

LET US ENTERTAIN YOU

Smith Fine Arts Series returns to Western Oregon University on Friday for 39th season

By Emily Mentzer
The Itemizer-Observer

MONMOUTH — It's that time of year again, when world-class music and dance comes to the Western Oregon University campus, bringing a level of performances not usually offered in Polk County.

The 39th season of the Smith Fine Arts Series offers a lineup of six events, kicking off on Friday with Groove for Thought.

The annual series attracts members of the community, students, staff and faculty. One act, dance troupe BodyVox, scheduled for Jan. 8, 2016, will likely bring Portlanders down to Monmouth, Coker said.

"They tour the world," he said. "Most of their performances are not in Oregon, even though they are Portland based. It's rare to get to see BodyVox in the state."

Coker starts lining up acts for the Smith Fine Arts Series more than a year ahead of time, and it's lucky he does. A couple of his acts would be too expensive if he tried to book them now, he said.

Sean Jones, who wraps up the series on June 3, 2016, is one of those.

"I managed to get him on the series about a year ago," Coker said. "Since then, his career has skyrocketed. I'd never be able to get him

If You Go ...

What: 39th season of the Edgar H. Smith Fine Arts Series.

Where: Western Oregon University, 345 N. Monmouth St., Monmouth.

When: Friday, Oct. 2 (Grove for Thought); Friday, Oct. 9 (3 Leg Torso); Friday, Jan. 9, 2016 (Rainbow Dance Theatre); Friday, Jan. 8, 2016 (BodyVox); Friday, Jan. 15, 2016 (Ten Strings And A Goat Skin); Friday, April 8, 2016 (Sara Gazarek and the American Metropole Orchestra); and Friday, June 3, 2016 (Sean Jones with the Western Hemisphere Orchestra).

Of note: All performances start at 7:30 p.m. and take place in Rice Auditorium on the WOU campus.

Tickets: Season tickets for all seven shows are \$119 for adults and \$52 for students. You can also choose five-show packages (\$99 adults, \$42 students). Individual performance tickets are \$25 in advance and \$29 at the door. Student tickets are \$11 per show.

For more information: 503-838-8333; email to fin-eart@wou.edu; online at www.wou.edu/sfa.



SMITH FINE ARTS SERIES/for the Itemizer-Observer
Groove for Thought will take the stage at Rice Auditorium on Friday at 7:30 p.m. to kick off the 2015-16 Smith Fine Arts Series. The seven singers combine the swinging style of The Manhattan Transfer with the smooth sounds of Take 6.

Groove for Thought, Oct. 2

The seven singers of Groove for Thought have been blowing audiences away for longer than 15 years. Performing classic tunes in a jazz style unlike anything you've ever heard, the group combines the swinging style of The Manhattan Transfer with the smooth sounds of Take 6. Groove for Thought is proud to announce the release of their latest recording, Unnecessary Dissonance.

Together since 2000, Groove for

Thought began as a group of friends that got together weekly in their living rooms to sing a style of music that went above and beyond what was possible in their college jazz choirs.

Many of the members of Groove are experienced music teachers, and all members have ties to the rich jazz education tradition of the Pacific Northwest.

Groove for Thought has toured extensively throughout North America

and Europe, sharing their unique brand of music with school, concert, nightclub, and festival audiences alike. Performance highlights include many of the finest jazz festivals in the United States including the Lionel Hampton Jazz Festival, the University of Northern Colorado/Greeley Jazz Festival, and the Gold Company Invitational.

Groove For Thought hopes to continue to inspire audiences with their fun and uplifting music.



SMITH FINE ARTS SERIES/for the Itemizer-Observer
3 Leg Torso promises an eclectic synthesis of chamber music, tango, klezmer, latin and Roma (Gypsy) music. The group performs Oct. 9 at Rice Auditorium.

3 Leg Torso, Oct. 9

3 Leg Torso formed in 1996 as a violin, cello and accordion trio with the mission of creating original modern chamber music for their unique instrumentation.

The quintet now performs original compositions based on an eclectic synthesis of chamber music, tango, klezmer, latin, and Roma (Gypsy) music.

As principal composers, founding members Béla R. Balogh (violin and trumpet) and Courtney Von Drehle (accordion) provide the core of 3 Leg Torso's sound. They are joined by veteran percussionist/mallet player Gary Irvine, the consummate mallets/percussion of T.J. Arko, and the gentleman of the acoustic bass, Mike Murphy.



SMITH FINE ARTS SERIES/for the Itemizer-Observer
BodyVox, a Portland dance troupe, performs on Jan. 8, 2016. The group seldom performs in Oregon, so local fans will likely flock to Monmouth to see the show.

BodyVox, Jan. 8, 2016

BodyVox, currently in its 17th season, has toured extensively throughout the U.S. as well as Canada, Mexico, Europe, Japan and India. Based in Portland, and founded by Emmy Award-winning choreographers Jamey Hampton and Ashley Roland, BodyVox has developed eight award winning films, 20 evening length shows and three operas, featuring nearly 200 original dances.

The dance troupe has three different productions available year-round and includes outreach in all of its touring.

Ten Strings and a Goat Skin, Jan. 15, 2016

Members of Ten Strings And A Goat Skin, a bilingual band hailing from Prince Edward Island, Canada, are having the time of their lives as a trad/folk/fusion trio.

Weaving the music of the Irish, Acadian, Francophone and Maritime cultures and their original creations with modern and world rhythms, Ten Strings And A Goat Skin have created a fiery, contagious and unique sound that has them in demand and touring extensively throughout Canada, the United States and Europe.

Jesse, Rowen and Caleb highly respect the traditions of the music they play but are riding the wave that is redefining the roots of that music.

Their original material maintains solid traditional elements, but explores rich world flavors and textures. The results have been described as intoxicating and refreshing.



SMITH FINE ARTS SERIES/for the Itemizer-Observer
Ten Strings and a Goat Skin hails from Canada, and will perform at WOU on Jan. 15, 2016.

Sean Jones and the Western Hemisphere Orchestra, June 3, 2016

Music and spirituality have always been fully intertwined in the artistic vision of trumpeter, composer, educator and activist Sean Jones. Singing and performing as a child with the church choir in his hometown of Warren, Ohio, Sean switched from the drums to the trumpet upon his first exposure to Miles Davis at the age of 10.

Heavily involved in education, Sean has recently joined the Berklee College of Music's distinguished faculty as the Chair of the Brass Department. He has also taught at Duquesne University in his adopted hometown of Pittsburgh and at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music, while regularly offering master classes and clinics all around the world. Sean also serves as Artistic Director of both the Pittsburgh and Cleveland Jazz Orchestras and is working toward organizing the various Jazz orchestras all over the country. Sean is current Artist-in-Residence at San Francisco Performances and is a member of The SF JAZZ Collective.



COURTESY OF SMITH FINE ARTS SERIES
Sean Jones will close the series in June.



COURTESY OF SMITH FINE ARTS SERIES
Sara Gazarek will sing April 8, 2016.