

Stocking Stuffers from Planet Eugene

World music, classical music and other CDs with Eugene ties

With onstage action abating for some sort of pagan solstice celebration, here are some recom-

mended recent CD releases from musicians with local ties. If you're still into buying rather than downloading, why not pick them up at local stores like the Musique Gourmet?

Americanistan, *Live at Luna*

Eugene's favorite world music collective scores again with a scintillating survey of dance music with roots in Turkey, Israel, Egypt and nearby regions. It's best encountered in close proximity to bouncing bellies, but the CD-only experience is one of the most entrancing I heard in 2006.

Cosmas Magaya and Beauler Dyoko, *Afamba Apota* (Dandemutande)

Eugene is a second home to this Zimbabwean mbira duo, whose album of shimmering duets stands with any of the dozens of world music albums I heard this year.

Marin Alsop, Naxos recordings

The controversy over her appointment as music director of the Baltimore Symphony this year may have overshadowed the Eugene Symphony's conductor laureate's increasingly prominent recording career. But stirring releases of orchestral music by Toru Takemitsu, Michael Hersch, Samuel Barber, her mentor Leonard Bernstein and other 20th and 21st century composers (e.g. Philip Glass, John Adams, Michael Torke, Michael Daugherty) with her U.K. ensembles, the Bournemouth Symphony and Royal Scottish National Orchestra, are showing the world what we in Eugene knew a decade ago: Contemporary classical music has no more persuasive advocate than Marin Alsop.

Arnold and Victor Steinhardt, *American Journey* (Naxos)

On another new Naxos CD, the emeritus UO piano prof and his famed violinist sibling offer elegant renditions of music by Bernstein, Copland, Foss and more obscure but still worthy American composers, including Victor's own tango.

Joseph Waters, *Offshore* (Albany)

UO alum Waters, now teaching at San Diego State University, runs the New West Electro Acoustic Music Organization, which sponsors new music concerts there and in Portland and New York and is about to go international. But he's also a skilled, provocative composer of diverse music for acoustic and electronic instruments, and his new disk ranges in influence from Debussy and Messiaen to Cuban rhythms.

Scott Unrein, NonPop (blog)

Recent UO graduate and composer Scott Unrein offers weekly samples of accessible,

innovative new and recent American music at <http://nonpop.scottunrein.org>



The Decemberists *The Crane Wife*

The Decemberists, *The Crane Wife* (Capitol)

Portland's literary art rockers led a parade of Pacific Northwest artists (e.g. M. Ward, Death Cab, Neko Case, etc.) to the forefront of popular music this year, and it's a relief to see that major label success hasn't diffused Colin

Meloy's delicious weirdness or his band's proggish punch. Their wild November 2005 show at the McDonald still rings in my ears.

Craig Einhorn, *Something Real* (Unicorn)

The classically trained guitar virtuoso takes a brave leap into singer-songwriter territory, mixing covers of Lennon, Young, the Dead and more with his own laid-back originals, often regarding his Eugene home ("Zen Man: Spencer Butte," "Oregon Song") and recent Maui sojourn ("Warm Summer Breeze," "Island Style"). Einhorn's singing can't match his guitaristry, but the aloha spirit that breezes through this Hawaiian-influenced disk and solid contributions from a dozen local lights (Dave Burham, Shandi Sinnamon, Rebecca Oswald et al.) will warm up a chilly winter's eve.

Here's a couple of non-local CDs of special appeal:

Eighth Blackbird, *Strange Imaginary Animals* (Cedille); *The Time Gallery* (Naxos)

On still another Naxos disk, the daring Chicago ensemble passionately performs neo-Romantic music by 2004 Pulitzer Prize winning composer Paul Moravec while their other new CD covers exciting, sometimes outrageous contemporary chamber music by Jennifer Higdon, Steve Mackey and other hot new composers.

Andy Palacio, *Watina* (Cumbancha)

This pulsating disk of music from the disappearing Garifuna culture of the Caribbean coast makes a fine stocking stuffer for anyone who relishes the intersection of West African and Latin American music. Cuba is the closest referent, but this music has a spice all its own.



Victor Steinhardt

Finally, let's give a shout out to **Cherry Blossom Productions, Eugene Contemporary Chamber Ensemble** and **DIVA**, three new-ish upstart Eugene well-springs of new sounds and visions that provided some wonderful musical moments over the past year. They give us the great gift of live music of our time and place, all year long. I hope they'll inspire our more established institutions to bring us more music of here and now. **EW**

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