

## A Musical Monument

**Tuesday July 6, 8 pm**

Gächinger Kantorei and Festival orchestra. Bach *Mass in B Minor* Kirsten Blase, soprano; Ingeborg Danz, alto; Lothar Odinius, tenor; Sanford Sylvan, bass; Helmuth Rilling, conductor. (Silva).

Some informed observers consider Bach's *B Minor Mass* to represent the pinnacle of Western civilization's artistic achievement. Bach himself seems to have constructed it (using both new and earlier music) as a kind of Platonic ideal of Baroque musical architecture. If it therefore seems more monumental and slightly less moving than the Passions, the Mass is nevertheless a magnificent and beautiful temple of instruments and voices. It's almost an overview of Bach's composing career, and Western sacred music up to his time. Like the *St Matthew Passion*, this concert features both of Rilling's choirs, and you should try to see at least one of these performances. Western music doesn't get any greater than this.

## Country Comforts

**Thursday July 8, 8 pm**

Festival orchestra. *Beethoven Symphony No. 6*, Penderecki *Agnus Dei* and Flute Concerto; Lorna McGhee, flute; Krzysztof Penderecki, conductor (Silva).

This has certainly been a Beethoven biennium in Eugene, what with the Eugene Symphony's complete cycle of the symphonies and performances of his work by the Oregon Mozart Players and others. Beethoven's Pastoral symphony is worth hearing again. An almost impressionist portrait of nature, it beautifully evokes bucolic scenes and feelings — a brook, a country gathering, a storm, and a shepherd's song. Less literal than one of its obvious predecessors, Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* concertos, the contemplative *Sixth Symphony* opened novel avenues for musical expression, but in a much gentler way than Beethoven's other innovations.

The symphony will be conducted by a 20th century musical innovator, Krzysztof Penderecki, who's better known as one of the greatest living composers. Starting out as a radical innovator, Penderecki turned to more conservative idioms a couple of decades ago, and his flute concerto, which will also be performed at this concert, is one of his most accessible, even playful creations, particularly the lovely duet in the pensive slow section. But it doesn't entirely reject the composer's earlier modernism, especially in its percussion textures. The concert also features a string arrangement of the "Agnus Dei" from one of Penderecki's masterpieces, the *Polish Requiem*. Whether your tastes run to musical conservatism or progressivism, this concert should be one of the highlights of the festival.

## Anglo Irish Chords

**Friday July 9, 8 pm**

Intimate Evenings. "Classical and Celtic" works by Purcell, Handel, Bax, Britten and others; Lorna McGhee, flute; Heidi Krutzen, harp; David Harding, viola (Beall).

Yet another unusual program, and another welcome appearance by Lorna McGhee, along with her colleagues on viola and harp. This concert of British music jumps from Baroque masters such as Henry Purcell (represented by dance-oriented hornpipes and airs) and George Frederick Handel (admittedly a German import, but surely Britain's most popular composer during his long sojourn there) to the early 20th century British pastoral composers Arnold Bax (his poignant, Debussy-scented *Elegiac Trio*, written out of the gloom of World War I and a friend's death in the 1916 Irish uprising) and Hamilton Harty (an Irish flavored fantasy evoking Dublin street musicians) to the most acclaimed of latter-day British composers, Benjamin Britten (his "Lachrymae" based on music of John Dowland). Best of all, the show features music by two contemporary British masters: Peter Maxwell Davies (a onetime radical composer just named Master of the Queen's Music, sort of the poet laureate of British music, and represented here by arrangements of dances from his ballet *Caroline Mathilde*, which looks back to 18th century forms) and Gavin Bryars, a marvelous composer whose

works are seldom if ever performed in Eugene. His 1994 "The North Shore" is a beautifully brooding piece that uses the viola's veiled quality to evoke both abstract paintings of James Hugonin and the cool, grey North England coast — just right for Oregon. And since it's the Bach festival, the concert throws in a work by a modern Bach — Jan Bach, a contemporary Illinois composer who contributes a piece based on a Welsh tune.

Naturally, this is an opinionated and limited overview, not a comprehensive assessment. For example, I'm not a great fan of Romantic music, but if you are, try Mendelssohn's *Elijah* or Levin's concert of Romantic piano music. And you might try to attend at least one of the Discovery series lecture-demonstration/performances. Two of Bach's most popular cantatas (140 and 147) are among the gems there, as is Mozart's Requiem. It's an excellent way to learn about music from the inside, from a conductor who understands it as thoroughly as anyone alive.

And those of us still fiscally challenged by the Republican recession can try some of the many free events, such as choral concerts and organ recitals, sprinkled throughout the schedule.

Also, see the separate feature on the George Crumb concerts July 2 (2 pm) and July 3 (10 am and 2 pm) in presented by the Third Angle New Music Ensemble in Beall Hall. ■

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