



# Land of the Free (music)

Music plays while the GOP convenes

**W**ith the Republican convention wrapping up this week, it's a perfect time to celebrate the party's platform philosophy of getting something (yet more tax breaks for zillionaires, or roads, schools and other components of civilized society, say) for (apparently) nothing. Over the next week or so, you can hear some sweet summer music downtown for free.

Two of the shows happen at the long-time home of free afternoon concerts, the Atrium Building. On Sept. 1, the courtyard will ring with Celtic music from fiddler **Linda Danielson** and Celtic harpist **Janet Naylor**, familiar from many appearances at Saturday Market and other bands, including Celtic Tradition with fellow Irish musician Joe Ross. Naylor is also a member of Americanistan and has performed Celtic music in Sheela na Gig and the Renaissance ensemble Terra Nova Consort, while Danielson is well known for accompanying contra dances and English country dancing, plus fiddling in the cowgirl band, the Slow Ponies.

The following week at the Atrium, on Sept. 8, **Cascadia Concert Opera** (CCO) returns for its fourth season, this time presenting an abridged, hourlong version of German composer Otto Nicolai's 1849 opera, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Based on Shakespeare's play, it's probably more familiar from concert performances of its overture than as a fully staged opera (or actually singspiel, which uses spoken dialogue rather than recitative).

Composed of professional Oregon classical players from Eugene, Corvallis and beyond, CCO also performs in alternative venues such as nursing homes, community centers, etc. in Eugene, the Oregon Coast, Portland and elsewhere. They'll be performing a full-length (and ticketed) version of the show in October at Springfield's Wildish Theater, Lane Community College and out of town, but these entertaining condensed performances (stripped down to a few singers playing major roles and a pianist), while making a splendid teaser, also stand on their own.

Yet another free show is on stage at downtown's First United Methodist Church, 13th & Olive, as its worthy **Concerts at First** season begins with a recital by Brazilian pianist **Priscilla Dantas**, a UO student and piano prodigy from an impoverished background in her home country who was discovered by Professor Alexandre Dossin after winning regional and national competitions in Brazil. She came to Oregon as a foreign exchange student at Churchill High.

Of course, unlike the Republicans, the rest of us understand that anything of value must be paid for, so the organizations that sponsor these performances, and the musicians who devote endless hours to preparing these performances, would certainly appreciate any donations (including nonperishable food donations to FOOD for Lane County for the Methodist church series) you might provide to help keep the music flowing.

One splendid new disc arrived just too late to make my last column of CD reviews of new releases by Oregon musicians. The Portland-based choir **Cappella Romana** is not only one of the finest vocal ensembles in the West, it's also renowned for being the world's primary exponent of music from the Byzantine era. The music of the ancient Eastern Roman empire and Greek and Russian Orthodox churches has until recently been relatively neglected in the West but has recently been experiencing a revival, driven by growing interest in world music and chant, and by scholarship (including work by Cappella's England-based director, Portland native Alexander Lingas) that's brought many powerful songs back to circulation after lying in obscurity for centuries.

During its 20th anniversary this year, the group journeyed to its music's homeland and recorded its resonant new album — by far its most diverse yet — in concerts on the island of Paros. The collection includes works by Cretan court musicians Angelos Gregoriou and Manuel Gazes and other 15th and 16th century composers as well as modern choral settings of Byzantine chant, and is well worth the money saved by attending the aforementioned free concerts. **EW**

## EVENTS CALENDAR

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