

# Like football, the symphony can be an escape

■ Attempting to attract younger audiences, the Eugene Symphony plans an 'extremely festive' season

By Josh Ryneal  
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Going to the symphony is kind of like playing with one of the Rubik's Cube puzzles. At first glance, it doesn't necessarily look that interesting and doesn't compel you to investigate further. It's just a funny-looking square that looks too boring and too difficult to mess around with.

But once you sit down and start to play with it, the more absorbing and interesting it becomes. Pretty soon, you start playing with it all the time and can't put it down. It becomes an obsession.

The symphony evokes the same initial reactions from the average college student. Say the word "symphony" to overworked, stressed-out college students, and their eyes immediately glaze over. Some may even fall asleep right there on the spot.

A lot of people have the mistaken impression that the symphony is boring, stuffy and too expensive for cash-strapped students. Why would you go to the symphony some night, when you could get smashed at some bar and wake up with a hangover and an empty wallet?

The Eugene Symphony would officially like to change your mind. With renowned conductor Miguel Harth-Bedoya at the helm, the symphony kicked off its 2000 season a week ago, and hopes are high that this year's powerful and varied performances will draw a younger

crowd to the Hult Center.

Patricia Cusick, marketing director for the Eugene Symphony, said that the average age of a symphony concertgoer is about 55, but younger audiences will definitely be able to come away with a valuable experience.

"We would love to see a younger crowd," she said. "We are trying a fresh approach, with a young conductor and a lot of young talent."

Cusick added that the symphony will play classical pieces but mix them with contemporary works by modern composers.

Harth-Bedoya, who also conducts orchestras in Fort Worth and New Zealand, likens the symphonic experience to going to a Ducks game.

"When I came here, I didn't know that much about football," he said. "I wasn't told what to look for, but I could still participate and follow what was going on. The symphony is exactly the same way."

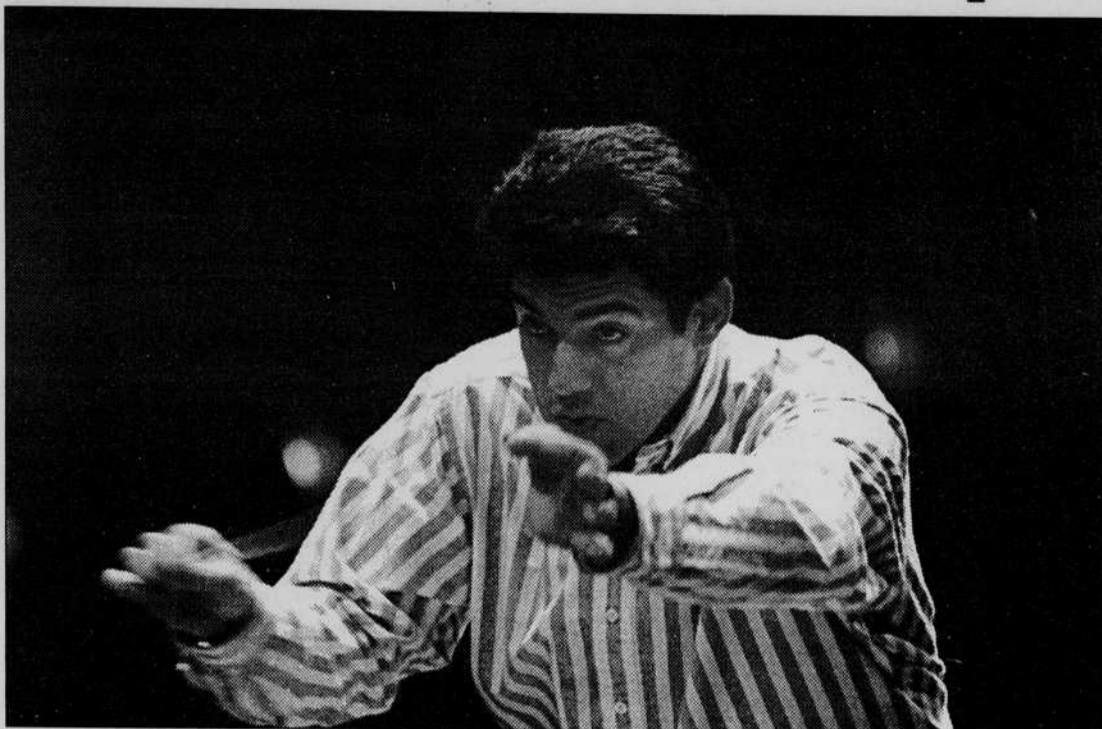
"Like at a football game, the symphony is like an escape; it lets your mind go someplace else."

The average person doesn't need to know a lot about music to enjoy the symphony, Harth-Bedoya said.

"Like with anything else, the more you know about it, the more you can get out of it," he said. "But anyone can come to the symphony and have a great time."

Harth-Bedoya called this year's season "extremely light-hearted and festive" and debunked the myth that orchestras only play straight-laced classical music.

"We play salsa, we play movie music, we play romantic music. All the music we play deals with emotion and feeling," he said. "The orchestra can play versatile music."



Miguel Harth-Bedoya, who was conducting as early as 18 years old, brings youth and flair to the Eugene Symphony this season.

Courtesy of the Eugene Symphony

Aside from the variety, what will make an immediate impression on newcomers is the incredible precision necessary to synchronize 75 distinct musicians in harmony. The result is a wall of sound that is impressive, and all the more so because there is no electric amplification. The symphony relies only on the talent of its musicians, its conductor and the acoustics of the venue to produce that "world's best stereo" sound.

The Hult Center is a great place to see the symphony. Every seat in the house is a good one, and the sound leaps off the stage and into the ears

with breathtaking clarity.

The symphony also boasts a number of University students and faculty in its ranks. Jeff Williams, a music professor and a trombone player entering his 21st year with the symphony, urged everyone to give it a try.

"While you're in college, you should try to broaden your horizons," he said. "I think the symphony is an intellectually and spiritually broadening experience."

Williams also noted that orchestras are aware that their core audiences are aging and need to appeal

to younger fans.

"Miguel is a young and innovative conductor, and I think he's conscious of what young people would enjoy," he said.

Enjoying the symphony isn't expensive. Tickets for individual performances, which can be purchased at the Hult Center or at the EMU ticket office, are \$10 for students.

The Eugene Symphony performs concerts one Thursday each month, along with other special orchestral events and free concert previews. For a schedule or ticket information, call 682-5000.

**\$10 buffet - All you can eat and drink! Friday, 9-12pm**



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