

Speaker shares her passion, persistence

■ COMMENCEMENT:

Director of the Eugene Symphony Orchestra Marin Alsop addressed the audience at the University's summer ceremony

By Kristin Bailey
Associate Editor

If you ask Marin Alsop for her recipe for success, she'll probably tell you the usual ingredients: passion and perseverance. But the music director of the Eugene Symphony Orchestra has used her penchant for music to become one of the world's leading classical music conductors.

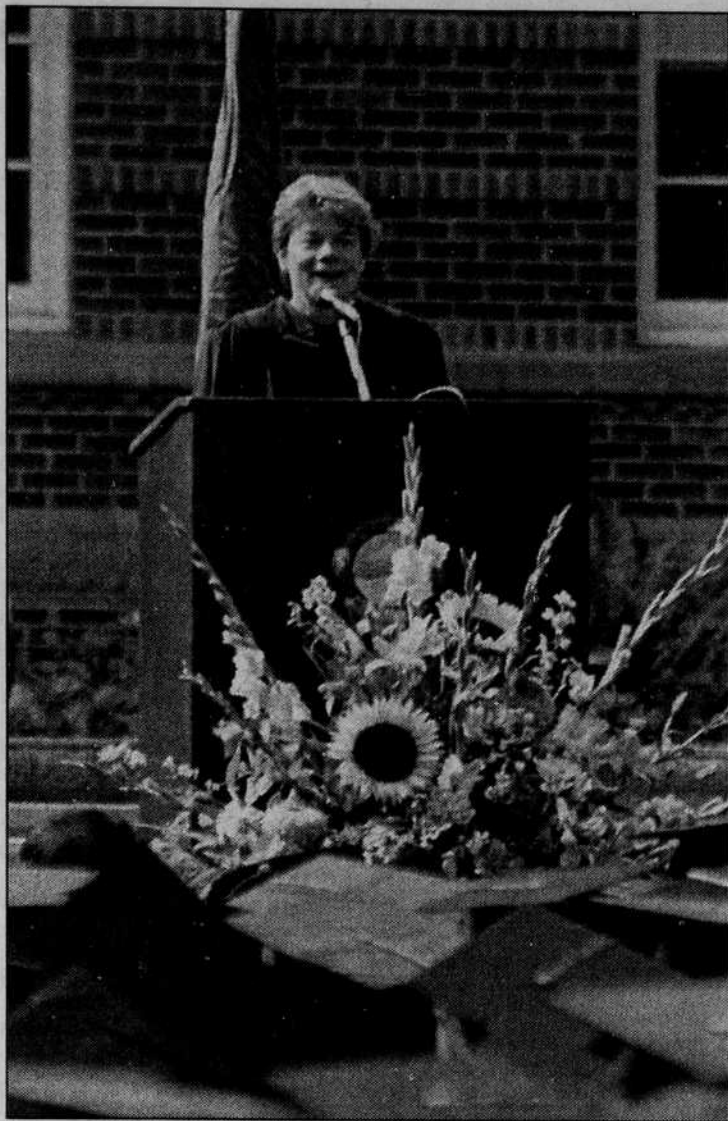
"The one thing I can offer you is to share the experience of the pursuit of that which I've always been passionate about," Alsop told the crowd at the University's summer commencement ceremony. "Today it feels like it's been easy, but most days it feels as though it's been very, very challenging. But I think that's the only rewarding way. I've known what I've wanted to do since I was very young. I don't know if that's a blessing or a curse."

But many of Alsop's peers say Alsop's determination has been anything but a curse.

"Marin Alsop has created her own standards of excellence of achievement in her work, conducting and directing several symphonies nation-wide," Anthropology Professor Paul Simonds said. "Creative and courageous excellence have been the driving force of her life. Creative and courageous performance the result."

At the age of seven, Alsop said she decided she wanted to be a professional conductor. But reaching her goal hasn't been as easy as just picking up her conducting batons.

"I wanted to play in the orchestra until someone started complaining that there was some little kid in the back of the second violins who was trying to lead the orchestra the whole time," she said. "So I got called into the conductor's office, and he said 'You know, you really have to stop moving around and having such a good time back there. Music is serious.'"



ANDREW BRACKENSICK/Emerald
Marin Alsop speaks about her history as a conductor to the 1996 summer graduates at the summer commencement Saturday morning.

But Alsop said she never lost sight of the fun she can have when doing what she loves.

"My parents told me if you don't enjoy the rehearsals along the way, you're never going to have a good concert," she said. "And I try to use that [advice] whenever I can because the journey has been very grueling at times."

Alsop's journey has included the founding of two New York-based music groups, a position as the St. Louis Symphony's creative conductor chair and work as music director of the Colorado Symphony and the Long Island Philharmonic. She has studied with the late Leonard Bernstein and re-

cently received the University's Distinguished Service Award.

"I'm one of those people [for whom] the biggest motivating word is 'can't,'" she said. "As soon as I hear that word, something in me says, 'Absolutely I must.'"

But Alsop said her success has also come from the help of others.

"If I could give a little bit more advice, I would say try to surround yourself with people who are supportive of what you do and people who can give you honest feedback that you can handle and that you can use to benefit yourself," she said. "Always invest in yourself. I think it pays wonderful dividends in the end."

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