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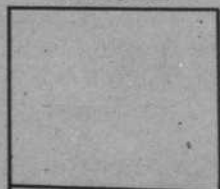
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LIVE MUSIC

Percussion that isn't just spice



Percussion, the hitting of an instrument with a stick or hand, is often seen as simply an accompaniment to a band or orchestra.

Indeed that's a valid premise.

"Percussion can be used like spices are used in a stew; to make it taste good," says Charles Dowd, conductor and musical director of the University's Oregon Percussion Ensemble.

But Dowd's 18-member Oregon Ensemble itself becomes the "stew" by playing compositions distinctly written for a group of percussionists, or a percussion ensemble. The music is in a variety of forms including classical, jazz, ethnic and "modern" music.

The ensemble, which is beginning its 13th year, is made up entirely of University students. It appears throughout the Northwest in recitals, workshops and percussion and music education festivals. The group has also won awards at percussive arts ensemble competitions.

Dowd says the ensemble specializes in the performance of new and unusual 20th century compositions. This is a reflection of a change that 20th century percussion chamber writing is undergoing, he says.

"Our instruments are going through a renaissance like the violin was 200 years ago," he says.

This renaissance is seen in sound experimentation and in the ever-expanding use of ex-

otic instruments, Dowd says. In an upcoming Oregon Percussion Ensemble concert, instruments will include rice bowls, lengths of pipe and Chevrolet brake drums, as well as the more conventional marimbas, cymbals and drums.

This Wednesday's free concert is a re-enactment of a famous 1940 concert by five avant-garde percussion composers at Mills College in Oakland, Calif.

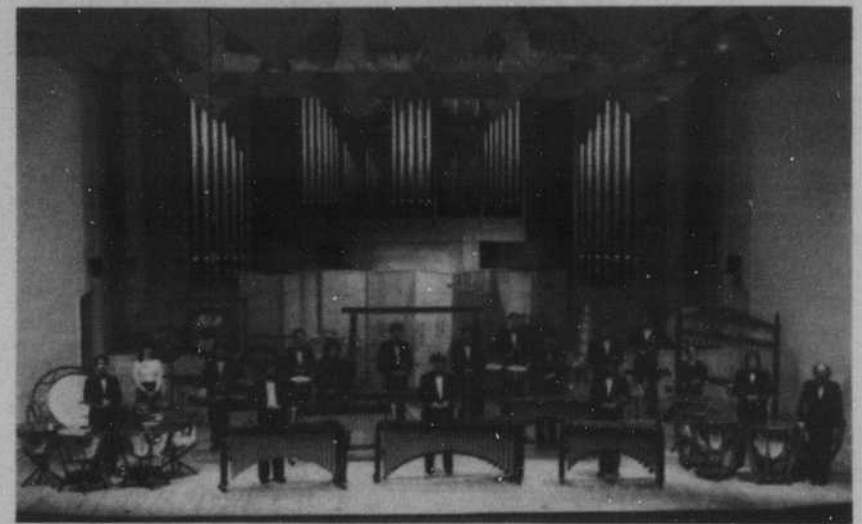
"At the time it was a really controversial and innovative

the concert is a good blend of avant-garde percussive music and more traditional rhythms.

"People are not as aware of the Percussion Ensemble as they could be but when they come they are pleasantly surprised," he says.

Performances are pleasant for the percussionists as well because they get to take center stage, playing music written for percussionists and taking a secondary role to none.

"It's our time to shine," says



Courtesy photo

The Oregon Percussion Ensemble will re-enact a famous 1940 concert, complete with rice bowls and Chevrolet brake drums Wednesday at the University's music school.

historical event that exposed the percussive instruments to the more legitimate 20th century compositional genre," says Dowd.

This section of the concert features five pieces, including an imagined Aztec composition, and the use of more than 80 instruments.

Tim Cogswell, a five-year member of the ensemble, says

Cogswell.

The concert will be narrated by music school professor emeritus Robert Trotter and will feature a new composition written and performed by Thom Bergeron. It will be held in Room 198 at the University's music school Wednesday at 8 p.m.

Dave Carlson



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