

Music, theatre, ballet, opera have holiday flavor

Santa's not the only bearer of gifts. Eugene's major arts organizations have your name on their list, too. This time of year you can catch the holiday spirit and enjoy the fine arts at the same time.

Eugene Symphony

Lovers of fine music get their presents early. This weekend the Eugene Symphony Orchestra presents its Christmas Liszt concert Saturday night, and the Symphony Guild has an additional treat: the Christmas Walk Saturday and Sunday.

The Walk is in its fifth year, and for the first time you can experience the ambience of four homes, rather than the three of previous years. This year four houses in the classy Fair Oaks area will open their doors to the public.

Each home has a holiday theme, which has been carried out festively by local florists. Surprises planned on the self-guided walking tour include live music, home-baked delicacies for sale, and craft demonstrations in certain homes. All proceeds will benefit the Orchestra.

In case you're wondering, yes, the Eugene Symphony again will invite the audience to sing along with the orchestra on seasonal favorites at Saturday's Silva Hall concert. So if you've caught yourself humming snippets of melodies now that the Christmas spirit is on the rise, you may want to catch ESO's offering.

Orchestra soloists Edward McManus and David Kruse will highlight Telemann's *Concerto For Two Horns*, conducted by orchestra member Edward Kammerer. After the intermission, four community choral groups will join the orchestra. The Eugene Concert Choir, with Diane Retallack

conducting, will stage a musical excerpt from the biblical story *Amahl and the Night Visitors*. The University of Oregon Children's Choir, conducted by Randall Moore; the Eugene Gleeman, conducted by Nelson Enns; and the Women's Choral Society, conducted by John Hakes, will appear in Silva Hall with the ESO.

Oregon Repertory Theater

ORT again brings *A Christmas Carol* to town for the holiday season, and true to the repertory group's proclaimed avant-garde bent, the production has an unusual twist: it's a play within a play set in the home of its author, Charles Dickens, on Christmas Eve.

Joseph Gilg, ORT artistic director, said that Dickens actually did give theater performances as charity benefits, with groups of colleagues and friends, in Victorian London. "Several characters in the play are based on historical figures," says Gilg, among them: Dickens' wife, his brother, the editor of *Punch* magazine at the time, and John Forester, London publisher and friend.

Christmas theater audiences demand their *Christmas Carol*, and ORT has come through with it for many years. Gilg, in his first year in his position, says having veteran ORT players around who've done the play before has added an exciting dimension to this year's experience. He laughs about working in a British-accented production, which sees occasional lapses into Southern dialect during rehearsal, leftovers from last year's *Appalachian Ebenezer*.

Johnny Schiller of Fiddlin' Big Sue, Uncle T and Johnny fame, is one of the returnees from last year's production. At first, Gilg sought a vio-

linist/actor for the role of Clarkson Stanfield, a painter. When the right person did not appear for the dual role, Gilg chose Bill Reid (local favorite, most recently in Mainstage's *Gold Dust*) for the part. Schiller will play the music while Reid mimes the character, and both will be on stage at once. As Gilg pointed out, it's a

theatrical "convention," a concept in the arts whereby those involved accept a certain change in reality for the particular art form.

ORT's *A Christmas Carol* begins with Dickens talking to his Muse, or inspirational being. Dickens is suffering from a case of writer's block. The Muse suggests the story of a child on crutches, the nascent Tiny Tim. It's Christmas Eve. After soul-searching with the Muse, Dickens joins his family, which begs a story of him. Nope, he says, not working tonight.

Dickens does finally agree to a group play, with family and friends taking part, and from this point on audience members are left in on some of the magic of creating theater. The play opens December 11 in the Soreng Theater, Hult Center.

Eugene Ballet

The unforgettable music of Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky, joined to the moves of Eugene's professional ballet company, graces the larger stage of the Hult Center later this month.

The Nutcracker is a popular ballet based on Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker Suite* and the tale written by E.T.A. Hoffman. Like *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, an operetta, *Nutcracker* has proven of special appeal to little ones. It has become a Eugene tradition to educate children in the marvels of ballet by attending *Nutcracker*. Residents have come to expect the cartoon figures of the ballet festooning such places as the Eugene Public Library window this time of year. Adults, too, relive childhood eyes-wide-open days at Eugene Ballet holiday performances.

Children are instrumental in the local *Nutcracker* production. In the past five years, over 200 children have

danced in Eugene performances of the beloved ballet.

Among many dancers' roles in *The Nutcracker*, this year Baby Mice, Bon Bons and Party Children have been cast entirely of dance students of the Eugene Ballet Dance School. Forty four- to six-year olds of our community will perform as Baby Mice in the five different EBC performances, with eight at each performance. The figures which artistic directors Toni Pemble and Riley Grannan must juggle are phenomenal. The ballet opens December 17.

Eugene Opera

This year you can cure post-Christmas and Hanukkah blues by experiencing the thrill of the human voice in perfection.

Eugene Opera presents two end-of-year performances of *The Daughter of the Regiment*, in English, in matinee December 27 and on New Year's Eve. The New Year's Eve performance will be followed by a Gala Benefit for the Opera, catered by the Charcuterie and set to the music of the Dana Lutes Ensemble.

At the Gala, Horizon Satellite Systems will dazzle those in attendance with a TV broadcast of New Year's festivities in New York, London and other major world capitals. A fine opera, global link-up, gourmet cuisine and hot jazz can be had in one evening—Gala tickets are \$20 at the Hult.

In *Daughter of the Regiment*, a child is abandoned on a battlefield during French Napoleonic times. French soldiers raise her. She grows up and falls in love with a military man. Nach. Then circumstances separate the lovers, but not to worry, the opera is a romantic comedy.



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Eugene Ballet: *The Nutcracker*

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