

Bringing it Bach — Eugene style

Festival sure to please people's musical taste buds

By Joan Herman

Music connoisseurs will have a chance to satiate their artistic appetites at the 14th annual Oregon Bach Festival, which runs today through July 3.

There are musical delights to please everyone's taste buds, from free noon concerts in tiny Beall Hall to afternoon lecture series with internationally known critics, late afternoon cantatas, and evening performances in the elegant Silva Concert Hall.

With 30 different concerts, 15 of which will be downtown, 1983's festival is "the most demanding ever," says Royce Saltzman, the festival's executive director. Saltzman is also an associate dean at the music school.

But one needn't have a music degree from Juilliard to enjoy the festival. Assistant Festival Director Henriette Heiny says a wide range of people attend the festival's many activities.

"We have some people that like the sense of festiveness. They like music. They don't know why, they just know they love it — and that's great. That's important about a festival like this, that it can involve everybody. It really can," Heiny says.

She suggests would-be musicians attend the afternoon cantatas as an introduction to Bach. "The cantata performances are some of the best ways to see how things develop," Heiny says.

Headlining the festival, as he has done since its quiet beginning fourteen years ago, will be West German conductor Helmuth Rilling.

Critic Mike Greenburg once referred to Rilling's musical brilliance in the San Antonio Sunday Express News.

"One awestruck musician, according to one report, said that if he believed in reincarnation he would swear that Rilling was Bach," Greenburg wrote.

Other world-renowned artists will include soprano Arleen Auger, mezzo-soprano Julia Hamari, and former Eugenic Alan Kays, a tenor now living in New York City.

The Friday afternoon lecture series will feature commentator Martin Bookspan, of PBS's "Live From Lincoln Center." Musicologist Hans Muldenhauer, owner of Brahms's original "Rinaldo" manuscript (this piece will be performed at the festival), will also present one of the afternoon lectures. A facsimile of one of the rare manuscripts from his collection will be displayed at the Hult Center.

Despite this impressive line-up, many Oregonians don't appreciate the festival's excellence as much as national and international musicians and critics do.

New York critic Alan Rich expressed astonishment at finding the likes of Rilling in Hicksville, USA.

"If the idea of finding a man of Rilling's background in a remote American town strikes you as somewhat anomalous, it did me, too — until I arrived. After nine years of summering in Eugene, Rilling has become a local hero, and for good reasons," Rich wrote in 1978.

The Bach festival is so highly regarded among music circles, the entire festival group will head for Los Angeles July 4 to open the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra's summer season at the Hollywood Bowl.

Besides Bach's major works, the festival will feature several Brahms performances to commemorate the 150th year of his birth. The popular "German Requiem" and the rarely played "Alto Rhapsody" and "Rinaldo" pieces should please both amateurs and professionals alike.

Having burst the seams of the tiny 550-seat Beall Hall, the festival will try the Hult Center's 2500-seat Silva Concert Hall on for size.

This "fitting" promises to be a good one for both festival goers and organizers. Heiny hopes to sell about 30,000 tickets for this year's festival, compared with 13,000 sold in 1982.

"We were ready to move, but now we have a hall four times as large. Right



Photo courtesy of the Bach Festival

Helmuth Rilling conducts a wide variety of musicians from all over the world.

now it doesn't look like we'll sell out. It's hard to jump from 550 to 2500 seats." Yet Saltzman doesn't doubt the festival will fill even the relatively large Silva Hall within a few years.

But not all of the festival's concerts will be held at The Hult Center. The popular free noon concert series will grace Beall Hall with chamber music and solo recitals, ranging from jazz to early instruments.

Prices don't drain pocket books, either. Two-thirds of the 30 concerts cost less than \$3.50.

Eleven free noon concerts and eight afternoon cantatas are priced at only \$1 for students, senior citizens and children under 12 (plus a 25-cent ticket tax). Regular admission for the cantatas is \$3. Discounted series tickets

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