

NELSON★STAR

Music installation at Jumbo planned for July



Victoria-based artistic composer Paul Walde scoping locations for his upcoming sound installation on Farnham Glacier.

Pat Morrow photo

By Sam Van Schie - Nelson Star
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By this time next month a group of 70 musicians and vocalists will be preparing to send a message from the mountains — literally.

Victoria-based artistic composer Paul Walde is planning a live musical instillation on Farnham Glacier, where the controversial Jumbo Glacier Resort development could soon build its first ski lifts and lodge.

"It's a way for us to make a statement without standing in a march, or being part of a blockade, or picketing," Walde said of the project. "People can feel like they're doing something by doing what they do best — which for many of them is playing music."

Walde put out a call for musicians on Facebook last month, with the hope of finding 30 people for the choir and 40 for the orchestra. Together they will perform his original composition "Requiem for a Glacier," which is an operatic memorial mass that would be traditionally sung at funerals.

"We're imagining the glacier is gone and we're singing for its memory," Walde explained. "It's like the glacier is there for its own funeral."

The piece presents the history of the glacier, the advent of electricity, climate change and the year-round recreational development that could ultimately destroy it.

"While we're up on the glacier presenting the Requiem, people could be skiing on it — hastening its demise," Walde said. "These glaciers provide fresh water to numerous communities — to pollute it or have it disappear faster than it would ordinarily will impact people's lives."

Much of Walde's previous artistic works have touched on themes of climate change and the relationship between landscape and other cultural forms, such as music, but he said this is the first time he's done anything that could be viewed as overt activism.

"It's such a urgent issue and one that, I think, people outside the Kootenays don't really understand," Walde said. "I want to show people this landscape, so they can see what will be lost."

A film crew will record the performance and the video will be featured in gallery exhibits in Kaslo's Langham Cultural Centre in October and Nelson's Oxygen Art Centre in January.

There is also a public dress rehearsal in Nelson in late July to give the community a chance to hear the music live. The actual performance on the glacier is set for July 27. The exact location hasn't been disclosed.

Walde said there's still opportunities to get involved, whether you're a musician or want to help out as part of the crew.

"We need sherpas and all kinds of people to help out. It's a rather large undertaking and we don't have a Hollywood budget," Walde said.

If you're interested in volunteering, email requiemforaglacier@gmail.com. For more information about the project search "Requiem for a Glacier" on Facebook.