

Element Music Festival

(Three Nights, Six Sets)



THE STRING CHEESE INCIDENT

GARAJ MAHAL
(Three Nights, Five Sets)

STEVE KIMOCK
(Two Shows, Three Sets)

August 3 - 6

Snug Lake Amphitheatre - British Columbia, Canada

www.ElementFestival.info

EUGfun!

eugfun.org



Friday, June 30

Fridays at the Park Blocks: Funk Jam

4:30 - 8 pm at the Park Blocks
Grab a bite, a beer and a concert after work.

Wednesday, July 5

Now! Performing Arts presents Spiller

12 - 1:30 pm at the Park Blocks
Four-piece rock band and food trucks for lunch.



Kesey Square Beer Garden!

Every Wednesday & Thursday
from 4-6 pm with music from
the Hi-Fi Street Performance
Series.

pARTy on the Plaza

Thursday, July 6
Eugene Taiko
5:30 - 6:15 pm at the
Hult Center Plaza
Traditional Japanese
drumming.



Event Details at: eugfun.org

MUSIC

BY BRETT CAMPBELL

IS LESS MORE?

Oregon Bach Festival, smaller, relocated

There's less of the Oregon Bach Festival than there used to be. Some of that amounts to addition by subtraction. Gone are the bloated, historically inauthentic on anachronistic modern instruments and tunings that undermined the full beauty of authentic Baroque music.

Also nearly gone are the big concerts in the Hult Center's acoustically challenged Silva Hall, unsuitable for the intimate sound of historically informed performance (HIP), and replaced by more intimate, historically accurate performances in the acoustically pristine Beall Concert Hall, the festival's original home, which more resembles the venues that music was originally composed for than does cavernous Silva.

Consequently, the music sounds better, truer and more in keeping with the current state of baroque performance everywhere else. Less is more. Judged simply on musical grounds, the venue shift is an admirable artistic choice.

But that's not the whole story.

Other shrinkages are more worrisome. In an article published in *Oregon ArtsWatch*, for which I also write and edit, Eugene writer and one-time NPR classical music critic Tom Manoff, who has attended the festival for decades, explains the Bach Festival's current crossroads.

"The most pressing concerns are a decline in ticket sales, a reduction in the number of performances at the city's major concert venue and a substantial cut in the number of performances by professional musicians," Manoff writes. "This year's scaled-back schedule offers fewer choices for patrons and also raises questions about the festival's future."

While I don't necessarily agree with everything in Manoff's valuable story, it's true that compared to the emeritus director Helmuth Rilling era (1970-2013), Eugene's — and Oregon's — most important artistic institutions is at once less costly to produce but in some ways more expensive to attend; more intimate and more authentic, but less well-attended and with fewer choices.

Still, both financially and artistically, the unoriginal old model of bringing classical music stars to Silva likely is unsustainable in the long run, as classical music's core audience ages and the old ways of presenting it grow increasingly dated. Using early music specialists in more intimate settings is HIPper, in more ways than one.

And with more performances by its laudable new Berwick Academy training orchestra for Baroque musicians, the festival is making an even greater investment in education (the University of Oregon institution's primary mission) that will ultimately benefit American music, at the short-term expense of star-studded soloist shows in Silva.

Manoff's constructive story, which has sparked a lively discussion in the comments section and in Eugene and UO music circles, also proposes a number of possible solutions to declining ticket sales, affordability and audience choices, without regressing artistically. Read it, attend the concerts previewed both below and in my next column, and let us — and the festival — know what you think.

Meanwhile, here are some highlights of the festival's first two weeks, all performed in Beall except where noted. Remember that even in its current reduced form, the festival features dozens of events, not just concerts, some of them free or low cost.

St. Matthew Passion June 29-30

Opening night features one of the greatest of all choral orchestral masterpieces — and in the ideal place to hear it, Beall Concert Hall, which will give it a very different sound from what you may have experienced in previous performances at Silva — much more like Bach himself would have recognized.

German Baroque July 1

Charismatic Portland Baroque Orchestra music director Monica Huggett, one of the world's finest historically informed fiddlers, leads performances by J.S. Bach and other composers of his era, including Telemann, Fasch and more, including Bach's own son Wilhelm Friedemann.

Venus & Adonis July 7

John Blow's musical setting of the ancient myth of the goddess and the hunter is the oldest surviving English opera. Matthew Halls also conducts works by two of the finest French Baroque composers, Rebel and Lully.

Hercules July 8

The only big Baroque production in Silva this year features a welcome music drama by the third of the Big Three German Baroque composers, George Frideric Handel. Not quite an opera, its characteristically stirring arias and choruses tell the tale of a hero's downfall.

Protecting Veil July 9

Though this year's festival is disappointingly short on contemporary music, it does feature one of the finest works by one of the three so-called late-20th century "Holy Minimalist" composers, Britain's John Tavener. The Orthodox composer's expansive 1989 cello concerto *The Protecting Veil* was inspired by a 10th-century Byzantine miracle. His fellow English composer Herbert Howells's 1933 *Requiem* is a rarely performed (hereabouts, anyway) Psalm setting of quiet intensity.

[Re]Discovery Series July 5, 10 & 12

Bach's other surviving Passion setting (and masterpiece) is the subject of the combined teaching/performance series rebooted from Rilling's pioneering combination of conductor workshop, lecture demonstration and performance. ■