



MIRO QUARTET

PHOTO COURTESY NATHAN RUSSELL

## MUSICAL COMFORT, FOOD AND JOY

Get ready for the holidays with Tchaikovsky, Schubert and a little Irving Berlin

“Chestnuts roasting on an open fire ...” If only. The holidays are the season for the comfort of familiarity, and in this holiday music season, that doesn’t just apply to carols. It’s always a treat to hear old faves, but pickings are slim for fans of the new and different. The Dec. 6 **Eugene Symphony** performance at the Hult Center includes three of the best-known works in classical music. Max Bruch’s violin showcase *Scottish Fantasy*, featuring the great fiddler Jennifer Koh; a suite from Tchaikovsky’s ballet *The Nutcracker* — whoops, actually, they’re doing *Swan Lake*, which counts as a surprise, I guess — and the orchestral suite Aaron Copland contrived in 1945 from his American classic ballet score, *Appalachian Spring*. An hour before the show, the **Eugene Ballet** will host a free talk, slide presentation and short performance of *Swan Lake’s* famous *Dance of the Swans*.

Sunday, Dec. 16, the symphony returns to the Hult with a family-friendly show sporting the usual holiday fare — but augmented by a return appearance of the aerialists, acrobats, contortionists, strongmen and other performers from Moscow’s renowned **Cirque de la Symphonie**.

On Saturday night and Sunday afternoon, Dec. 8 and 9, at the Hult Center’s Silva Hall, the **Eugene Concert Choir** sings another popular classic: J.S. Bach’s glorious *Magnificat*, which really lives up to its name. In this era of consumerism and rising income inequality, we can especially welcome the passage “He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty.” The family-friendly show does include a welcome lycanthropic world premiere (“Werewolf Christmas”), plenty of holiday faves and carols (including some of Duke Ellington’s great arrangements from *The Nutcracker*), a pre-show sing-along with the **Oregon Tuba Ensemble**, gospel singer **Darlene Jackson** and instrumental accompaniment by the **Oregon Mozart Players**.

The Oregon Mozart Players will be a busy group. That same evening, plus Dec. 10, they’ll perform a traditional — though non holiday-related — favorite at the Mozart Players’ annual **Candlelight Baroque** concert at First Christian Church, 11th Avenue and Oak Street, always one of the highlights of the classical music season thanks to its intimate atmosphere and accomplished music-making. New artistic director **Kelly Kuo** leads (from the harpsi-

chord, as was done in the Baroque era) a performance of Vivaldi’s (over) familiar but fabulous *Four Seasons* violin concertos, with a different fiddler taking the lead in each. Kuo himself will conduct another Bach classic, his great *Brandenburg Concerto No. 5*, and play the spectacular solo in the middle. And the concert does include a treat for fans of relatively modern music: Henryk Gorecki’s *Three Pieces in Old Style*, which has much the same appeal as his popular *Symphony No. 3*. Besides the candlelit ambience, the show also features cookies, cider and a chance to mingle with the musicians.

Also on Sunday (evening), the UO’s **Chamber Music@Beall** series brings one of the nation’s finest string foursomes, the **Miro Quartet**, to Beall Concert Hall to perform some of the finest chamber music of the 19th century, including yet another familiar classic: Franz Schubert’s *Death and the Maiden*, along with his equally great final quartet, *D. 887*, an expansive work written just before his last and greatest masterpiece, the *String Quintet*.

Music lovers seeking something different yet still spiritual this season can find it at Springfield’s Wildish Theater on Tuesday, Dec. 11, when the great Turkish master musician **Timucun Cevikoglu** will lead the **Mevlevi Order of America** in a performance of beautiful medieval Sufi music that often accompanies the celebrated Sema Ceremony with whirling dervishes. (You can experience the ceremony itself in his performance in Portland on Dec. 14.) I’ve heard Dr. Cevikoglu play the ney flute and frame drum in ensemble performances of this music that the poet Rumi knew, and it’s a memorable musical encounter that appeals to more than just fans of world music.

If you need a mid-day musical break from all the canned mall carols, head over to First Methodist Church (13th Avenue & Olive Street) at noon on Dec. 7, 14 and 21, where either of two veteran Eugene organists, **Julia Brown** or **Barbara Baird**, will play a half hour of music by various composers ancient and recent, including (on Dec. 14), the premiere of a new piece by long time UO composition prof **Hal Owen**. On the Dec. 21, Brown will be joined by harpist **Rachel Petty** in Christmas music.

Finally, to hear an American variation on holiday musical comfort food, check out the **Emerald City Jazz Kings** happily restored annual Christmas show, featuring great 20th-century seasonal songs (“Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas,” “Silver Bells,” “Merry Christmas Baby,” “Baby, It’s Cold Outside,” et al.) by Irving Berlin, Mel Tormé, etc., as well as carols galore. The show was replaced last year by a musical, but this year, you can see both — *Singin’ in the Rain* is also playing at The Shedd. It’s nice to see some new holiday traditions to go with the old. ■

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