



TAIWANESE PIANIST
CHING-YUN HU

ODE TO THE FUTURE

From burgeoning composers to Hapsburgian classics

Classical music institutions usually reach backward, content to be historical museums of music by long-dead composers. It wasn't always thus: Composers like Bach and Beethoven would have been appalled to see how today's orchestras play mostly yesterday's music. Had that notion prevailed in their time, the music of those great composers wouldn't have survived. That retro attitude, a product of the early-mid-20th century, has gradually been changing, and **Eugene Symphony** president **Scott Freck** wants his band to lead the way.

As part of the orchestra's 50th anniversary celebration, which commendably doesn't just look back to past glories but also invests in the future of classical music, the orchestra created the **Oregon Young Composers Project**. With funding from the National Endowment for the Arts and guidance from University of Oregon music grad students (supervised by UO composition professor **Robert Kyr**), five aspiring composers from Oregon high schools — none of whom had formal training in composition or orchestration — created a new piece, *Ode to The Future*, which the Eugene Symphony will perform Thursday, Nov. 17, at the Hult Center's Silva Hall.

The young composers got to hear how Kyr had used a Beethoven theme as a seed for his own piano concerto (commissioned by the **Eugene Symphony Orchestra** and performed last May), and then learned how to come up with their own original variations on Beethoven's famous "Ode to Joy," which climaxes his ninth symphony. They put it all together into a cohesive theme-and-variation piece, "Ode to the Future," with Kyr tying it all up by composing the ending section.

The result: A nine-minute original co-creation in which Beethoven's music is never far away, but still a 21st-century piece by tomorrow's music creators. The concert also features one of the world's celebrated polymath pianists, MacArthur "genius" grantee **Stephen Hough**, as soloist in Beethoven's third piano concerto, and Shostakovich's *Symphony No. 11*, "The Year 1905," written in 1957 (not coincidentally, just months after Soviet tanks had violently repressed Hungarians demonstrating for their freedom from Russian-imposed dictatorship), and commemorating the January 1905 massacre of thousands of unarmed demonstrators by Russian Tsar Nicholas' troops. Like the young composers on the program, Shostakovich also transformed existing music — in this case, revolutionary songs of the period — into an orchestral statement.

Another Oregon classical music institution that's combining past and future is **The Ensemble**. The all-star small vocal group drawn from Portland's top choirs has this year partnered with **Cascadia Composers** to showcase new music by Oregon composers alongside classics. Their Nov. 19 performance at Central Lutheran Church features music by some of Oregon's finest, including Eugene's **Paul Safar**, alongside madrigals written by Carlo Gesualdo. Notorious for murdering his wife and her lover, the Italian nobleman was also one of the most visionary and forward-looking composers of the Late Renaissance, writing hauntingly beautiful music that has influenced composers even down to our own century.

There's more mixing of old and new at the Nov. 20 **Eugene Symphonic Band** concert at the University of Oregon's Beall Concert Hall, featuring music by contemporary composers Frank Ticheli, Mark Camphouse and Joseph Turrin as well as 20th-century composers. Earlier that same afternoon in the same spot, **Chamber Music @ Beall** brings award-winning Taiwanese pianist **Ching-Yun Hu** to play Schubert, Chopin, Scriabin and Rachmaninoff.

Also on Nov. 20 at Junction City's St. Helen's Catholic Church (1350 W. 6th Ave), **Cascadia Concert Opera** joins Astoria's **North Coast Chorale** in operatic music by Gershwin, Sullivan, Bizet, Puccini, Mozart, Verdi and more.

If you crave some *really* old tunes, the **Oregon Bach Collegium's** Nov. 27 concert at United Lutheran Church (22nd and Washington) revives rarely performed music from the grand old 17th- and 18th-century Hapsburg Empire for trombone, voice and organ.

If you want new music from an entirely different tradition, check out **Tom Bergeron Brasil Band's** Friday Nov. 18 concert at The Jazz Station, which features jazz from the musically fecund state of Minas Gerais by some of Brazil's finest composers, including Toninho Horta, Flávio Venturini, João Bosco and the great Milton Nascimento, all curated by the band's Brazilian bassist, **Wagner Trindade**.

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