

## Basically Bach

Continued from cover

It would be nice to think that the cooling system in Beall Hall was spurred in part by these summer rehearsals in those various ovens masquerading as recital hall and sanctuary.

With all the obstacles, one thing was clear: Some exciting teaching and music-making was happening here, and the summer Workshops grew in size and length. As the performances expanded, auxiliary events were added. The Bach's Office was set up to sell admissions to the concerts, rapidly becoming a highlight of summer arts events along with Ed Ragozzino's musicals in South Eugene High School and the regular summer choir, band and orchestra concerts.

A Bach's Supper was instituted to gather together local and visiting performers and audiences. A Bach Run was organized, of course, and wine tastings (called "Go for Baroque") displayed the blossoming Lane County vineyards. As a veteran observed, "Where else would BYOB mean Bring Your Own Blanket and Bring Your Own Bach?"

Saltzman added a critical element, literally, to the programs with recurring seminars in Musical Criticism, inviting such writers as Harold Schonberg of the *New York Times*, Martin Bookspan of Public Broadcasting and *Stereo Review* magazine, Alan Skie of the *Fresno Bee*, Robert Commanday of the *San Francisco Chronicle*, Martin Bernheimer of the *Los Angeles Times*, Alan Rich of *New York* magazine, Paul Hume of the *Washington Post*, Michael Anthony of the *Minneapolis Tribune* and many others. These critics not only liked what they saw, they spread the word about this gem they had found in the Northwest. When Martin Bernheimer wrote that "... there are other Bach festivals in the country ... however, none remotely resembles Eugene!" he was giving high praise to the music and to the ambience of locale.

Seventeen years of anecdotes can mount up, but a few may give snapshot glimpses into the Oregon Bach Festival album:

• Royce Saltzman: "The choir bought RILLING IS THRILLING T-shirts and wore them under wraps to rehearsal one evening. On the downbeat, they 'flashed' Helmuth and he gave them one of his bashful smiles, obviously pleased. I was standing offstage, wondering how he

would take this interruption of a usually serious session. I must have looked grim, because Helmuth looked at me and asked, 'What's wrong? Don't you believe it?'"

• After a generous gift to the Oregon Bach Festival by William and Doris Scharpf and Bill and Barbara Bowerman for Nike, Incorporated, Helmuth Rilling was presented with a pair of Nike running shoes. Rilling put the shoes on during intermission, and when he returned to the stage for the second half, announced to the audience, "The tempos are going to be very fast!"

• Cellist Susan Rockey Bowles was expecting a baby the summer the Festival performed the *Saint Matthew*

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*Passion.* Labor pains started during the performance, but Susan remained onstage—she had a cello solo during one of the arias, including a text that spoke of peace and calmness. Miraculously, the pains stopped through the entire solo. The next day, after her son was born, Susan called Rilling with the news. He was thrilled, saying, "You must call him Matthew." She did.

• Other fond memories: Helmuth Rilling wearing his Superman T-shirt the choir gave him to a Bach's Supper on the lawn behind the Music School. ... Arleen Auger arriving late to rehearsal after warming up in the car, then sneaking in the back door so Helmuth could not scold her. ... Eugenean Jeff Bradetich returning as soloist after having played bass viol in the orchestra since his sophomore year in high school. ... Dr. Christoph Wolff lecturing and playing Bach organ works he unearthed in the Yale Library. ... Gwendolyn Koldofsky coaching master classes in singing and accompaniment. ... BBC hornist Alan Civil touring the brand new Performing Arts Center before its opening in 1982 and standing on the concrete floor where the

seating was to go in the large concert hall, observing that, "It's not a proper hall, now, is it—there's no organ!" ... Rilling wondering aloud about American enterprise as a guest on a local religious television show: "I didn't know Inspiration could be incorporated." ... a jam session late at night with keyboard-player Hans Joachim Erhard, soprano Arleen Auger, mezzo Julia Hamari and oboist Ingo Goritzki ... end-of-Festival pizza parties at Pietro's with families and irreverent but affectionate Rilling Roasts ... Henriette Heiny on one of the endless early-morning trips to the airport to pick up or deliver a performer ... Martina Rilling stepping into the alto section when a singer had hay fever ... and at the center of it all, teaching and performing the music of Johann Sebastian Bach, now in his 302nd year.

This could be called the Basically Bach Festival, since through the years music by Brahms, Beethoven, Handel, Haydn, Mendelssohn, Monteverdi, Mozart, Rossini, Schubert, Schumann, Schutz, Verdi, Debussy, Couperin, Buxtehude, Dvorak, Hindemith, Carter, Ligeti and Khachaturian and many others has been performed as well. As of 1986, 222 instrumental pieces and 149 vocal/choral pieces have been programmed, not even counting the dance, pantomime, theater and jazz performances.

Oregon Bach Festival-goers have heard such guest soloists as organists Hans Joachim Erhard and Guy Bovet, oboists Ingo Goritzki and George

Houle, flutist John Solum, recorder virtuoso Michael Schneider, violinists Ida (in 1975, Ayda) Kavafian, Sergiu Luca and Ilkka Talvi, gambist Seigfried Pank, clarinetist Ko Iwasaki, violist Walter Trampler, hornists Alan Civ. and Johannes Ritzkowski, sopranos Arleen Auger, Lucy Shelton, Delcina Stevenson and Costanza Cuccaro, mezzos Julia Hamari, Florence Quivar, Judith Malafronte, Sarah Walker and Alyce Rogers, tenors Jon Humphrey, Alan Kays, Adalbert Kraus and Scot Weir, bass-baritones Douglas Lawrence, Jan Opalach, Philippe Huttenlocher, Wolfgang Schone—some now famous, some emerging in the musical world. They have heard ensembles like The Musical Offering, the San Francisco Boys Choir, The King's Singers, Fine Arts Brass Quintet, Los Angeles String Quartet, Portland Pro Musica, Bach Chamber Soloists of New York, and many more.

Festival-goers have watched the amazing growth of School of Music facilities and the opening of the Hult Center for the Performing Arts along with the Festival itself. This year's marketing combination of "Bach to Broadway" with the Eugene Festival of Musical Theater and their performances of 1776 demonstrates that Festivals in Eugene can be a lodestone to draw people, attention and respect to our city. Last year alone, the Oregon Bach Festival made a \$3.4 million impact on Eugene-Springfield.

Someone jokingly suggested that the 1987 Festival concert of 20th cen-

tury music be called "Bach to the Future." Another replied, "Bach IS the future." Maybe that defines in part the vigor and excitement of the Oregon Bach Festival. Saltzman and his incredible staff and corps of volunteers have kept their eyes firmly on the heart of it: the music of Johann Sebastian Bach and its position in music history as a gathering-together of what went before and inspiration for what came after.

If musicians from the Swingle Singers to Wendy Carlos to Emerson, Lake and Palmer to Benny Goodman to Keith Jarrett to the Cambridge Buskers to the Temple City Kazoo Orchestra to Peter Schickele can dance with "the old Bach" and all emerge intact and enriched, then maybe there is something to Helmuth Rilling's mission: "to bring Bach to many people, to explain it, and to perform it." The timelessness and universal message of Johann Sebastian Bach just may define the word "classic."

The 1987 Oregon Bach Festival opens Sunday, June 28 and closes Sunday, July 12 with concerts in Beall Hall and in the Hult Center's Silva Hall, Soreng Theatre, Studio I and Lobby. Brochures listing events and ticket information are available at the Hult Center, the Music School and many other locations around Eugene-Springfield. We do Bach, yes!

[Karen Kammerer was a choir member of the 1970 Workshop in Choral Conducting with Helmuth Rilling at the School of Music and has been involved with many Bach Festivals since then.]



Martina Rilling (3rd from right), Helmuth's wife, had to step in at one year's Festival to replace a singer whose hay fever incapacitated her.

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