

SUMMER STANDARDS

OFAM opens up the American Songbook one more time



CHUCK REDD

Every summer, The Shedd's **Oregon Festival of American Music** approaches its two-week series of concerts, films, talks and more from different angles, but its perennial subject — American pop music from the 1920s to just before the rise of rock — somehow remains inexhaustible.

Wednesday's opening sampler ingeniously takes the form of an innovation that emerged toward the end of songbook era and helped extend it: the TV variety show. **Siri Vik** leads a sextet of singers and Torrey Newhart directs a sextet of jazz musicians in songs by Frank Loesser, Stephen Sondheim, Cole Porter, Irving Berlin, George Gershwin, Johnny Mercer and Rodgers and Hart, with an evening of Édith Piaf standards and even an opera aria.

The festival began last week with *Guys and Dolls*, which we told you about last time and which continues through this weekend. Its composer, Loesser, was "one of the very few lyricists who were genuinely funny," wrote Sondheim in *Finishing the Hat*, "able to perform the rare trick of

sounding modestly conversational and brilliantly dexterous at the same time. Most impressive to me are the ideas behind Loesser's songs. The lyrics need not be brilliant in execution; they can ride on their notions alone and bring the house down. Which they did, and still do."

There's more Loesser (sorry) next Thursday afternoon, Aug. 2, in a concert featuring four vocalists and a 10-member band playing some of his greatest hits, including "Let's Get Lost," "Two Sleepy People," "I Believe in You," the recently controversial "Baby It's Cold Outside," and more, including some *Guys and Dolls* standards.

That night, vibes master **Chuck Redd** joins Vik and an ace jazz quintet to play American Songbook standards and others refracted through a jazz prism by mid-century stars like Benny Goodman, Red Norvo, and Lionel Hampton. Vik returns with a quintet (including cello and violin) next Friday, Aug. 3, for the major departure from the American-centric program: mid-century standards made famous by French chanteuse Piaf.

Friday night's jazz concert is based on a book — a famous 1970s collection of jazz arrangements of standards from musicals by Rodgers and Hart, Porter, Jerome Kern and more that inspired the career of longtime Shedd pianist Vicki Brabham. That afternoon's talk by fellow Shedd vet **Ian Whitcomb** also contains a recital of his top ten 20th-century songs — most from the nineteen-teens and '20s, few of which make most other lists of standards. Whitcomb's explanation of his choices should be as entertaining as the music.

Saturday's jazz quartet concert features the greatest of American composers, George Gershwin, including pianist **Ted Rosenthal**'s solo piano arrangement of *Rhapsody in Blue* and jazz versions of Gershwin tunes. Saturday afternoon boasts a community sing-along, and Sunday afternoon a cabaret-style jazz party/jam led by Redd that samples songbook standards from the rest of the fest and more.

The Tuesday, Aug. 7, show is sort of curated by Barbra Streisand and Judy Garland, whose (sometimes fluffy) faves inform the American Songbook program put together by trumpet master **Byron Stripling** and performed by singers Vik and **Julliette Holliday** with octet.

Aug. 8 again departs from the show tunes format with a detour through the blues (in the afternoon), "curated" by Muddy Waters, Bessie Smith and B.B. King and led by Stripling's crack jazz sextet, who return that night in songs identified with New Orleans and its legends Louis Armstrong and Sidney Bechet.

So rich is this year's crop that the festival is repeating four of the concerts Aug. 9-11, presumably to give Eugeneans a second helping, or to make sure those (maybe vacationers) who missed it the first time around get the chance to experience it.

Elsewhere this month, one of Eugene's most fascinating musicians, UO percussion prof **Pius Cheung**, joins award winning master marimbist **Eriko Daimo** in the first Beta Percussion International Institute Aug. 4-10 at the UO's Beall Concert Hall. In next Saturday's show, Aug. 4, the pair plays solo and duo arrangements (for piano, marimbas and more) of music by Bach, Piazzolla, Sibelius and Cheung himself, plus a world premiere by Hirotake Kitakata. Five percussionists play contemporary percussion music by Virginia's Casey Cangelosi and Michigan composer Michael Udow in the Aug. 6 show. We'll tell you about the Aug. 9-10 concerts next time. ■

An advertisement for Capital Cannabis Premium Flower Pre-rolls. It features a box of pre-rolls on the left and a large graphic of a flower on the right. The text "CAPITAL CANNABIS" is at the top, followed by "PREMIUM FLOWER PRE-ROLLS". Below that, it says "AVAILABLE STATEWIDE" and "ASK YOUR LOCAL DISPENSARY". At the bottom, it lists "ORGANIC GROWN", "HAND-WATERED", and "HAND-TRIMMED".

EUGFUN DOWNTOWN



JULY 27

DOWNTOWN VISUAL ARTS FESTIVAL

Eugene celebrates the visual arts with a week-long festival featuring the 20x21 EUG Mural Project's Eugene Walls, Eugene Biennial, the return of the Mayor's Art Show, Salon des Refusés and BRIDGE Exhibitions with innovative, contemporary art installations. Street art, contemporary art and gallery art come together in an event for the entire family.

Details at eugene-or.gov/VAF

AUG 3

JULY 29

EUGENE SUNDAY STREETS & EUG PARADE

🕒 10am to 4pm • Downtown Eugene

It's the City of Eugene's largest event! Enjoy live music, vendors, free bike helmets, bike tune-ups, free fitness classes, yoga classes and so much more all in our City's largest open space - the streets.

Details at eugenesundaystreets.org

AUG 2

NORTHSTAR DANCE COMPANY PARTY ON THE PLAZA



🕒 5:30pm to 6:15pm • Hult Center Plaza

An inter-tribal/contemporary crossover of Native story, song, music and dance with the community.

