

Adventures of storybook elephant take stage

By Karen Engels
Emerald Contributor

The adventures of an elephant named Babar will take center stage Saturday in a children's concert at Beall Concert Hall. Slides from the Babar storybooks will be shown while Bernard Dobroski, dean of the music school, narrates. Pianist Barbara Palmer will accompany with "The Babar Suite," by Francis Poulenc.

The concert is the third in the "Lively Music for Young Listeners" series, new this year at the music school.

The object of the concerts is to provide live music performances designed for children 3-12 while helping them learn listening skills and an appreciation of a variety of music.

Parent and child response has been enthusiastic and appreciative, said Mary Lou Van Rysselberghe, instructor of music education at the University and organizer of the concerts.

"We wanted to do something for the children in the community," she said. "I'm heartened and exited by the faces of children and comments from parents."

To encourage young concertgoers and parents, the music school sent packets of listening tips, lists of reading and listening resources and invitations to elementary school teachers in the Eugene, Bethel and Springfield districts. The introductory letter said, in part, "In these rapid-paced days filled with electronic media, television, stereos and Walkmen, it's far too easy to omit the experience of live concerts from both our lives and those of our children."

Those who attended the first two concerts, "Fairy Tales and Song and Dance," and "Bach Birthday Party," were treated to birthday cake, a guest appearance by Johann Sebastian Bach for his 304th birthday, music selections from Walt Disney and an appearance by the University's Song and Dance

Troupe.

After the concerts, children and parents were invited to come on stage to touch and look at instruments including a harpsichord and pipe organ. "Mr. Bach," Dobroski in a white powdered wig and purple choir robe, encouraged laughter and active participation while telling youngsters to listen with both their eyes and ears.

"Row, Row, Row Your Boat," sung by the audience, was a demonstration to teach the meaning of "fugue," a musical form used frequently by J.S. Bach.

"We think about ways to keep their attention," Rysselberghe said, referring to the sometimes short attention spans of children. Shorter pieces are chosen and audience participation is encouraged.

While munching birthday cake and peeking at a harpsichord, Emily, 3, said she liked "the singing part" the best and another young listener said he liked "the silly one" the best, referring to a short, humorous piece by P.D.Q. Bach played by a brass quintet.

"Listening Tips for Parents" are handed out at the door when concertgoers leave. Rysselberghe said she hopes that these suggestions, combined with the listening and reading lists, will give parents ideas for enhancing their children's knowledge of music.

"The Story of Babar," will be performed at 10:30 a.m. Saturday at Beall Concert Hall, 961 E. 18th Ave. Tickets are \$2 for adults, \$1 for children or \$5 for a family.

"The Carnival of Animals," by Saint-Saens, the last in the children's concert series, is set for Saturday, May 20 at Beall Hall. The Eugene Symphonic Band will perform, under the direction of Pat Casey. Pianists Dean Kramer and Claire Wachter will be featured. Wendy Ray will narrate.

Call 686-3769 or 686-3761 for more information.

Opera challenges audience

Roller skating, tap dancing and moonwalking are not what you expect when you go to the opera, but in Eugene Opera's production of *Così fan tutte* "All Women Are Like That," that's just what the audience will see.

In the hands of stage director James Toland, Mozart's comedy of love and the fickle heart will be played out during a constantly changing time frame. Opening in the late 1700s, the opera will jump ahead to the Victorian Era and the Roaring Twenties, ending in the 1980s. This "tongue-in-chic" approach to the story of two pairs of young lovers is clearly not about some 18th century porcelain figurines, but about real people who experience the first thrill of true love, the test of another's love and the bittersweet tug-of-war that can pull your heart in two.

Così fan tutte was first performed in Vienna on January 28, 1790. Supposedly based on an actual incident, its story concerns two young officers, their fiancées, an old bachelor and a conniving housemaid.

The bachelor, a cynic, suggests to the officers that their young fiancées' apparent fidelity would dissolve the moment the officers returned to military duty. He makes a wager on the subject, and the officers, confident of their fiancées' constancy, accept the challenge.

Letting the women believe that they are being sent overseas, the officers disappear briefly, returning in disguise. There follows a switching of partners and some high-pitched wooing. Egged on by the housemaid, an ally of the bachelor, the ladies succumb and cynicism appears to have triumphed.

This production, although experimental in its approach to telling the story, is one of Mozart's timeless classics with brilliant music and an ending that keeps the audience guessing. The opera will be performed April 28 at 8 p.m. and April 30 at 2:30 p.m. in the Hult Center's Silva Concert Hall. Tickets are \$5.50 to \$35.50 and available at Hult Center outlets.



Courtesy photo

As part of the Children's Concert Series of which "The Story of Babar" is one event, the Oregon Brass Quintet performs Johann Sebastian Bach's "Contrapunctus IX."

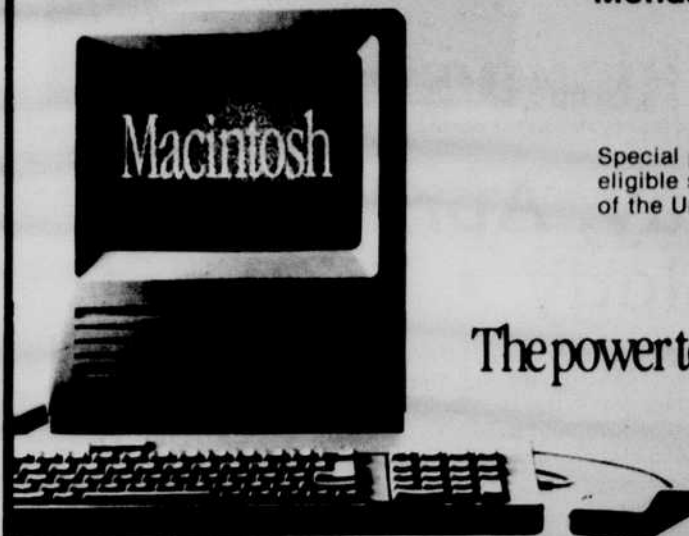
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