

# Compose for Your Friends

Musical artists have always worked together

I am adamantly aggravated by the *EW* article "From the Page to the Stage" (Bach Festival guide, 6/21).

Where I applaud Kyr's *modest* attempt to include contemporary music as part of the Bach Festival, I am frustrated at the ongoing misrepresentation and mysticism surrounding the lives and work habits of composers, a misrepresentation perpetuated by this article.



It is not correct to imply that composers and performers have historically been strangers, and that composers only recently have begun performing their own works. Writer Brett Campbell touches on this in his article but de-emphasizes it to the detriment of clarity. Composers and performers have always consorted together and composers have always performed their own work – Liszt was a well known piano virtuoso in his time, for example – but what about Morton Feldman, Julius Eastman, Steve Reich, Bunita Marcus, Yuji Takahashi and Karlheinz Stockhausen and Phil Glass (does anyone remember Glass' solo piano performances at the Hult back in 1991?).

Going back further, John Cage composed "4'33" for his friend David Tudor to perform, Messiaen composed (and purportedly performed) *Quartet for the End of Time* in a concentration camp during WW II, and Mel Powell, that master of the jazz keyboard, went on to become a guru of serial music and performed much of his own work throughout his life. Morton Subotnick is currently touring the country performing his own electronic works – a practice he has maintained since his early rise in experimental electronics in the '60s.

## Any self-respecting composer doesn't compose for the hell of it but because s/he has been asked and, in some form, paid.

The opening lines of Campbell's article state the composer is "hoping someday someone will play what she writes." In fact, most classical music we know today, and just about anything contemporary one might hear for the first time, has been composed in response to a request, or commission, for some specific purpose and/or a scheduled performance. That is to say, being a composer is a job like any other, and any self-respecting composer doesn't compose for the hell of it but because s/he has been asked and, in some form, paid.

Furthermore, particularly in the world of contemporary music where virtuosity is in high demand, compositions are created with close attention to the particular abilities of specific performers. Guidon Kraemer and Luigi Nono worked together extensively, for example, on several of Nono's works. To let you in on a secret, budding composers throughout time have all been offered the same sage and sound advice by their mentors: "Compose for your friends." They say this because it's a sure-fire way to get a good performance of a new work.

I don't mean to slight Kyr's local achievement, but let's keep it in perspective – the idea of bringing composers and performers together to examine new musical works in a festival/workshop environment is not new: Morton Feldman started the June In Buffalo Festival in 1975 (and it was not the first of its kind), bringing composers and performers from around the world to perform new works – in Buffalo, N.Y., of all places; In the '80s, Morton Subotnick followed suit on the West Coast at CalArts, hosting a contemporary music festival that brought to the Tehachapi Mountains not only Györgi Ligeti, Morton Feldman, John Cage and Iannis Xenakis (to name only a few) but also a host of international press, some of whom stayed and currently form the backbone of Southern California New Music criticism and helped in influence talent the likes of Dorothy Stone, Rand Steiger, Erika Duke, Stephen Mosko, Gloria Chang and a host of others; and let's not forget the very famous Aspen Music Festival where contemporary greats August Reed Thomas met her husband, Bernard Rands.

Lastly, I have to take profound offense at Campbell's reference to Laurie Anderson in this article – to the exclusion of Joan La Barbara, Meredith Monk and Robert Ashley. None of these are obscure names.

To be clear about my point: The rest of the world has been doing for centuries what the article represents as "a new paradigm." We're only just finally getting up to speed here in Eugene.

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## HELMETLESS TODDLERS

It never ceases to amaze me. Once again, I just witnessed a woman on a bike with a kid trailer attached riding in traffic, going north on Willamette and getting into the left-turn lane (the traffic lane) to go west on 29th. The amazing part: She had on a helmet, but the two toddlers in the bike trailer did not! Wake up, please!

Christin Knechtges  
Eugene

## TOO MANY COPS

I was amazed to learn that Eugene's police chief is trying to increase the number of police officers in his force (news story, 6/14). Based upon my observations, Eugene has an overabundance of police officers with little to do.

In the recent case where the teenager had become unruly and the mother called the police for help, she specifically told them not overdo it because this would aggravate her son. Six police cars showed up on the scene. One kid with a kitchen knife against six or more cops who overreacted and shot and killed him.

Last summer a body was found in the Willamette River near the EWEB facilities. On the south side of the river where the body was found were three police cars and two sheriff's cars. On the north side of the river was another police car. Everyone stood around watching while the men from two rescue boats were in the water attending to the man who had drowned.

A couple years ago a canoe overturned in the river and was held against the small island near the footbridge leading to Valley River Center. There was a group of maybe four or five police officers on the footbridge standing around watching as, again, men from the rescue boats were checking out the canoe. Anytime there is an incident of any consequence in Eugene, the response by EPD is overwhelming.

We've had a number of noise complaints in my neighborhood — mostly due to barking dogs. In every case that I have witnessed, at least two police officers have shown up to address the problem.

And of course we know of at least two cops who had plenty of leisure time while on duty in which to visit street ladies and take care of their sexual needs. Maybe a nap was also in order? And of course, there was plenty of time for a number of other cops to listen to complaints from these women and then cover for their buddies by not reporting it. We will never know just how many police officers were involved with abusing these women while on duty, but it was probably more than two.

Wayne Pierce  
Eugene

## SPREAD THE LOVE

OK — I won't argue with the feds wanting to call that bunch of idiot arsonists "eco-terrorists" and tacking a "terrorism" charge on 'em — as long as they're willing to use the "terrorist" label, and prosecute as aggressively, those so-called "right-to-life" thugs who bomb Planned Parenthood clinics and post "hit lists" of doctors who offer abortion services.

Likewise, let's apply the "terrorist" sentencing enhancement to all the violent white-supremacists and the gay bashers. These people are our own homegrown "Taliban" and are a *much* bigger threat to our lives and freedom than a dozen tree-hugging monkey-wrenchers.

Amy Carpenter  
Eugene

## HORRIBLE LETTER

As a volunteer at Greenhill Humane Society for more than three years, I have been involved with every aspect of the kennel. I am outraged by the false accusations and assumptions by Catherine Mish in the June 21 issue of this paper.

Ms. Mish never bothered to communicate with any staff member regarding the five dogs she claims were euthanized. In fact, five dogs were transported to the Oregon Humane Society in Portland on Friday, June 8. If these were the five dogs she was talking about, she easily could have found this information.

Greenhill's Second Chance Program provides dogs who face euthanasia at other shelters (including LCARA)



a chance to find a home at Greenhill. Sometimes, Greenhill also sends dogs to other shelters to meet adopters in other parts of the state. The foster program provides temporary homes to puppies too young for adoption and dogs that need extra socialization or time to recover from a surgical procedure. A dog you see today may go into foster or to another shelter tomorrow. Would Ms. Mish assume they were all euthanized?

No dog is euthanized by mistake; no need for Catherine Mish to shudder. There is *no* problem with the evaluation of dogs at Greenhill. The only thing "horribly wrong here" is that ignorant people make misleading statements put into print by a newspaper.

Had Ms. Mish simply asked a question, her horrible letter would not exist because I know she would have received the open, honest answers that I always receive from Greenhill staff. Now the dominoes are falling — negative attention has been drawn to Greenhill. If that prevents one adoption or causes one donor to change their mind about giving, I think the blame should fall squarely on the shoulders of Catherine Mish.

Dru McCarthy  
Eugene

## WHY BIG HOSPITALS?

I enjoy the situation comedy *Scrubs*. For me the show has an enjoyable combination of slapstick humor and factual information. In one show I remember, the salty Dr. Cox turns to Newbie and says, "You know, Newbie, if you eliminate the emergency room and the maternity ward one out of three people who come to this hospital will die."

I have lived in Eugene for more than 15 years, and in that time the women I have known who have given birth have chosen to use the birthing center instead of the hospital — including a nurse.

I remember when the big plan for Eugene was for nodal development. Why not have a small emergency room in each neighborhood? If a child falls on a playground in Bethel, why do the parents have to drive 20 minutes to a hospital? Wouldn't it be best to