



Twentieth Century Decadence

The spirit of Weill lives on at the Shedd

Of all the great theater music teams the 20th century produced, few if any surpassed the incendiary combination of the great German-born composer Kurt Weill and playwright Bertolt Brecht. The team swaddled Brecht's fierce, often cynical portraits of decadence, class divisions, corruption and more in tuneful yet piquant sounds concocted by Weill, one of the century's greatest composers. If all you know is the prettified versions of "Mack the Knife," check out soprano **Siri Vik** and pianist **Nathalie Fortin**'s concert of music from immortal stage works like *Threepenny Opera*, *The Silver Sea*, *The Lost City of Mahagonny*, *Happy End* and *One Touch of Venus* at the Shedd on May 21. If you already know more than "Mack," you'll be there anyway.

You can hear the spirit of Weill and Brecht's decadent cabaret songs in the music of Portland's **Vagabond Opera**, now embarking on a national tour occasioned by its new CD release. Gypsy neo-cabaret, woozy accordion, swashbuckling horns, cheeky cello, sly Bohemian swagger, belly dancers, tangos, klezmer touches, Ukrainian ballads, opera arias in 11 languages, danceable rhythms from tango to Hot Club of Paris-style swing, strutting brass, costumery, hula hooping fire artists! — Vagabond Opera is what might have happened if pre-war Western and Eastern European pop had conquered American hipster culture instead of guitar rock. The group's spectacle can overshadow its members' classical and even ethnomusicological chops, but a VO show is almost certainly going to be the most fun of that particular evening. And with delightful local tango masters **Mood Area 52** opening their May 22 show at the WOW Hall, it's likely to be the perfect kickoff to summer indulgence.

The next night, more world music-influenced sounds and dance pervade the UO's Agate Hall (18th & Agate) when the **Qadim Ensemble** plies its diverse Middle Eastern sounds. The Bay Area-based group combines Eliyahu Sills's sinuous flute, Rachel Valfer's vocals and oud (Arabic lute), John Villa and Faisal Zedan's various drums and percussion in Arabic, Jewish, Turkish Sufi, Hebrew-Yemenite, Armenian, Greek and Moroccan music. Dedicated to

harmonizing the cultural influences of a region that's often in conflict, the members have studied in Israel, Palestine, Syria, North Africa, India, Australia and beyond, and they'll be joined by guest dancer **Elena Villa** in what promises to be one of the best world music concerts of the year.

African sounds collide with jazz and funk in the danceable groove of **NOMO**, who plays the WOW Hall on May 21. Wielding a battery of homemade percussion based on instruments from around the globe, as well as synths, electric mbira and a powerful horn section, the Detroit/Chicago-based sextet appeals to jazz and world music fans alike, and makes the fusion sound so cohesive that it all feels like a natural, even inevitable blend.

World music fans may also want to check out visiting prof **Steven Feld**, a renowned ethnomusicologist who's presenting a trilogy of films about jazz and other music in Ghana May 18-20 at the UO's McKenzie Hall. He's also giving talks about subjects including, on May 22, Brian Eno and David Byrne's landmark album *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts*.

Some fine homegrown jazz is brewing at local clubs. On May 20, recent UO grad **Hashem Assadullahi** leads his own quintet at Sam Bond's, then joins fellow former UO colleague **Doug Detrick** in his quintet in an excellent double bill. And on May 15, trumpeter **Josh Deutsch** leads a strong quartet featuring Portland piano master Randy Porter, bassist Sam Howard and Jason Palmer at Jo Federigo's. They'll survey the work of some of jazz's greatest composers — Bill Evans, Billy Strayhorn and Kenny Wheeler — plus play original tributes to that trinity.

The UO has some attractive classical shows remaining this month at Beall Hall: Mozart's divine Sinfonia Concertante (featuring faculty soloists violinist Fritz Gearhart and violist Leslie Straka) plus Mahler's first symphony at the **University Symphony's** May 17 concert; some fine contemporary music from the school's top concert bands, the **Oregon Wind Ensemble** and **Symphonic Band** on May 21, featuring the premiere of UO percussion prof **Sean Wagoner's** didgeridu concerto, and more.

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