

A Passionate Celebration

STORIES BY BRETT CAMPBELL

This summer the Oregon Bach Festival takes bold steps on multiple fronts to broaden and update its line-up. This year's festival focuses heavily on contemporary music, adds multicultural acts and focuses on using authentic instruments to play the works of the greats. Add it all up, and there's a lot to get excited about.

Contemporary music — We get two (or three, if you count the open rehearsal) chances to see the first musical masterpiece of this millennium: Osvaldo Golijov's *Passion According to St. Mark* (see story p. 3), performed by the forces he wrote it for. More of today's music is on tap from the world's most acclaimed new music ensemble, the legendary Kronos Quartet, and two rising young new music groups, Imani Winds and FIREWORKS, and modern works appear on other programs.

Multicultural music — The festival continues to expand its gaze beyond dead white European males by bringing back Venezuela's Schola Cantorum of Caracas, the African and Latin American Imani players and Golijov.

Authentic instruments — This year, we get two chances to hear Baroque music played by Philadelphia's Tempesta di Mare ensemble on the instruments and in the manner intended by the composers, which can really bring that music to life.

The standard issue concerts are pretty strong, too. Along with a wealth of Bach's glorious but seldom-heard-elsewhere cantatas, there's a major work by that other Baroque master, George Frederick Handel and — surprise! — It's not the overplayed *Messiah*.

Classical music fans can hear two of Mozart's loveliest works, along with one of the real masterpieces of the choral-orchestral repertoire, Joseph Haydn's monumental *The Creation*. And Romantics and operaholics get a chance to hear a "new" (actually, recently disinterred) opera by 14-year-old Felix Mendelssohn along with one of his liveliest concertos. But it's the festival's steps in new directions that are most welcome.

Just as Osvaldo Golijov's *Passion* infuses a familiar old story with contemporary, multicultural energy, the 35-year-old Oregon Bach Festival itself seems to be finding new passion by broadening its vision.





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