

HANDBELLS WILL BE RINGING

Cultivating Oregon musicians, composer James MacMillan and the bells of Kiriku

On July 6, the Oregon Bach Festival chorus sang a sweet surprise 80th birthday gift for retiring founding music director Helmuth Rilling — an “Alleluia” commissioned from the great contemporary Scottish composer James MacMillan, who’s working on a big new commission for the 2016 festival. It’s a treat to see the OBF returning to sparking the creation of new music, as it did for a while every other year, resulting in major works by Arvo Pärt, Osvaldo Golijov and other composers. But why do our major Oregon classical music institutions keep sending American taxpayer dollars (here, a \$25,000 NEA grant) to non-American composers — at the same time they fail to invest in the development of contemporary Oregon music? Granted, OBF has long sponsored a biennial Composers Symposium for students, devoted to the cultivation of new classical music, but it’s not exclusively for Oregonians. By contrast, MacMillan’s success stems from early and continuing financial encouragement from his homeland music institutions — the kind of support that backward-gazing organizations like OBF and others have failed to provide Oregonians.

Before he was 30 years old, the promising young Scot received showcases by at least three of Scotland’s major music festivals (in Edinburgh, Orkney and Glasgow) for his first major pieces and an early commission from the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, which then appointed him its composer in residence, supporting his composing for a decade. MacMillan soon received more commissions and performances from the Royal Scottish National Orchestra and the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, culminating in another commission by another British music festival, the Proms, for which he composed his breakthrough: the searing *Confessions of Isobel Gowdie*. The BBC Philharmonic then made him its composer in residence from 2000 to 2009.

So, thanks in great part to the early support he received from Scottish and British classical music institutions, James MacMillan became an international star and helped revitalize the Scottish classical music scene that had demonstrated such faith in his early promise. Had Oregon institutions shown similar faith in our creative artists back in the 1980s and ’90s, maybe that plum OBF/NEA commission could have gone to an Oregonian rather than a Scot.

That difference in political and artistic leadership may explain why Scotland has succeeded in cultivating its native composers and Oregon hasn’t: Unlike Scotland, shortsighted Oregon political and classical music institutions have failed to invest in our state’s creative artists. If we want Oregon classical music to flourish, every Oregon classical music institution, especially those that receive public funding, should be regularly (not once every few years, as now) performing and commissioning the works of Oregon composers. If our major classical music organizations would only demonstrate a serious commitment to the creative future of the state they’re supposed to serve, they might find the next James MacMillan right here in Oregon.

With the Bach Festival over, Eugene enters its summer musical doldrums, but a few gems remain this month. In a free afternoon performance July 28, at First United Methodist Church (1376 Olive St.), you can experience probably the world’s greatest handbell ensemble when Japan’s Kiriku Handbell Ensemble launches its U.S. tour. Performing classical, jazz, pop and traditional Japanese music, they’re as much fun to watch as to hear: A sextet of white gloved musicians stands behind a table on stage, a line of gleaming gold colored metal bells and music scores arrayed in front of them. Kiriku’s sold-out performances at major concert halls in Japan show that those handbell ensembles, which originated in the 18th century, continue to ring around the world.

The latest installment in the intimate Broadway House concert series this July 20 features the excellent New York-based, Seattle-born, University of Oregon-educated trumpeter Josh Deutsch, whose music has ranged from composed, contemporary classical works to hard-swinging post-bop with his band Pannonia and in his duo with guitarist Nico Soffiato. Deutsch will be joined by one of Eugene’s finest jazzers, Cherry Poppin’ Daddies saxophonist Joe Manis, plus drummer Jason Palmer, pianist Torrey Newhart and bassist Andrea Niemiec. ■



JAMES MACMILLAN

MUSICLISTINGS

CONTINUED

WEDNESDAY 7/24

5TH ST. CORNUCOPIA
Karaoke—9pm

AXE & FIDDLE Miwa Gemini, Paul Quillen—8:30pm; Singer-songwriter, \$5

BLACK FOREST Karaoke—9pm

THE BLIND PIG Karaoke w/Jim Jim—9pm

COWFISH “Hump Night” w/ Connor J, Club Bangers—9pm; n/c

CUTHBERT AMPHITHEATER
Slightly Stoopid, Atmosphere—6:30pm; Hip-hop, reggae, \$37.50/\$42.50

DEXTER LAKE CLUB Acoustic Sessions w/Morin, Sorseth & Steve Ibach—7pm; Acoustic, n/c

DOWNTOWN LOUNGE Bikes, BBQ & Blues Jam—8pm; n/c

GOODFELLA'S Karaoke—9pm; n/c

GRANARY Jazz jam w/Gerry Rempel & Thierry Renoux—7pm; n/c

THE GREEN ROOM Karaoke—9pm; n/c

JERSEY'S (FORM. TANKARD)
Karaoke—8pm

LUCKEY'S The Soft White Sixties, Run Boy Run—10pm; Indie, \$5

MAC'S Wine, Jazz & Variety Show w/Gus Russell & Paul Biondi—6pm; Jazz, blues, n/c

MAX'S Lonesome Randall—7pm; Rock & roll historian, n/c

MULLIGAN'S Open Mic—8:30pm

MUSIC MASTERS Bluegrass Jam—7pm

OAK ST. SPEAKEASY The Lowmen, Dead Hand, Blinder—9pm; Rock, n/c

COUNTY FAIR MUSIC ROUNDUP

It's high time the county fair became hip again. As society changes, the annual celebration of all things rural faces well-documented challenges. But in the age of Etsy and Pinterest, when cross-stitch, pickling and DIY chicken coops are all the rage, the county fair seems to have its finger on the zeitgeist. I mean, where else can you find a table-setting competition?

And on top of it all, the county fair is a great place for touring national acts. Sure, a lot of it is Nashville music from trumped-up *Country Music Television* favorites like **Billy Currington** or **Montgomery Gentry** — two of the acts appearing at this year's Lane County Fair. But the entertainment docket is also a truckload of classic guilty pleasure bands: **38 Special**, **Spin Doctors** and **Cheap Trick**. You can stop playing your dad's tattered vinyl copy of Cheap Trick's *Dream Police* for the umpteenth time; they're playing right here in town — and you can eat a sno-cone while you watch them.

Currington is touring in support of his latest release: *Enjoy Yourself*. The country singer, who made his name with hits like “Pretty Good At Drinkin’ Beer,” is keen on takin’ it easy, so if good ol’ boy pop-country is your bag, that’s just what you’ll get with Currington.

Country music mega-stars Montgomery Gentry made their name with the 1999 country-rock hit “Hillbilly Shoes” — bringing a hard driving, Southern-rock edge to the Nashville formula. Their latest release is appropriately titled *Rebels On The Run*. 38 Special have been at it since the ’70s and, like Montgomery Gentry, put their own twist on southern rock.

The Spin Doctors struck gold with their 1991 album, *Pocketful of Kryptonite* — one of the best-selling records of the decade, filled with gems like “Two Princes” and “Little Miss Can’t Be Wrong.” Defying critics who called them one-hit-wonders, the Spin Doctors have gone on to have a successful touring career, recently riding the wave of their 2013 album *If the River Was Whiskey*. Godfathers of ’70s power-pop, Cheap Trick blends pop, hard rock and punk in a way that’s instantly recognizable and unbelievably influential. Their hits include “I Want You To Want Me,” “Surrender” and “The Flame.”

Spin Doctors play 8 pm Wednesday, July 24; Cheap Trick plays 8 pm Thursday, July 25; Billy Currington performs 8 pm Friday, July 26; 38 Special plays 8 pm

Saturday, July 27; and Montgomery Gentry close the

Fair at 5 pm Sunday, July 27. General admission concert tickets are free with Fair entrance; \$20-\$35 for reserved seating. See atthefair.com for details. — William Kennedy



CHEAP TRICK

PHOTO BY DANNY CLINCH