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# HELLO FROM HOLLYWOOD

OFAM brings you the best of Tinseltown classics

Ya got trouble, my friend, right here,  
I say, trouble right here in River City.

That couplet from Meredith Willson's classic 1957 musical *The Music Man* could apply to just about any city on any river, any time and any place. Even though the action takes place a century ago, there will always be hucksters like Professor Harold Hill who use trumped-up moral outrage to perpetrate boondoggles, whether to "save" the kids from gambling via a swindle involving band instruments and uniforms, or somehow "saving" marriage by forbidding marriage, or even by promising to reduce gridlock or crime by fleecing taxpayers for a Columbia Crossing or West Eugene Parkway or [fill in your favorite].



CLAIRDEE

As with its other theatricals, The Shedd's six-show production, which opens this weekend and runs through Aug. 11, doesn't update the story to the present or extend it to the future or some alternative universe, as you might see in plays or operas in Ashland or Portland. Since The Shedd was co-created by a former history teacher, James Ralph, it's no surprise that its productions, including its **Oregon Festival of American Music (OFAM)**, have always rested on the assumption that we can best understand the classics (especially now that most of us are too young to remember the original incarnations) by experiencing them in close to their original contexts. That is why its takes on those bubbly '20s and '30s musicals, often eclipsed by subsequent innovations, work much better than often contrived attempts at modern relevance. (For that, we need more productions of contemporary works created in our own time and place.) In that sense, they actually resemble the historically informed performances from the Oregon Bach Collegium or Portland Baroque Orchestra that resist anachronistic romanticism and bring us Bach as he intended. This all-new production features some of the usual Shedd vets, like actor-singers **Bill Hulings** and **Shirley Andress**, choreographer **Richard Jessup**, conductor **Robert Ashens**, some newcomers (including 17 young ones) and of course classic tunes like "Seventy-Six Trombones," "Till There Was You" and the rest.

Speaking of OFAM, this weekend, The Shedd simultaneously opens its annual summer festival, which this year continues its valuable exploration of the American songbook with a look at how those classic pre-rock American tunes changed when the country's cultural center of gravity began to shift from New York's urban sophistication toward Hollywood's (ironically) faux-heartland soft focus. As the Aug. 7 vocal concert ("Smile: Hollywood Gems"), featuring **Clairdee** and **Siri Vik** illustrates, some of the same great Tin Pan Alley songwriters created film classics in the years surrounding World War II, like "Blue Moon," "I Only Have Eyes for You" and "Over the Rainbow."

The Shedd's Aug. 8 jazz party ("Body and Soul") brings Clairdee and trumpeter Byron Stripling back to play the hot jazz of the period in a cabaret setting. The Aug. 9 **Bob Cross** concert showcases the hits of one of American music's first real vocal superstars — Bing Crosby — long before he became a sort of icon of the old-fashioned for the rock generation (check out his Shatner-esque "Hey Jude" cover), including "Pennies from Heaven," "I'm an Old Cowhand" and many more. Hollywood's most swinging early icons, Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, danced their way through some of the era's great films to the strains of some of its loveliest music. The Aug. 10 concert ("Shall We Dance") with Vik, **Ken Peplowski** and other OFAM stalwarts includes examples like "A Fine Romance," "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes," "Cheek to Cheek" and other classics from Irving Berlin, the Gershwins, Cole Porter and more.

Hollywood comedies get their due in the Aug. 7 matinee concert featuring tunes from the Marx Brothers, the Bob Hope-Bing Crosby "Road" movies and more, while the Aug. 8 matinee focuses on the music of that timeless classic, *Casablanca*, whose score boasts many more period hits than that song Sam wasn't supposed to play. Aug. 9's matinee concert ("I Like to Sing") focuses on an often-overlooked source of great music: cartoons from Disney, Warner Bros. and more.

Hollywood certainly had its share of flops, musical and cultural, but as this summer's OFAM shows, it offered many musical gems amid the rhinestones. ■