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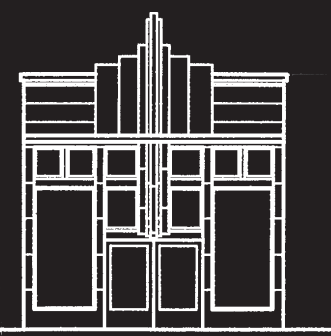
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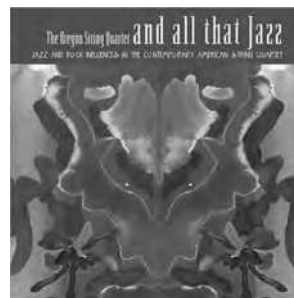
**Summer Sounds**

Homegrown CDs from Oregon

Summer's here and the calendar's relaxed enough to give us a chance to recommend some recent recordings by Northwest composers and performers.

**Oregon String Quartet: *All That Jazz*** (Koch)

For years, the UO faculty musicians who comprise the Oregon String Quartet (violinists Fritz Gearhart and Kathy Lucktenberg, violist Leslie Straka, cellist Steven Pologe) have been performing rhythmically propulsive American music along with the European classical repertoire. That experience shows in their new CD with guest jazz violinist Diane Monroe, featuring contemporary jazzy works for string quartet by Thomas Oboe Lee, David Baker, Albert Ginsky, Gearhart and the UO's Victor Steinhardt. Avoiding the twin pitfalls of slumming (when classically trained musicians struggle to achieve the spontaneity of jazz players) and diluting (when jazzers struggle to improvise on classical themes), the OSQ here finds compelling new, jazzy works by composers who understand classical and pop music. The result is as fun and exciting as anything by better known ensembles such as the Turtle Island Quartet — a treat for classical and jazz fans alike.



*Firebird* leads off this disk of "transformations" of classic music masterpieces, and its clever use of rock and West African rhythms and instruments makes it much the most entertaining track. Former SSO composer-in-residence Bright Sheng's orchestration of one of Brahms' piano intermezzos captures the serenity of the composer's late works. John Harbison over-romanticizes Thelonious Monk's "Ruby My Dear," demonstrating the original composer's wisdom in finding poignancy through wistful understatement. Local listeners will recall the Eugene Symphony's performance of Aaron Kernis's "Musica Celestis," which also appears here along with some less memorable works. Congrats to the SSO and music director Gerard Schwartz for commissioning most of these works and championing contemporary American composers and to the hometown coffee conglomerate for issuing them on its own label.

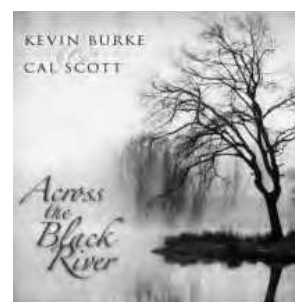
**Phil Hansen, cello / Mika Sunago, piano / Erin Furbee, violin:**

*Bragatissimo: Tango Nuevo* (North Pacific)

Eugene tangueros — and there are plenty of them — aren't the only local music fans who should welcome this gorgeous release of new tangos recorded at a Portland church by three of that city's top contemporary postclassical musicians. The title comes from the name of one of two principal composers on the disk: Jose Bragato was the cellist in Astor Piazzolla's celebrated ensemble, and the latter named the song after him. Bragato is continuing the dazzling reinvention of the tango that made his friend Piazzolla one of the most acclaimed

**David Schiff/Third Angle New Music Ensemble: *Gimpel the Fool*** (Naxos)

Some years before Schiff, a long time music prof at Reed College, moved to Oregon, he set the great Yiddish writer Isaac Bashevis Singer's story about a much-deceived and abused schlemiel as an opera. Schiff's grandfather had been, like the title character, a Jewish baker in Poland and, the composer writes, "truly a good man, no matter what adversities he might encounter." After Schiff received the author's permission (before Singer won the Nobel Prize for Literature), the first performance (in Yiddish, for singers and pianist) took place at the composer's New York synagogue. For later productions, Schiff devised an English language, orchestral version, which was recently recorded by Portland's Third Angle ensemble in a splendid performance. Not surprisingly, Schiff (who also writes engagingly about music for *The Atlantic*, *The Nation*, *The New York Times* and other publications) proves as adept at word-setting as he is at composing. The ebullient score pulses with klezmer, jazz and other popular influences, and the singers' not-so-"operatic" style makes the words easily understandable. Yiddish theater is said to be "half laughing, half crying," and the opera's more somber second act deepens the jaunty comic tone of the first, providing an appropriate musical setting for a rich tale of perseverance — both for the composer (who waited decades for a full recorded realization) and the title character.



composers of the second half of the 20th century. Glowing with nuevo tango's crepuscular combination of passion and melancholy, the CD consists primarily of works composed or arranged by Bragato, including two debut recordings, and his originals complement the quartet of Piazzolla compositions that highlight this haunting album.

**Kevin Burke & Cal Scott: *Across the Black River*** (Loftus)

Three-decade Portland resident Burke (Bothy Band, Patrick Street, etc.), maybe the world's finest Irish fiddler, hooked up with Trail Band guitarist/mandolinist/composer Scott while the latter was scoring a film documentary. The combo clicked so well that, with help from accordionist Johnny B. Connolly, bassist Phil Baker and flutist Michael McGoldrick, they recorded this delectable new CD for Burke's new label. Burke displays his usual elegant Celtic fiddle fireworks, but this pairing also offers a richer, wider-ranging selection of covers and original compositions that draw on Appalachian and other American folk roots. Celtic music fans shouldn't hesitate, but fans of modern acoustic American roots music should give this a try, too. **EW**

**Seattle Symphony: *Echoes*** (HearMusic)  
Schiff's jazzy take on Stravinsky's *The*