

NEW MUSIC CATCHES FIRE

Eugene — and the Northwest — are germinating contemporary sounds



**CHICK COREA TRIO
PLAYS THE SHEDD FEB. 6**

In the last few years, Oregon has become a beacon of contemporary classical music, with several new music ensembles and a composers' organization, Cascadia Composers, joining older groups like FearNo-Music and Third Angle.

One example: this Friday's concert at Whirled Pies, 199 W. 8th Avenue, by **ARCO-PDX**. The Amplified Repertory Chamber Orchestra of Portland has revolutionized Northwest music by plugging in and lighting up — that is, playing classical and contemporary music with tastefully amplified, beautifully lit, and fiercely energetic performances that listeners have long expected at rock shows.

What they haven't done until now, though, is play actual rock music. But this

show features not only classical music by Arvo Pärt, Shostakovich and more, but also so-called Darkwave music made famous by Depeche Mode (whose tours still outdraw almost every other rock act) back in the '80s. ARCO is adding synths and vocals to their usual mix of violins, cello, viola and other "classical" instruments, continuing to electrify the Northwest music scene.

Now a brand new festival has arisen to link the burgeoning new music hubs flourishing along the West Coast. Not long after moving to Portland, Cascadia Composer Scott Shell created the **Spontaneous Combustion New Music Festival**, which features performances of today's classical music by performers from both coasts. The name may be a little unfortunate given the fiery events that scorched California and Oregon this summer, but the music and performers are definitely sizzling.

Eugene's superb **Delgani String Quartet** performed in one of the festival's Portland concerts last week, and they're repeating the most dazzling of the pieces they played so brilliantly there at United Lutheran Church, 2230 Washington Street, on Sunday afternoon, Jan. 28, and Tuesday night, Jan. 30. The great late 20th-century avant garde composer Georgy Ligeti's *Métamorphoses Nocturnes* takes off from where his countryman Bartók's magnificent masterpieces left off — but turns into an impish, kaleidoscopic carnival ride (complete with drunken waltz) that had the Portland audience both chuckling and cheering.

The other quartet on the program, Beethoven's op. 131 from 1826, was considered as avant garde in his time as Ligeti's was at its birth in 1954. It's now deservedly regarded as one of the greatest compositions ever written, and one of Beethoven's own personal favorites.

While string quartets seize most of the chamber music spotlight, the terrific young **City of Tomorrow** wind quintet is challenging the string hegemony. They take the stage when the Spontaneous Combustion festival's Eugene series resumes Friday, Feb. 2, at Saraha Nyingma Buddhist Temple, 477 E. 40th Avenue, with music by recent Pulitzer Prize winner Julia Wolfe, Hans Abrahamsen, Esa-Pakka Salonen, and other current composers.

Since winning one of classical music's most prestigious prizes a few years ago (when they were based, appropriately, in the Windy City of Chicago), the Boston/Memphis based group and has gone on to create terrific performances and recordings of mid 20th-century modernist and contemporary music for horn, flute, bassoon, oboe and clarinet. Two members used to be based in Portland, so they also play music by Northwest composers.

The festival's Eugene run concludes at the temple on Saturday, Feb. 3, with cellist Ashley Bathgate playing music by the greatest living composer, Steve Reich, one of the most highly regarded young composers, LA's Andrew Norman, and more. Her daring performances and gift for connecting with audiences have made Bathgate the next big cello star, following the path of her predecessor in New York's Bang on a Can All Stars new music collective, Maya Beiser.

For a different kind of chamber music, hear fusion jazz legend **Chick Corea**'s new trio with drummer Ignacio Berroa and bassist Carlitos Del Puerto at The Shedd for two shows on Feb. 6. The Boston keyboard virtuoso has been blazing trails in jazz since his days in Miles Davis's first electric bands in the late 1960s, scoring 22 Grammys and at least as many different ensembles.

One of choral music's major purveyors of new sounds, **Chanticleer**, sings music from across the centuries at the UO's Beall Hall Feb. 3 as part of the San Francisco ensemble's 40th-anniversary tour. The next day at Central Lutheran Church, 1857 Potter Street, another superb choral group, Portland's world-renowned **Cappella Romana**, brings over the great French conductor Marcel Peres (who helped rescue early music from dry, scholarly performances) to lead one of the great Renaissance masterpieces, Guillaume de Machaut's *Mass of Notre Dame*.

If you're craving not-quite-so older sounds, check **Eugene Symphony**'s concert today, Thursday, Jan. 25, at the Hult Center, with fab pianist (and Northwest fave) **Jon Kimura Parker** soloing in Grieg's mighty Piano Concerto and the band finishing with Schubert's grand ninth symphony. ■

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