

FEATURES

Symphony to play Stravinsky

■ The Eugene Symphony will perform early works of the Russian composer, including "The Firebird"

By Lisa Toth
Oregon Daily Emerald

As the last of 83 musicians straggled in the door and those who were already seated finished warming up their instruments, the members of the Eugene Symphony began their second rehearsal of the evening.

Thirty-three-year-old music director and conductor Miguel Harth-Bedoya, wearing jeans and a blue T-shirt, collectively and calmly took his place in front of his players Sunday.

"It has to be a little more melodic," he instructed, raising his arms and wand, signaling that he wanted to repeat the measure.

And what ensued was a beautiful blend of music that filled the practice room, which he described as too small a facility, with its low ceiling.

Harth-Bedoya would draw out each line, surrounded by harmonies of flutes and the staccato notes of the French horn. But a few seconds later, he would raise his palm high in the air again — calling the playing to a dead halt.

"It has to be articulated. ... You have to raise the fortissimo (loudness)," he said, as he conducted Igor Stravinsky's Symphony No. 1.

Gentle but firm in his criticism, Maestro Harth-Bedoya demanded that everything from the climax of the kettle drums to the intensity of the oboe meet the tempo he desired and flow precisely.

During a brief break, as he took frequent gulps from a cup of decaffeinated coffee, Harth-Bedoya confidently detailed his musical choices for the Stravinsky Showcase. The concert will be performed Jan. 24 at the Hult Center for the Performing Arts in Silva Hall, and Jan. 25 in Florence.

The all-highlights evening highlights the Russian composer's early works (1905-1920) when he was composing ballet music, starting with his Symphony No. 1, followed by the delightful innovations of "Pulcinella" and concluded with the dance score that catapulted Stravinsky to fame: "The Firebird."

Harth-Bedoya said Symphony No. 1, composed between 1905-07, is a piece written during Stravinsky's youth that led him to become one of the most innovative composers in the 20th century.

"It's the Stravinsky none of us think of," Harth-Bedoya said.

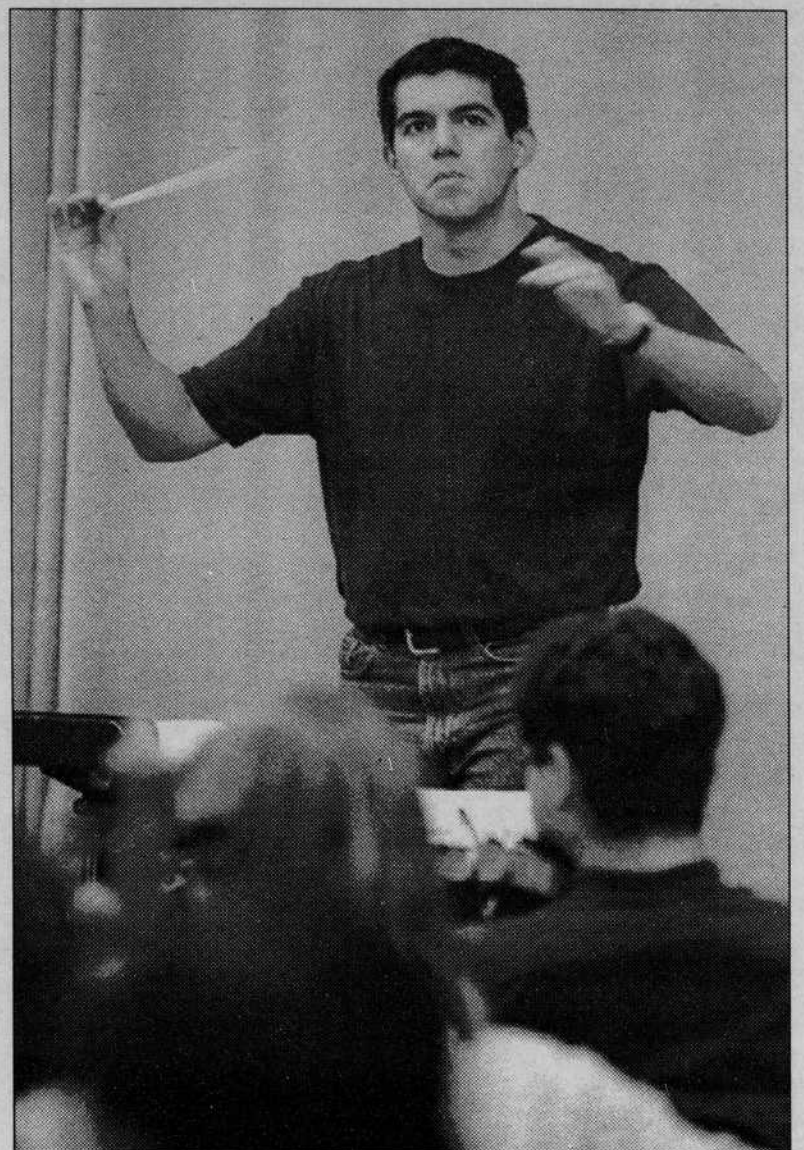
This piece of repertoire, Harth-Bedoya said, hasn't been played recently in Eugene and focuses completely on the orchestra, without any featured guest artists.

Harth-Bedoya said he feels a certain attachment to the musical score because Stravinsky wrote it at a young age, and Harth-Bedoya himself is a young conductor.

Harth-Bedoya added that he wanted to showcase the fairly contemporary composer's traditional works and rhythmic innovations. The conductor said the program can appear heavy on paper, but he hopes the audience will be able to easily digest the musical choices.

"I hope that the menu we sequence will work for the listener," he said.

Deanna McGlothlin, 30, who plays the French horn in the symphony and also serves as personnel manager, said the three featured works are very different, despite all



Adam Amato Emerald

Conductor Miguel Harth-Bedoya leads his musicians through rehearsal in Studio One at the Hult Center in practice for the Stravinsky Showcase to be performed Jan. 24 and 25.

coming from the same composer.

"All of the pieces share strong rhythmic motives, yet are very strikingly different in the moods that they portray," she said. "Stravinsky's 'Firebird' appeals to the primal nature of the listener, with the accented rhythms in the lower strings and soaring melodies."

She said "Pulcinella" is styled after the Neopolitan master Giovanni Pergolesi, with "dance-like rhythms and a baroque-string sound punctuated by winds."

"The Symphony (No. 1) is not as well known," McGlothlin said. "It is packaged in classical sonata form, yet is very different from your typical symphony. It is quite exciting to listen to."

During the concert, Harth-Bedoya said he never plans to leave the audience unattended, sharing with them throughout the performance guidelines as to what they can expect from the music and "making it personal."

He will also host a free preview with concert highlights at noon Jan. 23 in the Hult Center's Studio One, and a conductor's talk at 7:15 p.m. on Jan. 24 in Silva Hall before the concert, which begins at 8 p.m.

Eugene Symphony marketing director Patricia Cusick said for college-age audience members, the symphony pushes the "limits of classical music — it has that edge to it that young people can appreciate."

Cusick said this particular symphony may also draw ballet lovers because Stravinsky started out writing ballet scores. She added that she hopes students and staff in the University's School of Music already have an interest in this type of performance.

"Just because it is not pop culture doesn't mean it's not a worthy

event," she said. "There's no accounting for musical taste."

Harth-Bedoya's final season

For Harth-Bedoya, Thursday's concert also has another significance besides highlighting Stravinsky, being that his six-year tenure and final season as director and conductor of the Eugene Symphony is coming to an end.

Growing up in a musical household in Lima, Peru, Harth-Bedoya, said he came to Philadelphia to study music. He holds conducting degrees from the Curtis Institute of Music and The Juilliard School. His first professional appointment in America started in 1996 in Eugene.

"I have really enjoyed my time in Eugene — the society, culture," he said.

Currently, Harth-Bedoya said he has taken on two other music director positions, one with the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra in Texas and the other with the Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra in New Zealand. Harth-Bedoya also said he has about 12 other guest-conducting engagements every year of both symphonies and orchestras, with his last one in Eugene in May.

McGlothlin said the conductor has definitely left his mark here.

"I remember the conductor search that gave us Miguel," she said. "After I had seen all the candidates, I knew he was the one that would continue to lead the orchestra toward the artistic excellence. ... His energy and passion have inspired us, and we will remember it and never accept anything less."

For ticket information call the Hult Center Box Office at 682-5000, visit www.eugenesymphony.org or the EMU Ticket Office.

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