



**THE JULLIARD QUARTET
PERFORM AT BEALL HALL
THURSDAY, FEB. 5.**

From Wit to Waltz

UO, ESO bring chamber and orchestral masterpieces to town.

The UO's Chamber Music Series brings one of the world's most honored ensembles, the Julliard Quartet, to Beall Hall Thursday, Feb. 5. For more than half a century, the quartet has been winning acclaim for its taut performances of standard repertoire and new works. The Eugene program will include Haydn's "Razor" quartet (Haydn reputedly said he'd give his best quartet for a good razor.), one of Beethoven's magnificent Razumovsky quartets, and works by that paragon of the second Viennese school, Anton Webern, whose concentrated miniatures glow with atonal intensity.

Fans of both American and dance music might check out another UO concert on Sunday afternoon, Feb. 8, when the University Symphony plays three of the 20th century's most engaging musical adventures: Gershwin's "An American in Paris," "Creation of the World" by Darius Milhaud; and the original version of Aaron Copland's "Appalachian Spring."

Milhaud's delightful ballet music remains one of the most successful uses of jazz in classical music, while Gershwin plays the same French-American connection — from the other direction. If you've only heard the Copland in its later orchestrated guise, try this beautifully transparent version; the size of the orchestra pit limited Copland to only 13 instruments, but it lacks none of its larger cousin's majesty.

The UO Symphony joins the school's opera ensemble at the Hult Center's Soreng Theater on Feb. 18 and 22 and in Roseburg on the 21st for the big production of the winter: Stephen Sondheim's *A Little Night Music*. Set in turn-of-the-century Sweden (which, in this production, is evoked by Degas-style set design), the musical is based on Ingmar Bergman's play *Smiles of a Summer Night*.

Sondheim set every song in triple meter (although some would be tough to waltz to), in part to reflect the trio of love triangles that fuel the plot. You can enjoy its singable tunes on a superficial musical level, or step back a bit and admire Sondheim's trademarks: wit, ambivalence, melancholy humor, verbal virtuosity that rivals that of Ira Gershwin and Larry Hart, and unexpected yet unforgettable melodic beauty.

As Ravel did in his latter-day waltzes, ALNM gently winks at the bygone sentimental operetta tradition, yet nevertheless tells an emotionally involving story. Sondheim's ability to incorporate our era's

dominant attitude — irony — while nevertheless creating genuinely moving musical experiences may be his finest contribution to 20th century art. And no matter how much it's been butchered in however many lounges and cabarets, when heard in its proper theatrical context and performed in an unsentimental manner appropriate to the character who sings it, *Night Music*'s most famous song, "Send in the Clowns," still works.

The director, UO music professor Mark Kaczmarczyk, is one of the best things to happen to Eugene performing arts in recent years; his previous productions here have been characterized by high quality, sly wit, and excellent musicianship and compelling theatricality.

That contrived occasion dedicated to commercializing romance and boosting the bottom line of greeting card companies and dentists arrives on Feb. 14, which means the Eugene Symphony's annual pops concert is also nigh. This time it features singer Jubilant Sykes performing standards by Gershwin, Rodgers, spirituals and more. Sykes is a compelling live performer who can breathe vitality into the hoariest entries from the great American songbook.

The ESO's next "real" concert brings another renowned soloist to town: the great clarinetist David Shifrin, probably today's most acclaimed performer on his instrument not named Stolzman. Familiar to Oregon audiences from his leadership of Chamber Music Northwest and his many esteemed recordings and performances, Shifrin will join the orchestra on Thursday, Feb. 19 for the mighty and meandering *Clarinet Concerto* of Carl Nielsen — a real workout for the soloist. Guest conductor Daniel Hege, one of America's most highly regarded young music directors (a finalist for the position at the Oregon Symphony last year; I was impressed by his work with that orchestra), is a Northwesterner with ties to Eugene. It'll be a treat to hear him conduct that most stirring of overtures, Mozart's opener to *The Marriage of Figaro*, and Franz Schubert's imposing *Symphony #9*, a rhythmically charged masterpiece considered so long and difficult that it wasn't performed till a decade after the composer's death. The symphony then became an important influence on the Romantic movement, appealing to fans of Classical masters like Beethoven and Mozart whose work inspired Schubert's grand symphonic swan song.

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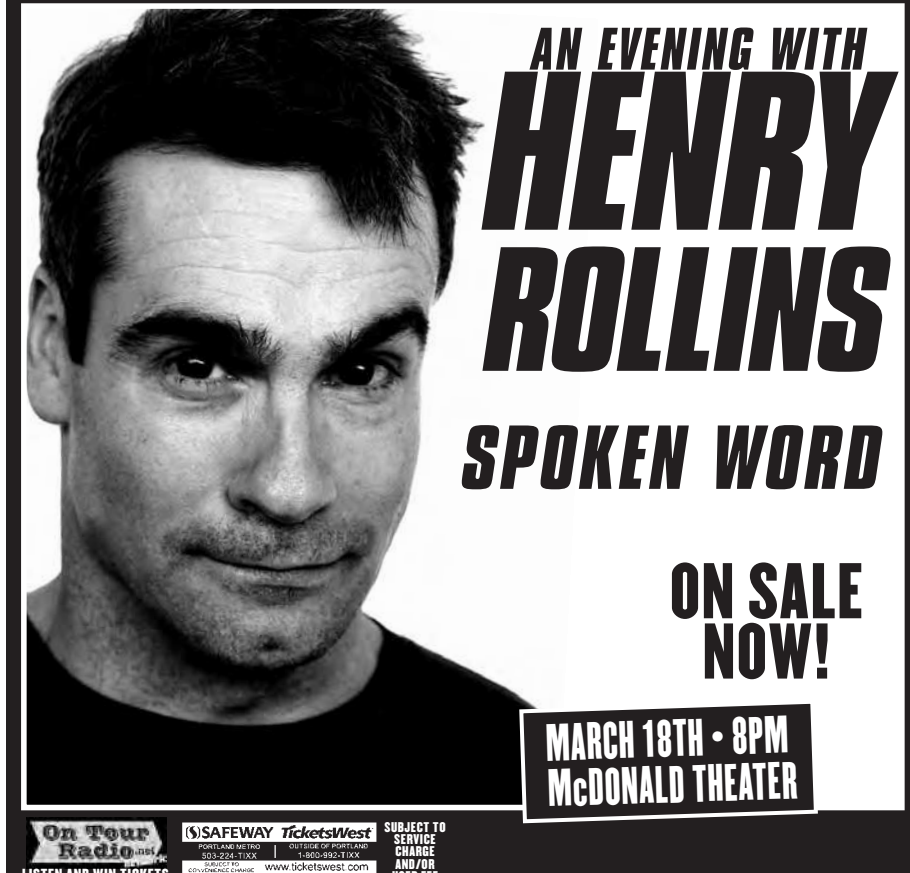


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