

# TRADITIONAL MEETS CONTEMPORARY

*Mbaqanga, nuevo tango, slack key guitar and "The American South" welcome February*

After joining and then replacing the great Thomas Mapfumo in the Zimbabwean band Wagon Wheels in the late 1970s, **Oliver "Tuku" Mtukudzi** became one of Southern Africa's most popular singers, rasping his uplifting lyrics in his native Shona language, as well as in Ndebele and English, over a bubbling beat of compulsively danceable mbaqanga and other African rhythms and American R&B-influenced grooves. Like Mapfumo, the Eugene-based legend whom he briefly rejoined in a London concert last year, Tuku often draws his guitar patterns from the mbira repertoire of his Shona people, and incorporates those traditional instruments into his band. At the WOW Hall Feb. 2, using mostly acoustic traditional instruments, his band **The Black Spirits** will play songs from his 60-plus albums, including his latest, *Sarawoga*, the first since the untimely 2010 death of his 21-year-old son and musical collaborator Sam in a car crash. But Tuku's easygoing music has always stood for overcoming difficulties (whether corruption, AIDS or repression) by dancing to the music.

World music fans can explore a different blend of traditional and contemporary global music on Feb. 1 when Hawaiian songwriter, bassist and guitarist **Nathan Aweau** and slack key guitarist **Jeff Peterson** bring their **MAMO** duo to The Shedd. The microtonal swooping sound of slack key guitar, adapted by native Hawaiians from the instruments brought by Portuguese sailors centuries ago, makes a soothing antidote to this ice- and fog-bound Oregon winter.

The Shedd brings another veteran Eugene favorite, clarinet master and saxophonist **Ken Peplowski** Feb. 7. Backed by **Ted Rosenthal**, **Tyler Abbot** and **Todd Strait**, Peplowski (The Shedd's jazz adviser) focuses this time on the music of midwestern American music legends Bix Beiderbecke (the 1920s cornetist who helped fuel the Jazz Age) and songwriter Hoagy Carmichael, who merely wrote "Georgia on My Mind," "Stardust" and other immortal classics.

Unfortunately, Feb. 7 is the same night as another highly recommended jazz concert at The Jazz Station, when double Grammy-winning jazz saxophonist **Ernie Watts** joins Seattle's **Marc Seales Trio**, which includes the Portland bassist **Dave Captein** and veteran drummer **Gary Hobbs**, both of whom, like Watts, have played with some of jazz's biggest names.

Back to the cultural confluences, **Chamber Music Amici's** Monday concert at Springfield's Wildish Theater features one of the most appealing examples of classical music and other genres, with the great 20th-century Argentine *nuevo tango* master Astor Piazzolla's *Oblivion* for violin, cello and piano. At first vilified for sully classical music's allegedly pristine central European heritage (or prettying up tango's rough Buenos Aires nightclub roots), Piazzolla eventually won wide acclaim for his brilliant, listener-friendly fusions of South American and European sounds. The program's refreshingly non-standard trio of trios also includes an earlier cultural expansion, Bedrich Smetana's 1855 *Piano Trio*, written, like Mtukudzi's latest album, in the wake of the untimely death of his eldest child. The concert, performed by present and former UO music school stalwarts, concludes with a trio by 19th-century American composer George Templeton Strong, whose final movement *The Village Music Director* musically recounts the results when the title character falls asleep and his mischievous students take advantage of the situation.

A couple of the Amici musicians performed on one of the first recordings (with the Oregon String Quartet) of the gorgeous 1960 Lyric Quartet by the great 20th-century composer William Grant Still, which highlights another chamber music concert Feb. 9 that also demonstrates classical music's ability to absorb once-neglected or even forbidden influences. In a free afternoon performance at the UO's Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art, the school's **Tardis Ensemble** performs "The American South," with music by Still and contemporary African-American composers Frederick Tillis and flutist Valerie Coleman. The show also features contemporary composer Brooke Joyce, whose 2006 *Sorrow Songs* incorporates recorded voices of former slaves. After the concert (part of the museum's exhibit *Emancipating the Past: Kara Walker's Tales of Slavery and Power*), UO musicology instructor **Larry Wayne** will facilitate a discussion of race, identity and the experience of African-American composers in Western classical music. ■

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