



Photo by Jim Ralph

Music for Hard Times

PENNIES FROM HEAVEN, THE TITLE OF THIS YEAR'S OREGON FESTIVAL OF AMERICAN MUSIC, FEATURES SONGS FROM THE GREAT DEPRESSION

By Elizabeth Sotelo

Hard times can result in great art. July 27 to 31 and August 2 through 6, The Shedd Institute will host its 31st Oregon Festival of American Music, *Pennies from Heaven*.

This year's theme is U.S. music from 1929-41—the years of the Great Depression. Despite those hard times, the period was marked by the rise of a variety of specific musical styles, resulting in what is known as the Great American Songbook.

The festival is not making a direct statement about the past and present economic times, says Jim Ralph, executive director of The Shedd. "I call it historic cultural tourism," Ralph says.

Pennies from Heaven celebrates jazz and swing productions from such well-known artists as the Boswell Sisters,

Benny Goodman, Count Basie, Duke Ellington, Artie Shaw, Walter Page, Benny Moten, the Gershwin brothers, Al Jolson and Ethel Merman.

"This is one festival that is focused upon what I call the classic Songbook in historical popular music," Ralph says.

OFAM's music director Chuck Redd is joined by five guest directors, including local singer Shirley Andress, Eugene performer Lynnea Barry, vocalist Siri Vik and jazz artists Peter and Will Anderson. Twenty-four performers also participate in the 10-day event as vocalists or in the band.

Redd directs the opening gala concert, scheduled 7:30 pm July 27, featuring musical examples from the golden age of radio. Tunes include such hits as "Star Dust," "In the Blue of the Night" and "Comes Love." Concerts on July 28 and August 6 pay homage to the Boswell Sisters,

a worldwide sensation in the jazz and swing eras. Benny Goodman, the king of swing, is highlighted July 29 and August 5.

Stage-based music and theater brought from New York to Los Angeles and remade for the movies in the 1930s is the focus July 30 and August 4. Under Redd's direction, Count Basie and Duke Ellington will be celebrated July 31.

The early career of Artie Shaw will be introduced August 2. On August 3, selected jazz and popular standards are scheduled to perform. Look forward to July 28 and August 4 to hear the Kansas City style pioneered by Walter Page and Benny Moten. Socially conscious music presented on the Broadway stage from 1928-40 is July 29 and August 5. The last concert, August 6, centers on 1930s crooners and swing ensembles.

OFAM 2022 also offers sing-alongs, films, talks and dinners. Free community sing-alongs are guided by vocal instructor Amy Adams 1:30 pm, July 27 and August 3. Movies will include such hits as *Pennies from Heaven*, *Swing Time*, *A Damsel in Distress* and *The Wizard of Oz*.

Talk series are open to the public and guided by Ralph, Howard Schumann and others. The nine talks are 5:30 pm July 27-30 and August 2-5 at the Sheffer Recital Hall. Pre-concert meals are offered in Warren Court at 6 pm for \$25.75 (adults) and \$19.75 (children 9 and under). Tickets must be purchased one day in advance. ■

Pennies from Heaven runs July 27-31 and August 2-6 at The Shedd Institute. Tickets start at \$25, with discounts available, at TheShedd.org.

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