

Two Worlds in Harmony

Saluzzi & Lechner meld jazz and classical, Europe and South America

Quick, name a bandoneon player! Now, name another. Most music lovers can identify the late, great Argentine composer/bandoneonero Astor Piazzolla as the musician who put the expressive sound of the South American button accordion on the world stage; it became the sonic signature of his nuevo tango/jazz/classical fusion. Since Piazzolla's death in 1992, the bandoneon's major innovator has been his protégé **Dino Saluzzi**, whose atmospheric music lacks the overt rhythmic pulse of Piazzolla's fractured dances but more than compensates with its intoxicating moods. Saluzzi has drawn jazz greats such as Tomas Stanko and Charlie Haden to collaborate with him on albums for the innovative ECM record label over the past 25 years. He's also worked with classical musicians; while recording his award-winning 1996 album with the Rosamunde Quartet, he struck up a visionary musical partnership with the ensemble's cellist, **Anja Lechner**. They've just released their first CD, and the resulting U.S. tour — his first — starts right here in Eugene at the Shedd on April 18. The melancholy aura conjured by both instruments permeates the European classical, South American folk and jazz elements in their music, much of which is improvised.

The Shedd also hosts **Carl Woideck's** tribute to Duke Ellington on April 13. The UO music prof, veteran jazz saxophonist and

KLCC jazz radio host has enlisted the cream of Eugene's jazz crop — saxman Steve Owen, trumpeter Tim Clarke, pianist Greg Goebel, bassist Tyler Abbott, drummer Kevin Congleton — to play both familiar ("Mood Indigo") and seldom-heard works by one of America's greatest men of music and his cohort Billy Strayhorn. The Shedd hosts more classic jazz on April 17 when it brings back popular singer-guitarist **John Pizzarelli** to play a tribute to another great American musician: Frank Sinatra. Early in his career, Pizzarelli opened for the blue-eyed one, and his famous guitar-playing father Bucky played on many of the Chairman's classics. No one can match Sinatra's voice or Ellington's orchestra, but these musicians should do the music justice.

Most of the operas you hear about today are 19th century classics or 21st century works by John Adams, Philip Glass, Tan Dun, Jake Heggie and other contemporary composers. At LCC's Performance Hall April 13, 14 and 15, the **UO Opera Ensemble and Orchestra** offer the rare chance to see and hear a trio of worthy mid-century operas composed in between. Some are so short that they're seldom produced — too much work and expense for so little stage time — and yet their very brevity makes them more accessible to the TV generation than your standard three-plus-hour Romantic marathon. Ralph Vaughan Williams's bleak, stormy (the score specifies

a whooshing "sea machine") 1936 setting of the 1904 Irish tragedy *Riders to the Sea*, a play written by his contemporary John Millington Synge, is one of the composer's finest works, clocking in at just over half an hour. *A Hand of Bridge* is even more concise: In under 10 minutes, between discards and trumps, a pair of card-playing couples sing about their lives, their fantasies and what they really think about the others around the table. Samuel Barber's jazzy music playfully underscores his life partner Gian Carlo Menotti's wry, witty 1959 libretto. A clever mélange of satirical pop song, musical theater and operetta, Leonard Bernstein's 1952 *Trouble in Tahiti* superficially recounts a day in the life of a bickering couple (reputedly based on the composer's parents) mired in domestic misery. But, anticipating the musicals of his protégé Stephen Sondheim, it's also a poignant character study in words and music, a potent early excoriation of the vapidness of suburban life — the little white house, the gym, the psychiatrist's office, etc. All three works show how opera can tell compelling stories of contemporary people's lives. On April 25 at Beall Hall, the Eugene Contemporary Chamber Ensemble (a group of UO student performers) will perform a free show of one of the 20th century's most delightful music-theater works: Igor Stravinsky's devilishly sly fable *A Soldier's Tale*, for three actor/dancers and chamber ensemble.



Anja Lechner and Dino Saluzzi

The **Eugene Symphony** finally gets back to contemporary music in its attractive April 19 concert. Arvo Pärt's brief, brooding *Fratres* is, in various arrangements, one of the most performed contemporary orchestral compositions — a modern classic. Fans of John Adams's early works were initially flummoxed by his dream-inspired 1985 *Harmonielehre*; did it repudiate his accessible minimalism, satirize late Romanticism or somehow try to fuse two seemingly incompatible worlds? Judging by the passionate, decidedly unironic performance I saw him conduct with the Los Angeles Philharmonic last year, Adams's grand vision transcends such simplistic notions, but it's one of the rare works that can appeal to both musically conservative and adventurous listeners. The program features one of Joseph Haydn's most glorious works, his *Cello Concerto No. 2*, featuring the deservedly acclaimed young virtuosa Alisa Weilerstein (see page 41 for more). **EW**

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