

Musical Revivals

Early music and other gifts come to Eugene

Last summer, the UO's early music ensemble **Collegium Musicum** performed a concert of music by composer Willem Ceuleers — a show that proved so successful the members didn't want the experience to end. They pleaded with their mentor, UO music professor **Eric Mentzel**, to find some way to keep this special group of singers together, even as they gradually completed their studies.

Mentzel had been working towards just such an opportunity for years. Before coming to the UO, he'd made his reputation as a singer in some of Europe's most accomplished professional early music groups, including *Sequentia*, the *Huelgas Ensemble* and the *Ferrara Ensemble*. Those pillars of the early music revival explored repertoire from the Baroque, Renaissance and even Medieval periods, breathing life into music that had lain entombed in dusty manuscripts for centuries.

Since returning to the U.S. from Cologne, Mentzel had worked with one of America's foremost early music ensembles, *Boston Camerata*, guest directed similar groups around the world, and started his own occasional group, **Vox Resonat**, whose membership varied depending on what repertoire it was recording.

But unlike in Europe, which has an extensive network of singers trained in early music techniques and repertoire and who often perform in various groups around the continent, professional early music specialists are harder to find in Oregon. So Mentzel reluctantly put *Vox Resonat* in hibernation, while striving to expose the UO's best singers to early music.

The *Collegium Musicum*'s performances of those sounds in the intimate settings of the university's Collier House have long been some of the most engaging on campus, but after last summer's successful Ceuleers concert, Mentzel realized that he'd at last found a group of singers skilled and dedicated enough to revive *Vox Resonat*.

And now you can hear the nine-member group's first public performance Friday, Dec. 9, at Central Lutheran Church. The program consists of settings of the biblical Lamentations of the prophet Jeremiah, which inspired some of the greatest music of the Renaissance, including *Orlandus Lassus*, *Antoine Brumel* and less-well-known composers, including one *Osbert Parsley*.

The concert should provide a refreshing alternative to standard holiday tunes, but beyond that, *Vox Resonat* adds an important new voice to Oregon music. Although some

Portland groups — like *Cantores in Ecclesia*, *In Mulieribus* and *Cappella Romana* — sing various strains of pre-Baroque music, none really specializes in small-ensemble medieval or early Baroque repertoire.

Now *Vox Resonat* can fill that yawning gap. This, in turn, opens the door for collaborations with a number of small and large instrumental ensembles in both Eugene and Portland, including *PBO*, *Oregon Bach Collegium* and other early music instrumental ensembles, potentially enriching the scope of concerts in both cities and beyond.

You can also hear Baroque music for voices Dec. 10-11 at the Hult, when the **Eugene Concert Choir**, **Eugene Vocal Arts Ensemble** and **Oregon Mozart Players**, along with other guests (the great UO a cappella group **On the Rocks** and its founders **Peter and Evynne Hollens**, soprano **Laurel James**, tenor **Brennen Guillory**, gospel singer **Darline Jackson**) team up to present the big classical concert of the season. The show will feature music by J.S. Bach, excerpts from Handel's oratorio *Messiah*, holiday songs and more, including an audience participation singalong. It's the prime musical pick of this holiday season.

Speaking of Baroque music, First United Methodist Church is presenting a series of December organ concerts with programs tied to the Advent and Christmas liturgical calendars. On Dec. 9, Corvallis organist **Craig Hanson** will play music by 18th century Portuguese composer *Carlos Seixas*; on Dec. 16, organist **Barbara Baird** and tenor **Guy Aydelott** will perform carols from around the world; and on Dec. 23, organist **Julia Brown** and — what do you call a woman who plays handbells? Bell handler? Handbelle? Ringer? — **Shira Fadeley** will perform new chorale settings by veteran Baroque keyboard player *Wolfgang Rubsam*, and more.

A jazzier take on carols and other holiday classics happens over at The Shedd Thursday, Dec. 8, and Sunday afternoon, Dec. 11, with singer/actors **Shirley Andress**, **Bill Hulings** and more. It's the same extravaganza The Shedd hosted for several years, then replaced with a fully staged musical. Happily, The Shedd is bringing back the Christmas party and keeping the musical, which this year is *The Sound of Music* (see review this issue), and the hills — and The Shedd — will be alive with it through Dec. 18. These revivals are making this holiday season, musically speaking, the city's richest in years. **ew**

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