

'Music at the 11th hour'

Seventh Species performs its neo-romantic, impressionistic music at the 'Festival of the Millennium, '99'



Music

By Yael Menahem
Oregon Daily Emerald

Music that goes beyond the boundaries.

That statement not only sums up what audiences can expect from the University's School of Music "Festival of the Millennium '99," the comment also describes one of the event's participating ensembles, Seventh Species, composer and group member Tim Mason said.

The festival will include concerts, panel discussions, lecture/demonstrations and receptions with the contributing composers, all under the theme of "Ring in the New: Three Dozen Premieres for the Third Millennium." Most compositions were written especially for this event, which was organized by artistic director Robert Kyr, an associate professor of composition and music theory.

Seventh Species is one of those ensemble's that will offer a premiere. Composer Gary Noland started the group when he lived in

the San Francisco Bay Area in 1990 as "a way for composers of new music to get together and put on concerts for audiences to hear," explained Mason.

The theme for this upcoming Seventh Species concert at the festival is "Music at the 11th Hour" which Mason explains is the last opportunity for these composers to write music in the 20th Century.

As part of the "Festival of the Millennium," Mason's world premiere piece written for soprano and oboe, called "Three Shakespearean Sonnets," will be performed.

Species regular Art Maddox will premiere "Apocalypso." He will be joined by another Species regular Jack Gabel, who composed "When Nobody's Looking." Other Species members Jeff Defty, Peter Thomas and Guy Tyler will premiere their pieces, as well.

Noland has written a performance art piece for the event called "Venge Art" that is six hours long, but only a portion of it will be performed in concert.

Mason said he's not sure what Noland's piece might include, but



Seventh Species performs Nov. 10 at Beall Hall.

courtesy of Timothy Mason

he gave an outrageous example of what performance art on stage might look like.

Imagine a cellist playing when the conductor signals someone to come from off stage. That person is dressed up in a gorilla suit and is walking around the cellist, who is oblivious to the going-ons, and then the gorilla leaves the stage.

"If you heard it on a CD, you wouldn't get the gorilla," Mason explained. "So you have to see it performed live in order to understand."

Mason is an assistant researcher at the neuroscience department and has been with Seventh Species for almost two years. Noland moved to Eugene in 1994.

Seventh Species' sound varies

from impressionistic, which Mason said is "new age before new age happened," to neo-romantic, which has a narrative structure. Seventh Species' music is at times atonal — music that doesn't have a discernible melody.

"You wouldn't be coming out of the music hall humming the tune," Mason said.

Instruments range from pianos and harps to electronic instruments, which Mason described as "just noise, kind of like Yanni."

The group performs around Eugene three or four times a year. The composers have to pay musicians to play their music at the concerts and that is one reason the number of concerts is few, Mason noted.

"Our music is not commercially

sellable [or] commercially popular," Mason said, emphasizing why the group's music goes largely unnoticed. "I don't think our music would go over at Sam Bonds — they'd laugh us out of there."

Plus, they're not your typical group of musicians.

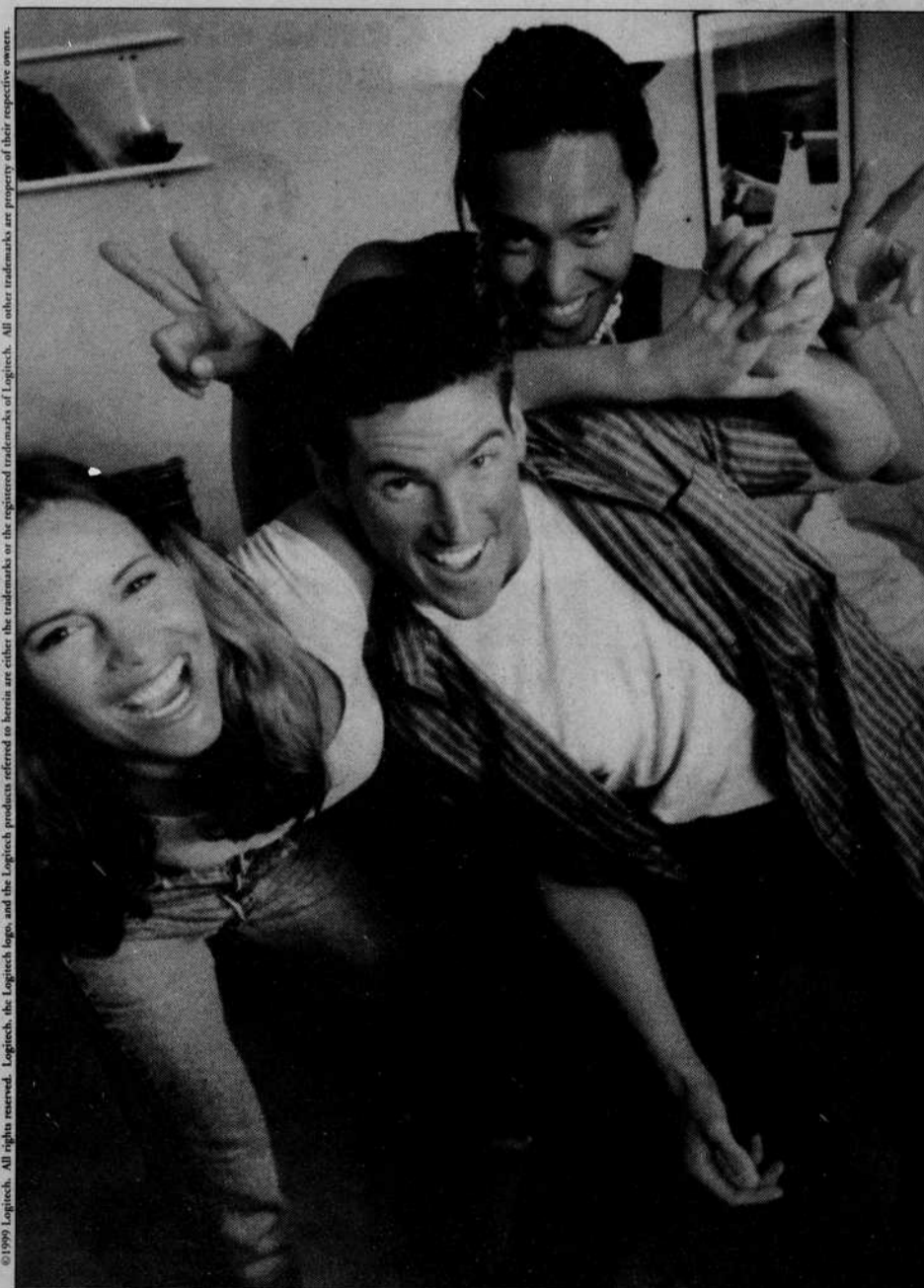
"We don't have a guitar or a drum player. If you ask us who our bass player is, well, we don't have one," Mason said, with joking tone.

If that doesn't spark your curiosity about this eclectic bunch of composers, the explanation about their name might.

In 1725, music theorist Johann Joseph Fux developed a way to describe how music works.

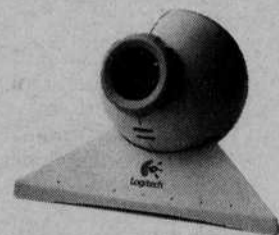
"Music is different melodic

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