

# Lady and the Tramp

Oregon Festival of American Music explores the Great American Songbook

**N**o sooner do we close the books on one festival — the most exciting Oregon Bach Festival in recent memory — than the city's other major summer music extravaganza comes upon us. And like the Bach Festival, the Oregon Festival of American Music is also changing its game a bit. Instead of focusing on a composer, this summer's **Too Marvelous for Words** organizes its eight concerts around two of the greatest mid-century performers.

Both Ella Fitzgerald and Frank Sinatra were already among the country's most renowned big band singers by the mid-1950s, yet each faced a decline in popularity when that era wound down. Fitzgerald and Sinatra then issued a series of immortal recordings to spark their artistic revivals. Fitzgerald, for her scattling, restrained that aspect of her art and let the era's greatest song composers (Irving Berlin, Harold Arlen, Rodgers and Hart, Jerome Kern, Cole Porter, Duke Ellington, Johnny Mercer) speak for themselves in her albums devoted entirely to each songwriter's classics. Sinatra, on the other hand, chose to focus his albums on themes.

Artistic director and New York-based clarinet titan Ken Peplowski says OFAM's series won't slavishly follow the original albums' arrangements, though they'll certainly draw on them for inspiration. Instead, performers such as trumpet virtuoso **Byron Stripling**, sax master **Jesse Cloninger**, singers **Shirley Andress**, **Bill Hulings**, **Siri Vik** and more will present modern interpretations of this living tradition. The first two concerts at the Shedd's Jaqua concert hall cover the nonpareil music of George and Ira Gershwin (Tuesday, Aug. 2), Rodgers & Hart and Irving Berlin (both Wednesday, Aug. 3).

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The festival opens Friday, July 29, with OFAM's annual summer musical. This year's choice, *Girl Crazy*, restores the Gershwins' original 1930 version, which was severely revised for later film versions and a 1992 revival/reinvention, *Crazy for You*. The debut production made stars of Ginger Rogers and Ethel Merman (in her Broadway debut). OFAM tracked down the original script by Broadway vets Guy Bolton and John McGowan, whose preposterous plot involves a city slicker gone west to open a dude ranch, but it's not the lightweight story that makes *Girl Crazy* still worth catching today.

Thursday, July 21, the Shedd brings Turtle Island String Quartet founder Irene Sazer's **Real Vocal String Quartet** to town. The violinist/composer and orchestra veteran, who's also played with everyone from Ali Akbar Khan to Ray Charles to Bjork, embraces world music influences from West Africa, Brazil, Appalachia and beyond. Her classically trained partners (violinist Alisa Rose, violist Dina Maccabee and cellist Jessica Ivry) have played in dozens of classical, bluegrass, new music, improv and world music ensembles. Together, the women weave an intimate, inviting tapestry of strings and voices that should appeal to both classical and folk music fans.

Speaking of music and dance, you can see both onstage at Cozmic Pizza this Saturday and next. On July 23, the colorful local Middle Eastern music ensemble

**Americanistan** joins belly dance troupe **Luminessah**, which combines Indian, Turkish, Egyptian, vaudeville, hip hop and other influences. Luminessah returns on July 30 (for those of you jealous of all the OG bohos in Woody Allen's *Midnight in Paris*) when Cozmic celebrates modern Bohemian culture with two more dancers from Corvallis (oriental dancer Siobhan and cabaret dancer Lyanna), along with electro-acoustic gypsy fusion band **La Boheme Reverie**, fingerstyle guitarist **Tony Kaltenberg** and more, including film projections.

On July 24, New York-based avant guitarist **Terrence McManus** brings his striking solo show to the Jazz Station, and fans of adventurous jazz and other experimental music should give it a whirl. Any guitarist who's inspired praise from Bill Frisell, John Abercrombie and John Zorn is worth investigating, particularly when his palette is so varied, ranging from shimmering atmospheres to gnarlier yet entirely compelling ventures. Fans of more traditional modern jazz should head for Sam Bond's on Aug. 3 to catch the **Joe Manis Trio's** sax and guitar-driven sounds.

For an even more intimate experience, check out the latest show in the Eugene Arte Latino series, a house concert featuring the fine Mexican songwriter/guitarist **David Aguilar** at 3050 Whitbeck Blvd. Be sure to call 543-4376 in advance to reserve a space. **EW**



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