

GRAMMY-WINNING
SOPRANO ESTELI
GOMEZ

UPDATING TRADITIONS

A new Oregon opera at the Music Today Festival

Portland Opera may have canceled this month's production, but you can see a brand-new, made-in-Oregon opera for free next weekend at the University of Oregon's biennial **Music Today Festival**. Since 1993, this festival has showcased new music by UO composers and leading contemporary composers, often performed by some of the country's top classical musicians.

This year's nine-concert edition, which began last month, enters its final stretch with Friday's concert by **TaiHei Ensemble**, which embraces classical music forms from different world cultures, not just Europe. This show includes music by not just UO students but also Japan's leading living composer, Toshio Hosokawa, Canadian composer Claude Vivier and more.

Saturday's concert by **Eugene Contemporary Chamber Ensemble** includes new music inspired by the poetry of Rilke, the Tarot and the end of the world. On Sunday, May 7, Grammy-winning soprano **Esteli Gomez** premieres new works written for her and a wide range of electronic and acoustic instruments by members of the UO's Composers Forum. The Wednesday, May 10, concert features another accomplished professional, Oregon Symphony clarinetist **James Shields** and friends, in music by former New York Philharmonic composer-in-residence Magnus Lindberg.

The big news is Sunday afternoon's staged-reading premiere of chamber opera *The Banshee* by UO student **Daniel Daly**, which sets an original story involving the legendary Irish mythological character. All shows are free and happen in Aasen-Hull Hall on the University of Oregon campus.

There's more new music from the UO — faculty percussionist and composer **Pius Cheung**'s new string quartet *Flow* — plus a new work with marimba by Canadian composer Alice Ping Yee Ho, at Delgani Quartet's May 16 percussion and strings concert at Temple Beth Israel, 1175 E. 29th Avenue. The show also features one of the most beautiful chamber works ever composed, Ravel's gorgeous *String Quartet*. There's more old classical music on May 6 at Beall Concert Hall when **Oregon Mozart Players** perform works by Prokofiev, Elgar and more.

One of Oregon's leading contemporary classical composers, **Paul Safar**, lives here in Eugene and has composed for Delgani Quartet. His May 13 show with the sublime singer **Nancy Wood**, sax master **Tom Bergeron**, veteran trumpeter **Dave Bender** and bassist **Nathan Waddell** features his arrangements of jazz and rock standards by Thelonious Monk, David Bowie and Tom Waits, plus Safar's new fantasia for tenor sax and piano.

Speaking of Oregon jazz, one of Portland's finest pianists and composers, **Darrell Grant**, who's been a major figure in American jazz since his New York days in the 1980s, has a new band called **MJ New Quartet**, and they're playing the Jazz Station Thursday, May 11.

Another great jazz pianist, **Bill Charlap**, returns to The Shedd for the fifth time this Friday, May 5, with his wonderful trio with **Kenny Washington** and **Peter Washington** celebrating their 20th anniversary. Charlap has worked with many of the greats, including Wynton Marsalis and Tony Bennett. If your tastes swing more toward the gypsy jazz of Django and Stephane, check out the young **Rhythm Future Quartet** May 6 at Tsunami Books, who are updating the enduringly popular guitar-violin led sound for the 21st century.

Speaking of updating traditions, on May 4 The Shedd brings back **Evyne Hollens'** Contemporary Songbook Project to perform music from today's musical theater. Performers include professionals from L.A. and Portland as well as local talent, including a multi-racial chorus of local UO and high school students.

Her show makes a fine complement to **Chico Schwall**'s May 10 Shedd exploration of American songwriting from 19th-century composer William Billings through Stephen Foster, Woody Guthrie, Texas troubadour Townes van Zandt, Portland's Elliott Smith, and up to Carrie Jacobs and more. And if your traditional tastes run more toward the bubbly Cape Breton/Scottish fiddle folk tradition, The Shedd has you covered there, too, with its May 11 show by Boston's Hanneke Cassel Band, featuring the fine folk-classical cellist Mike Block.

Finally, tickets go on sale today, Thursday, May 4, for this summer's **Oregon Bach Festival**, which opens June 29 with a performance of Bach's St. Matthew Passion at the UO's Beall Concert Hall. See OregonBachFestival.com for details. ■

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