

German conductor brings connection to Bach

JOEL P. SHEMPERT
Copy Editor

Many renowned musicians have graced Clackamas' music department, but few so unique as wizened conductor Stefan Minde, who rehearsed the Clackamas Chamber Singers Tuesday, Nov. 10, in preparation for their upcoming performance of J.S. Bach's *Christmas Oratorio*.

Minde's uniqueness is his deep connection to this music. A native of Germany, he has been instrumental in bringing phenomenal seldom-performed works to the Northwest, and sung in the same Leipzig choir that Bach founded in 1725.

"We have a direct line to Bach through Stefan," explains Chamber Singers conductor Lonnie Cline.

Minde's mission is, as is any good musician's, to broaden the horizons of those around him. He does this by travelling the less trodden path with the choirs and orchestras he conducts.

"When I came to America," Minde relates, "I noticed that around Christmastime, they only do *Messiah*, which is a nice piece...but I was thinking that there is maybe something else."

That something else was Bach's *Christmas Oratorio*, which is dear to Minde in many ways. Living in East Germany before the Fall of the Wall, this work became more than mere notes on a page for him.

"For me it has quite the significance because it deals with God. And in East Germany we were totalitarian—'There is no God,'" Minde explains.

Minde recalls attending the performance of the *Oratorio* and being moved greatly—a sentiment in which he was not alone. Many in the audience felt the same way, but because the music's content was theistic, no one could applaud in the auditorium, for fear of arrest. They had to wait to show their apprecia-

tion until they were outside the hall. "For me, it was some sort of silent protest against the regime," Minde says.

He goes on to further emphasize this music's historic importance. "You don't have to be religious or anything like that; that's not the point," he insists. "But [works of that kind] have such power."

It was a power that was once opposed and suppressed by many countries on the other side of the Cold War. And now, musical pioneers like Maestro Stefan Minde are free to spread this beauty and love freely to the world.

"It raised the whole sophistication level in this area," says Cline of Minde's arrival in Portland. "He's brought works that might never have been heard in this area. And that's important."

To that end, he has conducted the *Christmas Oratorio* in Portland for seven years.

Which is where Clackamas comes in. Last year, Minde and the Sinfonia Concertante Orchestra needed a new choir for the annual Bach performance, and one of his soloists, LeaAnne DenBeste, who teaches voice at Clackamas, recommended the Chamber Singers.

The resulting partnership was a resounding success, as professional orchestra and student choir delivered side by side Part 2 of the phenomenal work. This year they will complete the cycle by performing Part 1.

"I wanted to have [Lonnie Cline's] chorus doing both," explains Minde, "because they are quite good."

Bach, though a merciless choral writer in many ways, is one of the best things that could happen to the Chamber Singers.

"It's a challenge for these guys," Minde affirms. "If you challenge people, and you do it in the right way, you get more out of it."

Minde is not the only one pleased with the pairing. While instrumen-



TIMOTHY A. BELL/ Clackamas Print

German native Stefan Minde, former member of Leipzig choir founded by J.S. Bach in 1725, conducts a rehearsal with the Clackamas Chamber Singers.

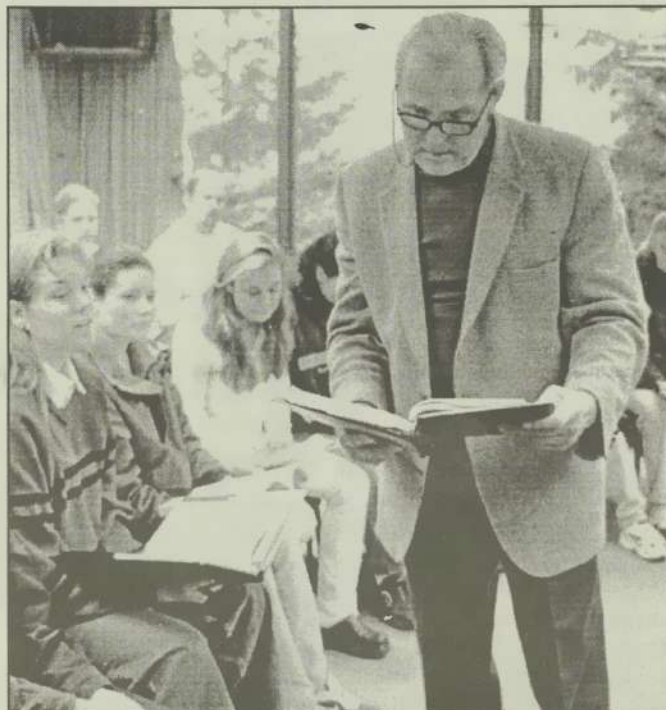
talists are traditionally known to be standoffish toward singers, the Sinfonia Concertante Orchestra, following 1997's Christmas performance, emphatically asked to have the Chamber Singers back the next year.

"That meant a lot to me," said Cline. "I was proud of the way my singers conducted themselves."

In addition to singing the *Christmas Oratorio* at 1st United Methodist Church in Portland on Dec. 4 and Christmas by Candlelight at St. John the Apostle Catholic Church in Oregon City on Dec. 6, The Chamber Singers are slated to sing Bach's grandiose *St. Matthew Passion* with Minde the following year.

Minde is enthusiastic about Clackamas' talent and potential, and desires to nurture it.

"It's the same with the orchestra," he says—"if you treat the orchestra members not as numbers, but as artists, you can achieve wonders."



TIMOTHY A. BELL/ Clackamas Print

Working with the choir's soprano section, Minde consults the score to Bach's *Christmas Oratorio*.

Jazz Night features world famous guest

Clackamas' instrumental music program will have its day in the sun with the Instrumental Jazz Night tonight, in the Gregory Forum at 7:30-8:30 p.m.

The Clackamas Jazz Ensemble and the smaller Jazz Combo will play a mix of Swing, Jazz, Latin and Salsa under the direction of Tom Wakeling. Both groups are comprised of dedicated student musicians, and the Jazz Ensemble has recorded as well as touring Europe.

The concert also features Grammy-winning guest musician Brad Turner, a trumpeter, pianist, and composer from Canada. Enthusiased Wakeling, "we're really excited to have Brad here, because he's world famous."

The music of jazz greats throughout history will be showcased, including Thelonius Monk, Miles Davis, Charlie Parker, and Perez Prado. The concert is \$3, \$2 for students, and offers a rich and varied program.

T-SHIRT DESIGN CONTEST

open to all ccc students

theme:

"The Pursuit of Happiness.
Conflicting Visions and Values."

1st Prize • \$50

For entry forms and contest rules contact
Dave Arter, Pauling 124 or ext. 2210

CAREERS IN MUSIC

explore the many career
opportunities in the music industry

CREATIVE/TALENT • TECHNICAL • BUSINESS

GUEST SPEAKERS

from the
REAL WORLD of the MUSIC BUSINESS

Tips on entrance strategies, writing promo packs, current job
prospects, income levels, and much more

MUS 199-01 • call 657-6958, ext. 2434 for more info