

He combines his love of music and teaching

By Mike Duncan
Of the Emerald

Proudly noting that he takes "complete responsibility" for choosing Eugene as the site of the 16th conference of the International Society for Music Educators, its Secretary General, John Ritchie, could not be more pleased.

"My enthusiasm for Oregon has amply paid off," he says.

Now very much an integral part of what ISME is today and will be in the future, Ritchie's involvement with, and love for, music began very early. Born and raised in New Zealand, Ritchie spent his high-school years at Dunedin technical school where he comments that everyone was directly involved with the music program.

"If a student was an engineer, he was not there solely because he excelled at that discipline, but because the school needed his particular music ability," he says.

His studies at Otago University in New Zealand were interrupted by World War II which gave him an opportunity to study composition and teaching principles at Trinity College of Music in England.

A member of the faculty at the University of Canterbury, in New Zealand, since 1946, Ritchie began an association with ISME in 1968 when he attended the conference in Dijon, France.

Though his love for music and teaching created the personal interest in ISME, an additional factor is that Ritchie

believes it is valuable to have direct contact with the variety of teaching methods used in different countries.

"I believe that we can learn so much from each other's countries," he says. "We may think that we (music educators) are doing well, or conversely, we think that we are doing badly, and it is quite helpful and reassuring to look at other countries. I am a great believer in getting people into other countries," he notes.

"I believe that the teaching, performance, composing and the study of music should be very professional," he says. "I have never been very strong on the 'play-away' methods."

One of the biggest problems for ISME in the past was that the organizers rarely knew where the next conference would take place. Ritchie notes that since he has been secretary general organizers have known three years in advance where the next conference would be held.

With this sense of permanence, Ritchie says that ISME "has gained its own timetable and its own tradition."

One of the big problems with organizing a conference, he says, is getting the theme adhered to by the keynote speakers. Ritchie says that in the past an apt theme for the conference might have been 'much ado about nothing,' since speakers often ignored the theme and spoke on what they wanted.

Ritchie notes that this year's theme, 'Music for a Small Planet,' has held the attention

of the speakers more than ever before. "The people of Oregon ought to be very proud of their organizing committee for this idea of a theme."

Winning-out over two contenders to host this year's conference, Ritchie says Eugene could not have worked out better. Assets considered were the University itself, the Hult Center for the Performing Arts and the size of the Eugene

community.

"Eugene is so charming," Ritchie says, "with an event like this, the whole community becomes involved."

Commenting on the quality of the University's School of Music, Ritchie says that this event would have been very difficult without the help of Dean Morrette Rider.

"The man is a genius," he says.



Photo by Michael Clapp

John Ritchie, in Eugene for the International Society for Music Educators conference, discusses his love of music and teaching and his fondness for Eugene.

Late concerts featured

A variety of American musical genres ranging from jazz to musical theater are highlighting a series of late-evening concerts during the 16th world conference of the International Society of Music Educators.

The American Showcase concerts, featuring many Eugene area musicians, will be performed at 10:00 tonight through Saturday.

•Thursday's showcase concert, in the Composers Hall of the Eugene Community Conference Center, will feature two contemporary jazz groups. The Dowd/Kammerer Jazz Duo consists of University faculty members Charles Dowd, vibraphone, and Edward Kammerer, piano. The "XJE" Contemporary Jazz Ensemble has 15 members, all of whom are University students or recent graduates.

•A night of barbershop-quartet singing, in the Playwrights Hall at the Eugene Hilton Hotel, will round out Friday's showcase. Performing will be the Cascade Connection Quartet of Eugene; the Most Happy Fellows Quartet of Tacoma, Wash.; Eugene's Cascade Chorus; and the Side Street Ramblers Quartet from Dallas, Texas. All groups are award winners in competitions sponsored by the Society for the Preservation and Encouragement of Barbershop Quartet Singing in America, which is also sponsoring this concert.

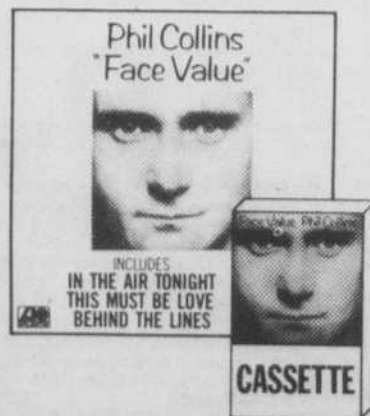
•The final showcase concert, also set in Playwrights Hall, will feature big-band jazz played by the Starliters. The Eugene group has performed in the area for more than 25 years.

Tickets to each showcase concert will cost \$2 and will be on sale at the door. Conference delegates and week-long pass holders will be admitted free. For more information, call 686-5678.

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