



D. Kern Holoman

Marginalia

Season of anniversaries

During the 2008-09 academic year, D. Kern Holoman will lead the UC Davis Symphony in its 50th anniversary season, a year that also marks the university's centennial.

And this also happens to be the 35th anniversary of Holoman's hiring as a UC Davis music professor.

He came as an acting assistant professor in 1973, then joined the faculty on a permanent basis in 1974.

Due to this conjunction of anniversaries, the UC Davis Symphony season will be loaded with large, famous works: Johannes Brahms' Symphony No. 4; Beethoven's Symphony No. 6 ("Pastoral"); Mendelssohn's expansive, Old Testament-based oratorio, "Elijah"; and the Mendelssohn Violin Concerto.

Which leads to further anniversaries.

2009 will be the 200th anniversary of the birth of Mendelssohn (February 1809), and the 125th anniversary of the year Brahms began his

Symphony No. 4 (1884). This season also is the 200th anniversary of the first performance of Beethoven's "Pastoral" Symphony (December 1808).

Jeffrey Thomas will lead the University Chorus in a performance of Handel's oratorio, "Alexander's Feast," on May 31. Local audiences already are familiar with Thomas conducting Handel; each December, he brings his professional ensemble — the American Bach Soloists — to the Mondavi Center to perform "Messiah."

Thomas is hard at work on a book about Handel and "Messiah," and "Alexander's Feast" fits into the research that Thomas has done for that book.

Handel composed "Alexander's Feast" in 1736 — five years before "Messiah" — at a time when his artistic career (and personal finances) were in decline, because of the fading popularity among Londoners of the operas in Italian that Handel had been writing. In contrast, "Alexander's Feast," an oratorio with a libretto in English, was a popular success.

"Alexander's Feast" has the characteristic, magisterial Handel sound, and the story is set in ancient times. But unlike several other Handel oratorios — "Saul," "Samson" and "Solomon," to say nothing of "Messiah" — "Alexander's Feast" isn't drawn from a biblical source. The libretto for "Alexander's Feast" is based in part on a poem by John Dryden, which describes a feast (with abundant music) hosted by Alexander the Great, in the captured Persian city of Persepolis.

The public's warm embrace of "Alexander's Feast" motivated Handel to try his hand at more oratorios, most notably "Israel in Egypt" (1738, still popular in England) and "Messiah" (1742, known worldwide).

— Jeff Hudson



The varied UC Davis music department season will feature a mix of student performances and guest artists: clockwise from top, the UC Davis Concert Band; veteran department conductor D. Kern Holoman, who will lead the UC Davis Symphony during its 50th anniversary season; the visiting Ives Quartet; artist-in-residence Rita Sahai; and Concert Band conductor Pete Nowlen.

COURTESY PHOTOS

Oh, what a beautiful season

'New Music' well represented in ambitious UCD music department schedule

By Jeff Hudson

ENTERPRISE STAFF WRITER

To celebrate its 2008-09 season, the UC Davis music department will hold a Golden Jubilee Gala for the UC Davis Symphony Orchestra on Nov. 23, which marks the ensemble's 50th anniversary.

Jorja Fleezanis — concertmaster of the Minnesota Orchestra, and previously the associate concertmaster of the San Francisco Symphony — will be the featured soloist for that concert, performing Chausson's Poeme for violin and orchestra.

The season also will feature performances of two major oratorios: a May 31 performance of George Frideric Handel's showpiece, "Alexander's Feast," a popular success for Handel in 1736; and a March 8 performance of Felix Mendelssohn's "Elijah," composed in 1846, in part as an homage to Handel's oratorios.

Contemporary and American music also will be featured during the season. The Empyrean Ensemble will present new works by California composers — including San Francisco's Wayne Peterson, New York's Mario Davidovsky and UCD's Pablo Ortiz — spread over concerts taking place throughout the year.

The Ives Quartet, a string quartet "inspired by the unique temperament" of trailblazing composer Charles Ives (1874-1954), will visit on Feb. 1.

A group called Duo X — which combines clarinet, saxophone, electronics and the traditional Japanese reed instrument known as the "sho" — will present music "that braves the least-safe territories of contemporary experimental music and improvisation," according to one press release.

The university's other student-community ensembles — including the Early Music Ensembles, Concert Band, Jazz Band, Gospel Choir, Hindustani Vocal Ensemble, Gamelan Ensemble and Samba School — will present concerts both on and off campus.

And the popular free Thursday noon concert series, typically held in the Music Building or the Mondavi Center Library, will continue weekly during each quarter.

Highlights of the upcoming season include:

Fall

■ Nov. 15 — Faculty pianist Lois Brandwynne and violinist Zina Schiff (a protégé of Jascha Heifetz) will play a recital featuring works by Mozart, Schubert and Robert Bloch.

■ Nov. 16 — The Empyrean Ensemble will present new chamber works by California composers, including past Pulitzer Prize-winner Wayne Peterson.

■ Nov. 23 — UC Davis Symphony Orchestra's 50th anniversary golden jubilee gala will include the Gloria from Beethoven's Missa Solemnis (with the University Chorus); Chausson's Poeme for violin and orchestra, with violinist Jorja Fleezanis; and Brahms' Symphony No. 4, with D. Kern Holoman conducting.

■ Dec. 5 — The University Chorus, conducted by Jeffrey Thomas, will give a holiday concert.

Winter

■ Jan. 23-24 — UC Davis Flute Festival, directed by Tod Brody, will feature two days of concerts.

■ Jan. 25 — The Empyrean Ensemble will present a film by Pablo Ortiz, along with new chamber works by Ortiz, Derek Keller, Aaron Travers and John Zorn, and music by John Philip Sousa and Charles Ives.

■ Feb. 1 — The Ives Quartet, UCD music department artists-in-residence, will present music by Ives and his contemporaries in early 20th century American music, including Amy Beach and Quincy Porter.

■ Feb. 8 — The Causeway Band Festival will feature concert bands from Davis and Sacramento.

■ Feb. 28 — Artist-in-residence Rita Sahai will present Hindustani vocal music with guest tabla and harmonium players.

■ March 8 — Mendelssohn's oratorio, "Elijah," will be presented by the University Chorus, Alumni Chorus and UC Davis Symphony Orchestra; Holoman will conduct.

■ March 15 — The Empyrean Ensemble will present "Hot Off The Press," featuring new chamber works by Mario Davidovsky and others.

Spring

■ April 18 — Duo X will present a program of East/West music for woodwinds and electronics.

■ May 2-10 — A two-week production of Rodgers and Hammerstein's "Oklahoma!" will feature the UC Davis Symphony Orchestra in the pit.

■ May 31 — Handel's "Alexander's Feast" will be performed by the University Chorus; Thomas will conduct.

■ June 2 — The UC Davis Symphony Orchestra will perform Rossini's "Barber of Seville" overture; the Mendelssohn Violin Concerto (John Abdallah, violin); and Beethoven's Symphony No. 6 ("Pastoral"). Holoman will conduct.

Most concerts will take place at the UC Davis Mondavi Center. "Mini-season" subscriptions will give music fans a good deal: a 10 percent discount for any three performances purchased together, and a 15 percent discount for any five performances purchased together.

Tickets are available at the Mondavi Center Ticket Office, (530) 754-2787 or <http://www.mondaviarts.org>. For general information about the music department season, call (530) 752-0948 or visit <http://music.ucdavis.edu>.

— Reach Jeff Hudson at jhudson@davisenterprise.net or (530) 747-8055. Comment on this article at www.davisenterprise.com

UC Davis theater and dance department offerings range from Shakespeare to a classic American musical

By Jeff Hudson

ENTERPRISE STAFF WRITER

The 2008-09 season for the UC Davis department of theater and dance will be highlighted by a visit from noted California playwright Philip Kan Gotanda, who will stage a new script — a production of a bittersweet late romance by Shakespeare — a new work by New York choreographer John Jasperse, and a revival of the musical "Oklahoma!"

Taking the highlights by quarter, we can anticipate...

See THEATER, Page C4