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# Cypress Quartet

with Jon Nakamatsu



SUNDAY JAN 22 | 3:00PM

# Salzburg Chamber Soloists



SUNDAY FEB 5 | 3:00PM

# Ebène Quartet



SUNDAY MAR 4 | 5:00PM

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# Tomorrow and tomorrow ...

A pungent preview of Eugene's theater scene BY RICK LEVIN

It's an unwritten rule of the performing arts: When times are tough, go conservative. Our perpetually slumping economy probably won't hurt those big-ticket venues on Broadway, but there can only be one New York, New York; the rest of the arts world is feeling the pinch as touring bands, fringe troupes and community theaters compete for what remains of our discretionary income after we feed and clothe ourselves.

It's a vicious circle — the tighter the budget, the safer you play it, around and around until all sense of adventure and risk is extinguished. Speaking as someone who's averaged a play a week for the past six or seven years, I'd rather see someone botch *The Pillow Man* than sit through *An Enemy of the People* one more time.

This is not an indictment. If anything, it is a request, a spur to theater companies to keep up the good work, and for audiences to keep filling those seats — and then to step it up. Judging by this past year, Eugene audiences show no sign of shying away from staged works. What's needed now is to get a new generation of theatergoers through the door.

To that end, Lord Leebrick Theatre Company (lordleebrick.com) is staging a trio of edgy contemporary plays that should appeal to a broad demographic, from angry young kids to veteran snobs of orthodoxy, and everyone in between. Tom Stoppard's *The Real Thing* (now through Feb. 4) kicks off Leebrick's 20th anniversary season (see review this issue), followed March 2-24 by that classic dystopia, Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*, directed by Bobby Vrtis and produced in collaboration with Eugene Public Library's "The Big Read" literacy program. Leebrick concludes its 2012 season with a dark domestic comedy by America's foremost poet of the down-and-out (and Pulitzer Prize winner), Sam Shepard; directed by Richard Leebrick, *A Lie of the Mind* runs May 11-June 3.

The Very Little Theatre (thevlt.com) commences 2011 with a wild and crazy farce by Steve Martin, *The Underpants*, running now through Jan. 28 (See *EW*, Jan. 12, for an interview with director Johnny Ormsbee). The laughs keep rolling when *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels* hits the stage March 9-31; this Broad-

way hit about a pair of con men working the French Riviera is directed by VLT veteran Chris Pinto. John Cariani's *Almost, Maine*, a play comprising several vignettes set in a mythological town, is directed by Michael P. Watkins and runs May 25-June 9. And get ready for a madcap comedy featuring a stolen stole, Scotland Yard and a bumbling band of middle-aged lodgers when *Breath of Spring*, directed by Nancy Boyett, opens July 27 (through Aug. 11).

Some of the most surprising turns on stage this past season were produced by students. This time around, UO's University Theatre (<http://theatre.uoregon.edu/>) gets timely with Clifford Odets' *Awake & Sing!*, a family drama set during the Great Depression, directed by Damond Morris (Jan. 26-Feb. 4). Next up, and keeping with our theme of the social squeeze, is Arthur Miller's classic tale of paranoia and persecution, *The Crucible*, directed by Theresa May and running March 8-17. Dominic Cooke's adaptation of *Arabian Nights*, directed by Michael Najjar, runs April 20-May 5, and LaDonna Forsgren directs Robert Alexander's *I Ain't Yo' Uncle*, a hip-hop revision of Harriet Beecher Stowe's revolutionary antebellum novel (May 24-June 2).

The crew at Lane Community College's theater department (lanecol.edu/perarts) offers up Joseph Coyne's *Exploding Love*, a comedy about the pyrotechnics of love and divorce (Jan. 26-Feb. 11), and don't miss the annual, one-day-only Shakespeare Showcase on March 17, directed by Judith Roberts.

The folks at Actors Cabaret have been tearing it up lately with a run of risky, raunchy, challenging productions, and 2012 promises more of the same: *The Great American Trailer Park Musical* (see review this issue) runs now through Feb. 18; the controversial and hilariously inappropriate *Sesame Street*-like satire *Avenue Q* plays March 2-April 7; and *Legally Blonde: The Musical* is set for May 4-June 2.

Definitely keep an eye on Trial by Fire TheatreWorks, a fiercely independent and seriously talented fringe troupe that continues to mount innovative and daring work: On tap in the next several months are *Beirut*, *Ruby by the River* and *Balm in Gilead* (for updates, visit [trialbyfiretheatre.org](http://trialbyfiretheatre.org)).

Break a leg.

EW