

Duck Tales

An Obelisk for the Ages

BY AARON RAGAN-FORE

ALTHOUGH IT MAY RESEMBLE A MARKER for migrating flocks of ducks, the obelisk constructed last spring on the west quadrangle of the University of Oregon campus is actually the centerpiece of a model horologium, or sundial. The tower, shaped like a miniature Washington Monument, is the result of a cross-campus collaboration of faculty, spanning departments as diverse as history, classics, architecture, physics and mathematics.

“It relates to what many scholars do,” says John Nicols, a history professor and horologium fan. The obelisk, he says, “combines art and scholarship in a dramatic light.”

Students seem to agree that the intersection of aesthetics and academics makes the project compelling. “I’m a big fan of interdisciplinary efforts,” says art history major Cary Watts, who recently completed a thesis paper on the history of the obelisk in ancient architecture. She says she’s pleased that faculty “wanted to erect an object that connected so many disciplines.”

At 35 feet, the UO monument stands only about one-quarter the height of its classical counterpart—a pillar imported to Rome from Egypt by Augustus Caesar, 10 years before the birth of Christ. Nicols and his colleagues will use the pillar to teach students about astronomy, timekeeping and architecture. They hope to soon replace this wooden model with one of more permanent granite or brass.

Visit the horologium’s virtual home at solarium.uoregon.edu or see the real thing on the UO campus.

More than sportsmanship

As the announcer for track meets at Hayward Field, and the former sports anchor of KEZI-TV, Paul Swangard has many ties to his



Illustration by Dan Pegoda

community. None, perhaps, may have the same long-term impact as his role as managing director of the James H. Warsaw Sports Marketing Center in the Lundquist College of Business.

With a four-course concentration for students to augment their MBA or undergraduate business degrees, the Warsaw Center emphasizes the business behind athletics. Coursework on financing a major building project, for example, might focus on the challenges of constructing a new football stadium.

With a starting lineup of marketing clients that includes Nike, the Portland Trail Blazers, the Seattle Seahawks and the U.S. Olympic Committee, the center's rigorous academics are anything but a spoonful of sugar to help the Gatorade go down. "You've got to understand business first," states Swangard, "then you can learn the sports business."

Swangard has a simple explanation why the UO is home to a center ranked among the top five programs of its kind by The Wall Street Journal: Ducks are sports fanatics. "The university has always used sport as a key ingredient in its mission," he explains. "I actually think sport is in the DNA of this place."

A modern balladeer

In the studios of the UO School of Music, harp instructor Laura Zaerr trains future virtuosos . . . even as her own inspiration stems from traditions of the past. Zaerr's passion for playing medieval and Celtic music finds voice in groups such as the Oregon Renaissance Band. But one of her most interesting musical outlets is a family affair.

Laura and her sister Linda Marie, a medievalist professor at Boise State University, have formed a two-woman group exploring the ballads and troubadour tunes of Europe. The sisters strive to recreate the original performance style of Middle English poetry, setting the words recited by Linda Marie to period melodies performed by Laura.

At a recent campus presentation, the Zaerrs brought to life the heroic poem "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight." The performance was sponsored in conjunction with the UO English Department class on oral tradition, but as the enthusiastic applause by the packed audience attested, this is anything but dry scholarship.

Describing the harp, her instrument of choice, Laura Zaerr grows wistful. "The main thing is just the sound," she says. "You play one note and it just resonates and reverberates." Sounds a lot like a metaphor for teaching, doesn't it?

The artistry of Laura Zaerr can be explored at laurazaerr.com. ■



It's your time to shine.



For your beautiful smile,
call 541-683-7500 or visit
ForBeautifulSmiles.com
and let's make your
smile shine.

DANIEL R. VODVARKA D.D.S.
COSMETIC AND GENERAL DENTISTRY
Eugene, Oregon

