

Courtesy the Oregon Bach Festival

Oregon Bach Festival conductor and founder Helmuth Rilling is releasing 160 CDs of interpretations of Bach's work.

Oregon Bach Festival vows to stun all music aficionados

By Rory Carroll
Oregon Daily Emerald

For many students, summer in Eugene connotes long, laid-back days in the depopulated metropolis. What many don't realize is that Eugene is the epicenter of the world-renowned Oregon Bach Festival, a gala that has gained international attention for its achievement and excellence.

Begun in 1970 by organist and conductor Helmuth Rilling as a week-long collection of performances and workshops, the festival has blossomed into an international event that expects to top its record 30,000-plus audience from last year.

This year's festival is celebrating the 250-year anniversary of Johann Sebastian Bach's death with the most ambitious event yet. From June 23 through July 9, the Hult Center for the Performing Arts and Beall Concert Hall will honor Bach's memory with performances by nationally known conductors, including Rilling, Miguel Harth-Bedoya and Fred Sjöberg.

This year's crowd will be treated to performances from a variety of musical styles, including several international choirs that will fly to Eugene to perform at the festival.

The choirs' project is called "International Voices: A Bridge to the Future." The key components to the project include the world premiers of a traditional song from each choir's homeland by a native composer. These composers will be on hand for the performance, which will take place on the opening night of the festival Friday.

The primary reason that the festival focuses on Bach is because Rilling, the artistic director, is from Germany and is one of the world's specialists in the interpretation of Bach's music, according to H. Royce Saltzman, Executive Director for the Bach Festival.

Rilling is releasing 160 CDs of interpretations of Bach's work on the German label Hänssler Classic, which will be distributed in the BMG record club catalog, opening its market to millions worldwide.

While the festival emphasizes Bach, it is not only interested only in Bach. Saltzman said that there will also be performances of Mendelssohn and Beethoven.

"The thread that goes through the tapestry you might say is Bach," Saltzman said.

George Evano, Director of Communications for the 30-year-old festival, said that the theme of this year's gala is Music Beyond Boundaries.

"If there is any composer whose music is beyond any constrictions or restriction of a time period, it's Bach," Evano said.

According to Saltzman, the versatility of Bach's music is what has kept it popular.

"Bach's music has been pretty much universal," Evano said.

Evano said that his relatively recent addition to the marketing staff has been an easy transition because the festival has been a success since its inception in 1970 and has enjoyed incremental growth, particularly in the past 5 years.

"When I came here it was a pretty mature organization, so it had reached the level of popularity that was pretty high for an arts group," Evano said.

This year's festival sets out to top last year's festival by adding more events.

"This year is the most ambitious festival since I've been here. There are almost 50 events," Evano said. "It will be a much larger final attendance because it's program-driven."

While the festival is legally an entity of the University music school, in reality it is a self-supported arts organization. Bach Festival coordinators raise money from sponsors and donors to flourish. Last year, the festival had ticket buyers from 30 states and private donations from more than 20 states.

"At the heart of the festival, education has always been at its core," Scott Barkhurst, director of publicity for the school of music, said. The festival sprung from summer classes at the music school. On a trip to Germany, Saltzman met Rilling and invited

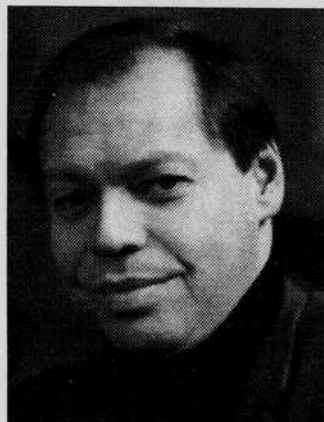
him to Eugene to teach.

"The thing grew incrementally," Barkhurst said, and added that education has remained at the festival's nucleus.

Many media outlets have picked up on the festival's remarkable development. The Los Angeles Times, The San Francisco Examiner and The Washington Post have all given nods to the Eugene-based Bach Festival.

Evano said that the 250th anniversary is a good time to reflect on how central a figure Bach is in music.

"While other composers from his time period like Vivaldi or Handel, when music people



Courtesy Oregon Bach Festival

Thomas Quasthoff

think of them they think, "That's Baroque music," Evano said. "But to the Romantic composers a century later, he was just as wild and an inspiration to them. And then to the composers of the early 20th century, he was this mathematical genius."

Sure to be a highlight of the festival will be the performance of "American Songbook" by Thomas Quasthoff on Sunday. His baritone voice lends itself beautifully to jazz interpretations of Bach's work.

Quasthoff will also perform on opening night along with the choirs who will band together under the direction of Conductor Harth-Bedoya of the Eugene Symphony for Beethoven's "Symphony No. 9."



Little Caesars®

Tuesday Special!

MEDIUM PEPPERONI OR CHEESE PIZZA

\$2.99

CARRY OUT
Extra Toppings
99¢ Each

1711 Willamette
(next to Blockbuster)

343-3330



Tune in to UO Today!

THE OREGON HUMANITIES CENTER
PRESENTS A 30 MINUTE WEEKLY
TELEVISION SHOW THAT TAKES YOU
INSIDE THE UNIVERSITY.

Humanities Center Director Steven Shankman interviews faculty, staff, and visiting lecturers about their research and interests.

UPCOMING PROGRAMS:

June 28, 2000	Marjorie Taylor, Psychology Dianne Dugaw, English/Folklore
July 5, 2000	Tsianina Lomawaima and the Museum of Natural History Exhibit on Indian Schools
July 12, 2000	George Sheridan & Evlyn Gould, European Studies
July 19, 2000	Milagro Vargas, Voice and Music
July 26, 2000	Steve Larson, Music Theory
Aug. 2, 2000	Mia Tuan, Sociology Marion Goldman, Sociology
Aug. 9, 2000	Ehud Havazelet, Creative Writing David Bradley, Creative Writing
Aug. 16, 2000	Danzy Senna, Author/Lecturer Ghaffar Pourazar, Beijing Opera performer/director
Aug. 23, 2000	Hill Walker, Dir., Center on Human Development
Aug. 30, 2000	Gary Snyder, Poet
Sept. 6, 2000	Barbara Allen Babcock, O'Fallon Lecturer
Sept. 13, 2000	Barry Lopez, Author
Sept. 20, 2000	Peggy Pascoe, History

The new season begins September 27!

WEDNESDAYS - 8:30 PM - CHANNEL 12
UO Today is also broadcast on Channel 97 on Monday at 9:00 pm.
Tuesday at 9:00 a.m., Thursday at 10:00 p.m. and Friday at 10:00 a.m.