

# Best of the Bach

## Highlights of this year's fest By Brett Campbell

Each year, the Oregon Bach Festival gets a lot of attention for its big productions, and this year's no exception: Brahms' *German Requiem*, Handel's oratorio, *Jephtha*, Beethoven's piano concertos, along with an unusual and attractive dance concert, highlight the schedule at the Hult Center's Silva Hall.

But for alternative types such as you folks reading this, why not try an alternative — and to my ears, superior — venue and musical menu?

The UO's Beall Concert Hall hosts a half dozen smaller-scale shows that pack at least as much musical muscle as the big whoppers at the Incredible Hult. With no major contemporary works on the bill, this may be the summer to sample some of those more intimate pleasures as well as the mega productions.

### Friday, June 27, 8 pm

Handel *Jephtha* (Silva Concert Hall, Hult Center)

We haven't heard enough from that other titan of the Baroque, George Frederic Handel, at the Bach Festival lately. While Bach often gazed inward or heavenward, Handel was a man of theater, and wrote extroverted, crowd-pleasing music often in the grand manner. *Jephtha* was the last of his great series of oratorios — almost operatic settings of Biblical stories, replete with grand choruses, dramatic soloists, and small orchestra — and one of his last important works.

This one sets the story of the Israelites' battle against the Ammonites, and throws in some added characters and plot devices. If you like the Handel oratorio everyone has heard — *Messiah* — give this one a try.

### Saturday, June 28, 8 pm

Paul O' Dette, lutenist (Beall Concert Hall, UO School of Music)

For a change from the large-scale grandeur of Handel, try this quietly intense recital of Elizabethan music performed by perhaps the greatest living lutenist, Paul O'Dette (accompanied in some songs by counter tenor Matthew White), in the ideal intimate setting of the UO's Beall Concert Hall. Just as Bob Dylan, accompanied solely by his acoustic guitar, can pack more emotional punch than an army of heavy metal electric guitarists, this music of William Byrd, Henry Purcell, and other English and Italian composers can, in its own stark way, feel as powerful as massive Baroque passions or oratorios. If you like solo acoustic guitar (jazz or folk), give this one a listen.

### Sunday, June 29, 4 pm

Bach Brandenburg Concertos (Silva)

The best of Bach, the Baroque, and maybe even classical music, the Brandenburg Concertos are perhaps the most widely accessible yet critically lauded staples of the repertoire, so tuneful and creative that — unlike certain other popular Baroque tunes — they deserve a lifetime of repeated listenings. This is the ideal concert for the classical music novice or someone looking for just one Bach Festival concert of guaranteed delight.

### Monday, June 30, 8 pm

Lorna McGhee and Friends (Beall)

The French may be cheese-eating surrender monkeys — or they may be skeptical about one country unilaterally attacking another, killing civilians and ultimately making terrorism more likely. Uh, where was I? Oh, oui, the French. Whatever you think about their politics, French composers wrote some of the most beautiful music of the early 20th century, especially Claude Debussy's ravishing 1915 "Sonata for Flute, Viola and Harp," some of the finest chamber music ever composed. Its characteristically French elegance harkens back to at least the music of the 17th century, when Marin Marais composed three pieces for the same forces, also performed at this concert.

Maurice Ravel looked back to French composers of that period when he composed a number of his finest works,

including the "Sonatine" for piano, later arranged for flute, harp and viola. Later, even the more experimental French composer Andre Jolivet couldn't resist this combination's lyrical pull, and this concert presents his "Petite Suite." Performed by top-notch soloists, this should be one of the loveliest concerts of the summer, and a prime recommendation for this festival.

### Tuesday, July 1, 8 pm

Beethoven Piano Concertos Nos. 2, 3 and 4 (Silva)

### Thursday, July 3, 8 pm

Beethoven Piano Concertos Nos. 1 and 5 (Silva)

Jeffrey Kahane, soloist and conductor

This has been the year of Beethoven in Eugene. Our symphony has embarked on a complete cycle of his symphonies; the Oregon Mozart Players did the triple concerto last month, and now Jeffrey Kahane will play all five of his piano concertos, second only to the symphonies among Beethoven's orchestral music. The somewhat tentative first (confusingly called Number 2) concerto owes a lot to his teacher, Haydn; the second evokes Mozart but already shows signs of moving beyond the Classical style, while the dramatic third uses Mozart's late concertos as a launching pad into new harmonic dimensions, signaling the arrival of Romanticism.

The quietly but consistently surprising fourth concerto culminates in a movement of exultant joy. His monumental final piano concerto is one of the most popular ever written, symphonic in its proportions and ambitions. It's one of the pillars of classical music, so maybe the July 3 concert is the one to choose if you can see only one of these.

### Wednesday, July 2, 8 pm

Tenor James Taylor, vocal recital (Beall)

That *other* James Taylor's Cuthbert show may be sold out, but this one looks a lot more interesting anyway. An award-winning tenor, Taylor has won plenty of praise in his previous Bach Festival performances, and he's performing in several concerts again this time. OFAM fans should love this survey of American art songs from Charles Ives (the first great American composer) and John Jacob Niles (who collected and set folk songs from his native Appalachia as well as composing his own) through Samuel Barber's and John Duke's settings of poems from James Joyce, A.E. Houseman and others.

Contemporary composers are represented by Dominick Argento, who sets Shakespeare and his contemporaries' verse to modern sounds, and Jake Heggie, who recently turned *Dead Man Walking* into a popular opera, who gives a musical backdrop to Emily Dickinson's poems.



Paul O' Dette, Beall Concert Hall, UO School of Music, Saturday June 28.



## Schedule-at-a-Glance

### Friday, June 27

- 6 pm Opening Ceremonies: Pacific International Children's Choir Festival (Hult Center Plaza)
- 7 pm Inside Line: John Steinmetz (Soreng)
- 8 pm Festival chorus and orchestra: Handel *Jephtha*\* (Silva)

### Saturday, June 28

- 10 pm Pinocchio, Eugene Youth Ballet (Silva)
- 12 pm On the House: St. Louis Children's Choir (Hult)
- 8 pm Intimate Evenings: Paul O'Dette, lutenist (Beall)

### Sunday, June 29

- 3 pm Inside Line: Marc Vanscheeuwijck (Soreng)
- 4 pm Festival chamber orchestra: Bach Brandenburg Concertos (Silva)

### Monday, June 30

- 12 pm Organ Interludes: ElRay Stewart Cook (Central Lutheran Church)
- 5 pm Discovery Series I: Bach Cantata BWV 150\* (Beall)
- 8 pm Intimate Evenings: Lorna McGhee and Friends, French works for flute, harp, and viola (Beall)

### Tuesday, July 1

- 12 pm Let's Talk: Helmuth Rilling (Studio One)
- 5 pm Discovery Series II: Bach Cantata BWV 131\* (Beall)
- 8 pm Festival orchestra: Beethoven Piano Concertos Nos. 2, 3, & 4 with Jeffrey Kahane, pianist and conductor (Silva)

### Wednesday, July 2

- 12 pm Organ Interludes: John Jantzi (First Christian Church)
- 5 pm Discovery Series III: Bach Cantata BWV 14\* (Beall)
- 8 pm Intimate Evenings: James Taylor vocal recital, American art songs, Donald Sulzen, accompanist (Beall)

### Thursday, July 3

- 12 pm Let's Talk: Tom Somerville and conducting master class (Studio One)
- 5 pm Discovery Series IV: "From Africa to Gospel" with André Thomas (Beall)
- 8 pm Festival orchestra: Beethoven Piano Concertos Nos. 1 & 5 with Jeffrey Kahane, pianist and conductor (Silva)

### Friday, July 4

Independence Day/No concerts

### Saturday, July 5

- 12 pm On the House: Oregon Renaissance Band (Hult Lobby)
- 8 pm Intimate Evenings: Ya-Fei Chuang and Robert Levin duo piano recital (Beall)

### Sunday, July 6

- 3 pm Inside Line: Robert Hurwitz (Soreng)
- 4 pm Festival chorus and orchestra: Brahms A German Requiem, Berg Violin Concerto with soloist Alyssa Park\* (Silva)

### Monday, July 7

- 12 pm Let's Talk: Anton Armstrong and André Thomas (Studio One)
- 5 pm Discovery Series V: Bach Cantatas BWV 2 & BWV 135\* (Beall)
- 8 pm Intimate Evenings: Festival Baroque Ensemble (Beall)

### Tuesday, July 8

- 12 pm Organ Interludes: Barbara Baird and Julia Brown (Beall)
- 5 pm Discovery Series VI: Bach Cantata BWV 112\* (Beall)
- 8 pm Youth Choral Academy in concert; Anton Armstrong, conductor, with André Thomas and Helmuth Rilling (Silva)

### Wednesday, July 9

- 12 pm On the House: Guy Few (Hult Lobby)
- 5 pm Discovery Series VII: Bach Double Choir Motets\* (Beall)
- 8 pm Intimate Evenings: "The Tao of the Well Tempered Bach" with Chungliang Al Huang and Robert Levin (Soreng)

### Thursday, July 10

- 12 pm Let's Talk: James Taylor and vocal soloists (Studio One)
- 5 pm Discovery Series VIII: "Beethoven as Inheritor of Mozart" lecture-demonstration with Robert Levin (Beall)
- 8 pm Intimate Evenings: Festival Chorus a cappella, Peter Hopkins and Kathy Romey, conductors (Beall)

### Friday, July 11

- 12 pm On the House: Word Pictures with Mark Lewis (Hult Lobby)
- 5 pm Discovery Series IX: "Mozart's Unfinished C Minor Mass: History and Promise" lecture-demonstration with Robert Levin (Beall)
- 8 pm Bach and Ballet, Eugene Ballet Company, Festival chamber orchestra (Silva)

### Saturday, July 12

- 10 am "Banging Bamboozles," Lelavision (Silva)
- 12 pm On the House: Voices of Korea (Hult Lobby)
- 8 pm Intimate Evenings: William Porter organ recital, works by Bach (Central Lutheran)

### Sunday, July 13

- 3 pm Inside Line: Peter Hopkins (Soreng Theatre)
- 4 pm Festival chorus and orchestra: Bach Magnificat, Mozart Mass in C Minor\* (Silva)

\*Helmuth Rilling, conductor