

## LOVER OF THE CLASSICS

Continued from page 15

"None of my violin teachers lived to see 70. To be a musician means one is compulsive. You're always trying to do better. It's never good enough," she says. "It's a difficult lifestyle. There is no financial security. The schedule can be rough on a relationship. It's no wonder all of my girlfriends have been musicians."

Compulsiveness is the successful musician's curse and blessing. The trait may wreak havoc on one's relationship and soul, but it may lead to critical acclaim. So it is with Huggett. Her unyielding fervor for baroque music and her desire to "do better" have made her one of the world's premiere soloists, directors and chamber musicians.

As a young person, Huggett studied modern violin with Manoug Parikian at the Royal Academy of Music. In her late teens she was introduced to the baroque violin, which she immediately fell in love with. Huggett went on to study the old techniques and styles from original sources, but also gained much insight from studying with Dutch and Flemish musicians such as Sigiswald Kuijken, Gustav Leonhardt and Ton Koopman, with whom she founded the Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra in 1979. Huggett was that orchestra's leader until 1987.

Today Huggett tours the world performing her craft. As founder of Trio Sonnerie, she has championed the works of the French baroque masters, recording Couperin's *Concerts Royaux*, Rameau's *Pièces de clavecin en concert*, as well as Corelli's Violin Sonatas, op. 5, and the Telemann Paris Quartets. She has appeared as director and soloist with the prestigious Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, The Hanover Band, and the Academy of Ancient Music. Her recordings of Vivaldi and Mozart concertos have been very popular, as has her first recording of the Beethoven and Mendelssohn concertos, with period instruments.

In addition to her performing and recording schedule, she is professor of baroque violin at the Akademie für Alte Musik of Bremen, Germany. And as if that weren't enough, last fall Huggett was appointed to a \$27,000-a-year job as the Portland Baroque Orchestra's artistic director. Though that job officially starts in July, Huggett has been scheduled for two PBO concerts this season, including appearances April 22 and 23 at Trinity Episcopal Cathedral in Portland, where she will both lead the orchestra and take the spotlight as violin soloist during an all-Bach program.

PBO enthusiasts hope Huggett's prestige will eventually lead to national tours and recording contracts for the orchestra. Though PBO has a solid reputation within international baroque music circles, it lacks broad-based recognition. Until now, PBO has been run as a small cooperative, and it hasn't recorded or toured very much.

Huggett says this new position creates new challenges for her. "As a performer, you really focus on the music, but as artistic director you've got to be concerned with things like the budget, working with the board, and talking with the right people," she says.

Mastering the art of schmoozing. "Yes. Schmoozing. I've never really done that before, but I'm starting to learn," she laughs.

"It's fascinating learning a new culture. In England, people seem more repressed. Even if they don't like something, they kind of keep it quiet. People here can be very outspoken and opinionated," says Huggett, who will live most of the time in London but will spend about three months each year in the United States.

"I was at a dinner party recently and I was just shocked at how some people were talking about taxation," she continues. "In Europe, people accept taxes as a part of everyday life, but here in America quite a lot of important people seem to oppose it and think their money can be spent better—and they say so loud and clear. I sometimes find it shocking, but I just kind of sit back and listen and learn."

Huggett comes to work in this country during a turbulent time for artists. Federal funding for the arts is under a sharp ax wielded by a less-than-sympathetic Congress. Yet despite the threat, Huggett says she sees this situation as an opportunity.

"A lot of the same thing is going on in Europe. The money just isn't there," she says. "What I hope is that this will mobilize the passions of arts organizations that have become rather complacent because they always thought



Monica Huggett in rehearsal with the Portland Baroque Orchestra

*"When I first came out it was considered very radical. There were no other well-known women who were out back then. Now there are so many young women who are out and I would like to think that my honesty has somehow made it possible for them to openly be who they are."*

—Monica Huggett

they were going to have government funding. Now they'll have to fight, and that may ignite their feelings."

Huggett suggests that it may in fact be this type of unstable environment that gives PBO its distinctive flair. A few years back PBO was saddled with a \$55,000 deficit. Though the orchestra's budget is back in the black, memories of that painful experience linger and have undoubtedly informed the board's financial inclinations (read: budgetary tight-fistedness).

"There is a definite difference between [PBO] and other orchestras I've worked with, and I think that does have to do with the reality that they have had to fight to get by. This is a very lively and creative bunch of musicians," she says. "There's an obvious enthusiasm among these musicians that you don't see with Europeans or the slick people in places like New York or Los Angeles. In those places it's not cool to

look like you're having fun. Here it's okay. I enjoy that."

Huggett says she also likes the fact that there seems to be a hunger for culture in the Pacific Northwest. "I first visited the region in 1983 when it was a very different place. The area was dealing with a recession. It didn't have the buzz that it does now," she says. "People seem to be moving here from bigger cities because it's such a livable environment. I think a lot of these people bring with them their desire for art and music... It's a very exciting time [for the Pacific Northwest] right now."

Yet with all of the benefits, there come some drawbacks. "Yes. I've heard about [the Oregon Citizens Alliance]," says Huggett, who came out as a lesbian in her late 20s. "One of the traits often found among musicians is our desire to be loved. When we perform we want people's applause. We want them to love us. We want their acceptance, so it does make me a bit uncomfortable to know there are people out there—people who don't know me—who think I'm disgusting and perverted because I'm a lesbian."

She adds: "I suppose to a certain extent I've managed to turn a blind eye to the discrimination I may have faced because I'm a woman and a lesbian. I just don't think it's healthy to always be saying that I didn't get this or I didn't get that because I'm a lesbian and a woman."

Despite that claim, Huggett readily admits she would not have been given an opportunity to lead a prominent baroque orchestra in England. "My first struggle has always been as a woman. You always have to be so much better than the men in order to have a shot at the same opportunity. It's not easy. You always have to prove yourself."

As for being a lesbian, she says: "It's a good thing I am, because I'd make a lousy wife." In a more serious light, Huggett says she's proud she may be a role model for young lesbians. "When I first came out it was considered very radical. There were no other well-known women who were out back then," she says. "Now there are so many young women who are out and I would like to think that my honesty has somehow made it possible for them to openly be who they are."

Huggett says she is currently in a "wonderful, wonderful" relationship, with a 28-year-old European musician. (She says her first girlfriend was from the United States and espoused a "pretty radical view of feminism.")

"My girlfriend and I get along splendidly. She's a musician, and her father was an actor and her mother was an actress, so she's used to the kind of crazy schedule I have," she says.

The two recently spent some downtime together doing a little sightseeing on the West Coast. "I love traveling. It's kind of funny because I do so much of it for work, but it's different when you're traveling on holiday. We hope to visit India soon," says Huggett, whose list of hobbies include gardening and restoring old buildings. "Oh yes, and I recently got a computer."

Now what would Bach think about that?

*Portland Baroque Orchestra's 1994-95 season will conclude with a program of music by the baroque period's celebrated composer Johann Sebastian Bach, in concerts April 22 at 8 pm and April 23 at 3 pm at Trinity Episcopal Cathedral, 147 NW 19th Ave. in Portland. Headlining the program is Huggett, who will lead the orchestra and solo on the violin. Tickets, priced at \$16 and \$20 (\$11 for seniors and students), may be purchased at Classical Millennium, 3144 E Burnside St. in Portland, or by calling the PBO box office at 222-6000.*