium is dark, musicians will need a little bit of light to keep track of the music they will be playing Saturday to accompany a silent film. - Jeff

What makes this showing so special is the live orchestra accompaniment moviegoers will hear as the picture show plays out on the big screen.

The Ivy Leaf Orchestra, a ten-person musical ensemble which emulates silent film orchestras of the 1910s and 20s, will be in the house, playing the sometimes whimsical, sometimes foreboding, but always on-target live sound track that the old silent films were known for.

The orchestra is under the direction of Rebecca and Eric Cook, two Mount Airy residents who began doing silent movie music years ago when they were living in Pennsylvania.



Linville | The News



Practice, practice, practice was the order of the day recently as members of the Ivy Leaf Orchestra prepared to play music along with the silent film "The Freshman" Saturday in Mount Airy. - Jeff Linville | The News

Eric Cook said the two became involved with silent film accompaniment about a dozen years ago, when he played an organ during the screening of a silent movie at a church in Western Pennsylvania.

"I did that for four or five years," he said, while he and his wife researched what music was like for silent films in the 1910s and 1920s. Turns out, with no sound available with the movies, it was up to individual cinema houses across the nation to come up with their own music to play with the films. Sheet music was available, specifically produced to be used with silent films, but the cinema had to supply the musicians.

A lot of the old movie houses of that day would have a local organist or piano player who sat through each screening of the movie, adding a dramatic flair to the showing with the musical accompaniment. Some cinemas went a step further, having an orchestra on hand for each screening.

"Thirty to 40% had an orchestra," Eric said. "But that might mean anything from a piano, drum and violin on up to a full orchestra." Most, he said, would have between five and 15 musicians, though some of the large city theaters (think New York or Chicago) would employ a 70-piece orchestra.

After doing a little more research in Pennsylvania, Eric said he and his wife were able to secure a grant and put together an orchestra there, to play for silent movie nights at various venues throughout the region.

"We did that for four or five years," he said, before the couple moved to Montana for "a couple of years."

The two settled in Mount Airy in 2016, and Eric said he's been working with Amy Snyder at the Mount Airy Museum of Regional History to learn more about the rich cinema house history in Mount Airy.

And to bring a bit of that history back this week, with a free Saturday screening of "The Freshman" open to the public.

When folks sit down and take in the movie, Eric Cook and his orchestra will have already seen the film several times in rehearsals.

"It's a very unforgiving art form," he said. "If you've ever played with live singers or dancers, it's a lot like that. You have to respond to what they are doing and they have to respond to you."

While playing for the movie is a little safer than playing for live performers, he said it's still critical the musicians stay on course, attentive to where the movie is in its screening — and be ready to improvise if the orchestra gets a little behind or ahead of the film.

Cook said he and his wife have been able to round up several orchestra players from the general area, with most coming from Forsyth and Winston-Salem.

"We've got really good musicians...I'm really impressed with the musicians we've found here."

The music he said will be authentic to the time period, taken from his personal collection — which consists of a library of roughly 2,500 musical selections from the silent movie era.

Cook said he's hoping to put that large personal library to more use, aiming for this weekend's event to be more than a one-time show in Mount Airy.

"I'd love to see a silent film festival at the Earle, that would be really cool," he said of the Historic Earle Theatre on Main Street.

For now, though, he's putting the final touches on rehearsals for Saturday's showing of "The Freshman."

The film will begin at 7 p.m. in the Central Church Social Hall at 1909 N. Main St. The program is free and includes free concessions of water and popcorn.

"The film follows the adventures of Harold Lloyd as he heads off to college," the public relations release of the film reads. "Will he become the big man on campus and fulfill his dreams? Join Harold Lloyd as he tries to find a place on the varsity football team and struggles to win the girl of his dreams and outwit the college bully.

"The granddaddy of all comedy movies about life on campus, this film print is in excellent condition and is as fresh as the day it premiered almost a century ago.

"Harold 'Speedy' Lamb heads off to Tate College and quickly discovers that making friends involves more than aping the antics he's seen in the movies. He soon becomes the target of practical jokes and ridicule.

"To further his search for popularity, he tries out to join the football team, but gets accepted only as a combination water boy/tackling dummy.

"What follows is more of the action/comedy that only Lloyd could devise."