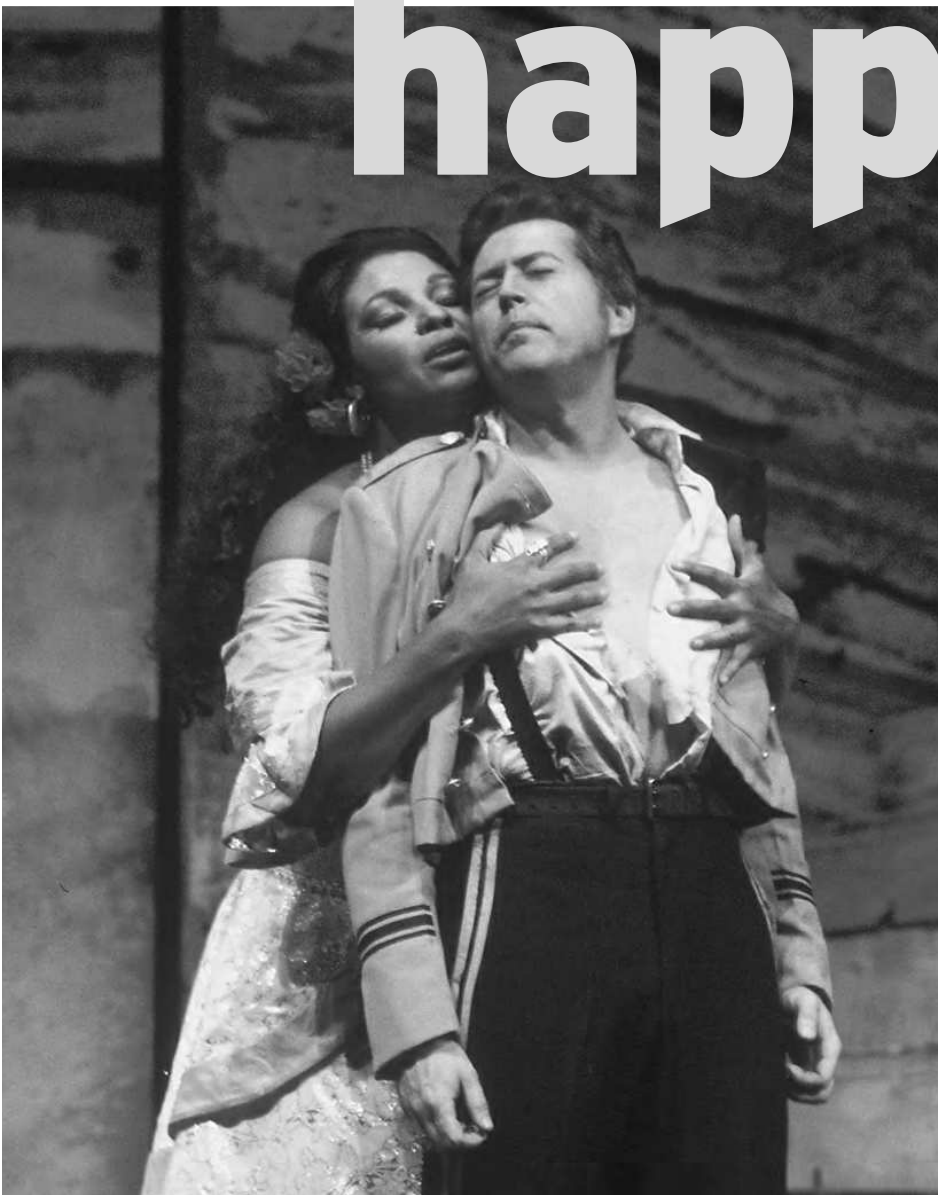


WHAT'S happening



There is no need to leave town in search of fun this New Year's Eve. Eugene offers up a festive, plentiful cornucopia of enticing holiday events. For starters, the enduring, fiery opera **Carmen** (top left) will open at the Hult Center. The story, centering around a woman torn between two lovers, originated as a French novella published in 1845. However, the opera's themes of bold passion and mystery continue to defy the passing centuries and remain forever universal. End the year immersed in sumptuous story and sound, performed by the Eugene Opera. Two other celebrations will consume the last night of 2003. A **Masquerade Ball and Auction** featuring music by **The Sugarbeets** (bottom) will take place in the Mallard Banquet Hall, 725 W. 1st. Proceeds from the festivities will benefit Bridgeway House and its mission to help autistic children and their families in Lane County. And for a more casual celebration, there is no better way to welcome the New Year than with familiar friends. Pacific Northwest musical mainstay **Shelley James Musicbox** (top right) will rock the Wild Duck this New Year's Eve with power pop – an exciting evening for both tried-and-true fans and new pals. See the Wednesday Calendar and music column for these and other celebrations. Enjoy!

