

FRIENDLY CLASSICS

Reinventing the classical music experience

Classical music's recent struggles have less to do with the music itself than the stuffy, archaic, expensive way it's too often presented in America. High-priced tickets, long concerts (with often pointless intermissions and under-rehearsed repertoire), silly "rules" about when it's OK to applaud (that many of the composers themselves wouldn't have recognized) and a solemn atmosphere with players wearing 19th-century formal attire, endless repetition of a few stale warhorses, a stage presentation that shows disdain for the audience ... it's a wonder anyone under 60 wants to go at all.

Fortunately, classical musicians around the country have been reinventing how and even where classical music is staged. For the past four years, **Chamber Music Amici** has been bringing classical music closer to its community by shaking up the long-calcified format. Instead of two-plus hour endurance contests which overwhelm both the performers' rehearsal and focus capabilities, not to mention the audience's attention, CMA's shows last an hour with no intermission (a most welcome trend I'm seeing elsewhere) — and they're followed by an onstage party with refreshments that allows the enthusiastic audience members to connect with the musicians and with each other. Thanks to a deep pool of experienced core and guest artists, the instrumental combinations change with every concert, keeping the experience fresh for players and listeners alike. Though the ensemble has made a home in Wildish Theater, contributing to downtown Springfield's cultural revival, it also offers outreach programs at public schools and retirement centers, bringing the music to the people instead of forcing them to worship at the temple of classical music. It even sponsors an annual poster art contest (deadline Dec. 5) for local artists.



JED BARAHAL

Crucially, the company keeps ticket prices relatively low (resulting in sold-out concerts that broaden the audience base while keeping it out of debt) and, most importantly, doesn't compromise the quality and integrity of the music itself, relying on experienced players to deliver satisfying performances that appeal to both newbies and experienced listeners.

On Monday, Dec. 3, at the Wildish Theater, Chamber Music Amici violinists Sharon Schuman and Pilar Bradshaw, violists Fritz Gearhart and Holland Phillips, pianist Victor Steinhardt and a special guest, California-born, Portugal-based cellist **Jed Barahal**, perform one of Mozart's delightful violin sonatas, a cello sonata by 20th-century Portuguese composer Luiz Costa, and Max Bruch's string quintet in A minor. They also perform the program on Nov. 30 at Cascade Manor and Dec. 1 at Oakland's MarshAnn Landing winery. On Dec. 5 and 6, the group hosts a pair of house concerts in Eugene featuring Barahal performing maybe the greatest solo instrumental music of all — J.S. Bach's suites for solo cello. Next month, the Amici website

(chambermusicamici.org) will feature a documentary (including interviews with Dave Frohnmayer, Peter DeFazio and others) about *The Emperor's New Clothes*, a collaboration with the Eugene Ballet Company we told you about last year that brought 2,000 students to free performances of composer Peter Schickele's setting of H.C. Andersen's fable. The group has built a teaching curriculum around the story and performance — another way Chamber Music Amici connects classical music to its community.

Several Amici performers hail from UO faculty, past and present, and another group of UO musicians — graduate students who specialize in ancient music history — have formed a new project called **Audeamus** that is revamping early music performance traditions. At 3 pm Dec. 2, at United Lutheran Church, you can hear them perform medieval music from famed manuscripts including the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*, *Codex Calixtinus*, and the *Red Book of Montserrat*.

On the UO campus, there's an abundance of **student chamber music** at the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art on Nov. 30, the annual **Holiday Choral Concert** on Dec. 1 at Beall Concert Hall, the popular **Gospel Choirs** show on Dec. 2. And probably the most interesting concert of the month features the combined **Oregon and University Percussion Ensembles** in music by Bach, Haydn (as you've never heard them), the great Mexican composer Carlos Chavez and rollicking contemporary works by Daniel Levitan and Illinois composer James Romig.

Finally, on Nov. 30, The Shedd opens its final theatrical production of the season: a full production of the 1983 stage adaptation of the great Gene Kelly film, **Singin' in the Rain** — an appropriate theme for December in Oregon. ■



CHAMBER MUSIC AMICI

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NEW HOURS BEGIN NOVEMBER 6th!

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OREGON MOZART PLAYERS

Candlelight Baroque

Vivaldi: *The Four Seasons*
J.S. Bach: *Brandenburg Concerto No. 5*

Sunday, December 9 and Monday, December 10, 7:30 PM
First Christian Church 1166 Oak Street

TICKETS
\$45, \$35, \$20 • \$10 K-12 & College
Phone: (541) 346-4363 Online: www.oregonmozartplayers.org
In person: UO Ticket Office at the Erb Memorial Union
and at the door if not sold out in advance.

Please join us for a lively pre-concert talk presented by Artistic Director Kelly Kuo at 6:45 PM in the chapel, and for cider, cookies and conversation with the musicians following the concert.