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MUSICAL STAYCATION

A plethora of options for diving into springtime

“Spring Can Really Hang You Up the Most” goes the old jazz standard, and that goes double for Oregon, where February often tantalizes us with a brief taste of sunshine — only to taunt us with months of more rain.

This time of year, it’s not just the spring breakers who want to get the heck outta Dodge. Fortunately, for those who can’t afford to fly or roll away for a few weeks, Eugene’s early spring music scene provides some virtual escapes to mostly sunnier climes.

- **Broadway.** You missed out on *Hamilton* tickets in Portland and Seattle — but you can catch the *Hamilton* of the ’70s when **A Chorus Line** arrives next weekend at the Hult Center. The 1976 Pulitzer Prize winner for drama (which also scored nine Tony awards, including Best Musical) was the longest-running show in Broadway history till that time. ACL set the template for many of the most successful musicals that followed. Marvin Hamlisch’s sparkling score, one of the finest ever composed for a musical, still moves the heart, as does the story of 17 veteran dancers auditioning for spots on a Broadway chorus line just before they age out of the business.

- **Scandinavia.** Speaking of Broadway, on March 29, the little bungalow at 911 West Broadway brings back the international award winning Danish jazz singer/composer **Sinne EEG** for the latest Broadway House concert. Her previous two appearances sold out, and this one, which includes L.A. jazz guitar master Larry Koonse, probably will too. To reserve seats, email pbodin@uoregon.edu.

- **Hawaii.** This Thursday, March 22, The Shedd hosts Grammy-winning Hawaiian singer/songwriter **Kalani Pe’a**, whose breezy, rootsy debut album topped the iTunes world music charts. There’s no better music to help us escape Oregon’s deceptive spring chills.

- **New Orleans.** OK, maybe one other musical tradition can better dispel the gloom than sometimes-melancholy-tinged island tunes: New Orleans boogie. And fortunately, one of the finest proponents of that rollicking style, pianist/singer **Marcia Ball** (who’s been based in Austin for many decades but grew up next door to south Louisiana) is coming to The Shedd on Friday, March 24. Not only does she cover soul and R&B classics with authentic groovy style, Ball also writes originals infused with the spicy, multicultural influences that animate New Orleans music.

- **India.** Indian classical music proceeds down the ages via study with the masters. Eugene’s **Doug Scheuerell** and **Ben Kunin** have studied, respectively, tabla and sarod with legends like Ali Akbar Khan and Samir Chatterjee. They’re playing March 24 at Yoga West. Afterwards, head over to Hi-Fi Musical Hall for DJ Prashant’s dance party celebrating India’s Festival of Colors.

- **Italy.** Also on March 24 at Central Lutheran Church (1857 Potter Street), Portland all-star choir **The Ensemble** brings two of its star singers and chamber ensemble to perform a pair of Italian Baroque classics. Giovanni Pergolesi’s famous *Stabat Mater* belongs on any top-ten list of 18th-century sacred music masterpieces, but it’s often performed by much larger forces than it was written for.

Of course, when you strip it down to the basics, those singers better be fantastic, because there’s nowhere to hide. Fortunately, **Catherine van der Salm** and **Laura Beckel Thoreson** also belong on a top ten list, the Northwest’s finest classical singers. The group will also perform a lesser known Italian masterpiece of the period, Giovanni Battista Ferrandini’s dramatic *Il pianto di Maria*, which sounds so much like early Handel that it was long mistakenly attributed to him.

- **Russia.** Not necessarily the most springlike destination, to be sure, but as Putin proved again last week, rules are made to be broken. On March 25 and 27 at United Lutheran Church (22nd Avenue and Washington Street) the fabulous **Delgani String Quartet** plays a pair of chamber classics by Sergei Prokofiev and Alexander Borodin, plus a swinging contemporary piece that the excellent New York violist/composer Ljova (Russian-born Lev Zhurbin) wrote for Brooklyn Rider. *Culai*, named after the founder of the great Gypsy ensemble Taraf de Haïdouks, ripples and sways with Roma dance rhythms.

- **Luna.** Well, technically, the two-sax-and-drum trio **Moon Hooch** hails from Brooklyn (where, like Ljova, they busked in the subway), but their punky jazz/funk definitely sounds rocket propelled. They’re playing Hi-Fi Hall with funk soul band Turkuaz March 27.

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