

GAMELAN

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returned to Eugene in 1986. Eventually the Lynns were permitted to bring the gamelan to the United States, where they decided to donate it to the School of Music.

While the music is unique, the gamelan instruments themselves are anything but usual. A metal xylophone (called Pemade or Jublag), a two-headed drum (Kendang), nipple gongs (Riong), Tibetan cymbals, Chinese bells, wind chimes in various tunings, African Gankogui (clapperless bell-like instruments struck with sticks), several bell trees and even brake drums are used.

Yet, while the concept of the gamelan is

exotic, the music of the Pacific Rim Gamelan does not carry an ethnic slant. "What attracted me to the group was the fact that they don't try to play Indonesian music," Trent, who plays the gongs, said. "Unlike a piano piece where textures can be changed for instance, we're forced to use rhythm in interesting ways with the gamelan."

As a result of the gamelan's creative demands, the group performs many original pieces composed by the students themselves. "Rarely do members of an ensemble get involved to this degree," Scott Barkhurst, publicity-director for the School of Music, said. "Our gamelan community is one-of-a-kind because the members are both composers and performers."

TUBA

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from far and wide to congregate in the mall, making this tuba concert one of the country's largest. The Eugene branch of the Oregon Tuba Association, which co-sponsors the concert with the Downtown Mall, expects as many as 200 tuba players and an audience of about 2,000.

Because this concert is outside, rain or shine, these "heavy metal" devotees risk more than spraining back muscles while lugging around their huge instruments. For the past 13 years the weather just has not always cooperated.

This poses a problem for both the tubas and their players, John C. Huenink, Eugene's Oregon Tuba Association President, said. He recalled "the year it hailed."

Tu-ba or not tu-ba was the question that year, he said. "It was raining, and we were deliberating whether we should go outside to do the concert. Well, the sun came through, so we decided to go ahead with it. At one o'clock the director gave

the downbeat, and on the first note sleet started pouring down on us. We just kept going, but pretty soon the instruments were gurgling. Of course, as soon as the concert was over, the sleet storm stopped, too."

Some tubas are especially prone to gurgling when it rains, Gene Slayter explained. One type of tuba, the Baritone, has a bell — the wide, fluted part of the instrument — that tapers upward instead of forward. Appropriately, these tubas are called "rain catchers," he said.

But when it's dry and cold, other problems arise, Todd Nix, a University music major and tuba player, said. In this case, tuba players not only have to deal with heavy metal, but also cold metal. "Your lips freeze to the mouthpiece and the valves freeze up. And it's also hard to play when your fingers can't feel what they're doing," he said. He has received the School of Music's Oregon Tuba Association scholarship award for three years in a row.

Nix has also played in the TubaCarolConcert for the past five years because he enjoys the "overall fun effect" of the show.

Anyone who wants to play is welcome to in this informal gathering of tuba buffs. What he likes most is that the concert brings together tuba players ranging from "as young as age six to as old as age 80," he said. "We just get out there and have fun. It's hard to make 200 tubas sound good, but somehow we do it," he said, adding, "It doesn't matter if you miss a beat because nobody can tell anyway with that many tubas."

It all began with a group of about a dozen tuba players and has grown, largely from word-of-mouth, to the impressive showcase of tuba talent that the concert now is, said James Newell, the business manager of the Oregon Tuba Association in Eugene and one of the original organizers of the concert. He gradually compiled a mailing list, and now they send out over 1,000 invitations to tuba players that live as far away as Alaska.

Annual "low blow" concerts are also a nation-wide occurrence. On Dec. 12, holiday music in low-brass harmony will also take place from coast to coast in at least 19 other cities, Richard Frazier, a music instructor at the University's School

of Music, said. But that includes only one day's worth of tuba concerts. His list showed a total of about 120 such concerts that will be held this time of year.

But why tubas?

"People think of tubas as being loud and crass. They actually have a very gentle sound," Frazier said. But with that many tubas being played all over the country, he said, "It's a wonder we don't blow the Earth off its axis."

Huenink said the "mellow" sound is especially suited for holiday music. The effect of so many tubas playing together is similar to the sound of an organ, he said. Also, "The low-brass sound carries for blocks and blocks. Just try that with a bunch of flutes," he said.

Newell gave a different reason, however. "John (Huenink) thinks that when God created the tuba, he should have just stopped there," he said. The real reason they do this concert, he said, is because "we tuba players are just a bunch of hams."

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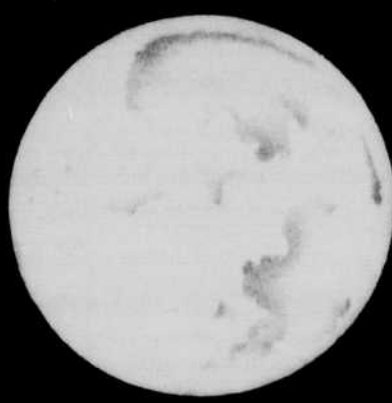
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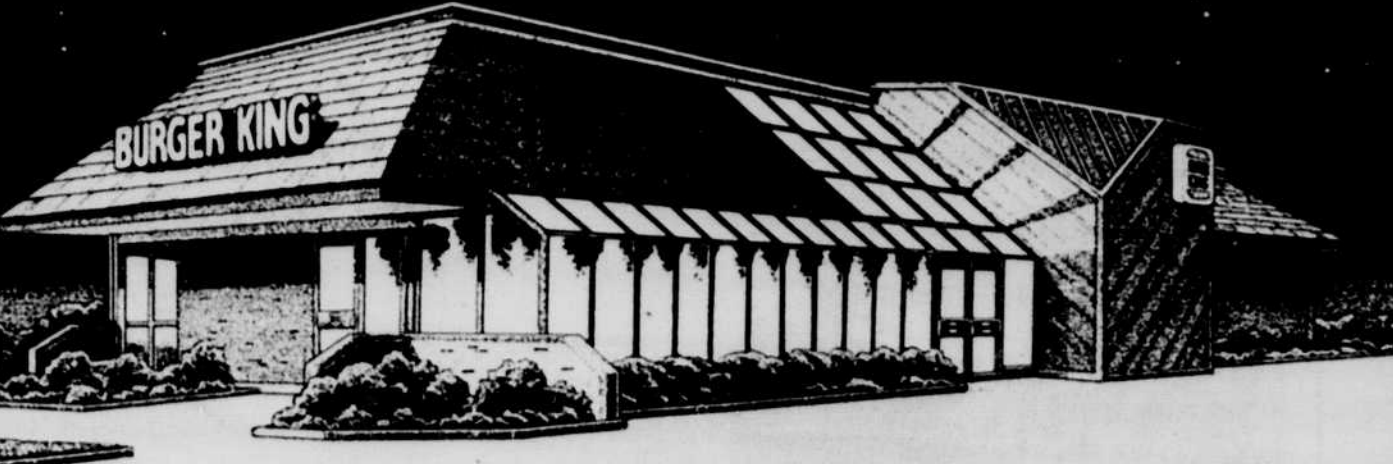
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