Pro Musica Newsletter, Fall 2010

Bowling Green State University, College of Musical Arts

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New York Youth Ensemble Carnegie Hall Premiere

Timothy Stulman

I gained the opportunity to attend composer workshops as part of the MidAmerican Center for Contemporary Music, Pro Musica and the Doctor of Musical Arts at Bowling Green State University. I also benefited from my participation in a wonderful workshop.

I was proud to represent not only BGSU College of Musical Arts, but also the MidAmerican Center for Contemporary Music, Pro Musica and the Doctor of Musical Arts in music education.

Irene Fiesinger

2009 Percussive Arts Society International Convention in Indianapolis

Attending the 2009 Percussive Arts Society International Convention (PASIC) was an extremely educational and enlightening experience. The majority of the conductors attended contained relatively new works, many of which were composed by the performers themselves and others were world premieres. The amount of good literature for solo percussionists is somewhat limited, so it was beneficial and exciting to hear so many new pieces that are attainable for me and my students.

The highlight of this convention was a clinic in which the Louisville Leopard Percussionists performed. This ensemble is comprised of kids between the ages of seven and 12, most of whom start with no prior musical knowledge. I was transfixed. Some of the students could barely see above the keyboards; yet they were playing arrangements of Bach, Michael Jackson and Thelonious Monk. The kids loved the music and its variety; some were even given opportunities to improvise over a blues scale in one piece.

Since most of these young musicians cannot read music, they learn by rote. Verbal phrases are used to help remember the rhythm. In addition to working on their musical skills, they are becoming better leaders and teachers among their peers. The instructors first teach new pieces to the students who learn the quickest; these students then teach the parts to their peers while the teachers work with the students who tend to struggle more. The teachers' initial focus is not on proper technique or learning to read music, but to simply develop a passion for playing music. Once this passion for making music has been cemented, then note-reading is introduced.

The directors were an inspiration to me, having taught their students more than just a love for music, but also necessary life skills such as leadership, patience, teamwork and pride in one's accomplishments. If more students are exposed to music at an early age, they will work and sound better! We attended inspiring concerts every night, including African Drumming, Imani Winds and the Michael Wilson Quartet.

All of the conductors had unique strengths and weaknesses, different backgrounds and experiences, and as Brooke Creswell, the creator of the workshop, intended, there was tremendous synergy between the composers, conductors, musicians and even the staff. I benefited from my participation in this wonderful workshop.

I was proud to represent not only BGSU College of Musical Arts, but also the MidAmerican Center for Contemporary Music, Pro Musica and the Doctor of Musical Arts in music education.

Your passion and generosity have driven our work. Let us review.

- Membership = 300 members. This is the greatest number of members in Pro Musica history.
- Travel Grant Expenditures = $42,408. This too is the greatest amount of funds spent for student travel.
- Travel Grant Awards = 130. This is the highest number ever and exceeds school year 2006/2007, when 111 grants were given.

These facts represent your generous, unwavering support for BGSU music students. Thank you. Together we have made a special memory during this centennial celebration. We look forward to sharing a new journey with each of you this fall.

Sincerely,

Karol Spencer
It is with great sadness that as the ProMusician was going to print, the college learned of Margit’s passing on August 13. She will be greatly missed by all whose lives she touched with her zest for life, her generosity and her kindness.

Margit Heskett in her sculpture garden

Margit Heskett

The principles behind noblesse oblige, inherited from her father, have given purpose to Margit Heskett’s life; a person with special gifts or significant wealth is compelled to share their riches with others. Celebrating her 90th birthday on July 17, Margit taught dance at BGSU from 1965-1979 and ethnic studies in the 80s. She was a founding member of Pro Musica and has endowed a Distinguished Professorship in the College’s Department of Music Performance Studies. Born in Czechoslovakia and immigrating to New York City in 1938, she describes herself as not being conventional in anything. In her book, Margit’s Red Book: Reflections of a Bohemian Butterfly, she writes: “My love of music was fostered by my parents. Music was always an integral part of my life. Besides Czech and German folk music, which I adored, I was exposed to classical music from grade school on.”

Margit’s governness, Oushko, took her to dancing class as a young girl. She described with fond memories the beautiful green costume with bows on her shoulders. She felt like a butterfly , but was heartbroken when Oushko, her governess, left her at the age of 7.

She was a single child whose father was a retired architectural engineer, she was “daddy’s girl,” but still extremely independent. Margit began architecture study at Columbia University and then transferred to complete her undergraduate degree at Wittenberg University in Springfield, Ohio. In 1964, she earned the Masters of Art from Columbia.

Margit is particularly fond of Verona instead of Venice. As an adventure was ahead at every turn, Margit took a train to Rimini and saw Juliet’s balcony. Terrible at directions, she once walked in the streets until she found the Athletes Village at the 1972 Munich Olympic Games, the same year the Palestinian terrorists murdered 11 Israeli athletes.

Margit states it best herself in her book: “The more I have thought about my life, the more precious it has become. As I reviewed all that I have accomplished, it became clear to me that my dance continues (and it has been a very long time since anyone thought I looked like an elephant), made possible by loving family, devoted friends, and talented colleagues. I have learned that even when one seems to perform solo, supporters are always just steps away, watching from the wings.”

Happy 90th Birthday Margit!

Happy 90th Birthday Margit! Pro Musica Officers

Katherine Kilburn

Seasons Festival Conductor’s Workshop in Yakima, Wash.

On October 9, 2009, I flew to Yakima, Wash., for the Seasons Festival and as one of seven conductors chosen for the Seasons Festival Conductors Workshop held in the Composer’s Workshop. The master conducting teachers were Donald Thulean and Brooke Creswell, with additional commentary from Robert Frankenberry, a respected and experienced professional in the field of conducting, performing and teaching.

The one-week workshop culminated in a performance with the Seasons Festival Chamber Orchestra, a professional orchestra consisting of musicians from Yakima and from as far away as Seattle. For the concert each conductor prepared an orchestral work composed by one of the composition fellows. Master teachers for the composers’ workshop included Daron Hagen, Chris Brubeck, Gilda Lyons and Michael Wimberly.

During the week, we began each day with movement classes lead by Donald Thulean, helping us to connect with our center and allowing us to focus our energy before stepping on the podium. Issues of balance, connection with sound, strength, tension versus intention were discussed. The concert went a long way towards helping us win the competition.

My participation in this competition has allowed me to consider more career paths where I can combine expressing and performing music on my own instrument as well as my passion for teaching. That realization alone may prove to be far more valuable than any title or award money ever could.

I traveled to Albuquerque to perform in the National Finals of the Music Teachers National Association Young Artist Brass Competition, having already won the state and division levels. My pianist and colleague, Sara Young arrived in New Mexico four days prior to the competition, allowing us time to acclimate to the altitude.

I gave a lecture to composition students at Brigham Young University–Hawaii. I was honored and pleased to be their guest and talked about hearing from several students after the lecture Wednesday afternoon the trio and I gave a presentation at the festival. The audience consisted primarily of bass players from age 10 to adult. I spoke about my ideas behind the composition 7 Million Results and Terra Nova performed excerpts. I also led a short group improvisation illustrating the difference between free and structured improvisation. The younger bassists were particularly enthusiastic and responsive.

Terra Nova performed 7 Million Results Wednesday night at the Fresh Café and was well received by the audience of approximately 130 people. After the concert I received many compliments as well as specific questions about the piece. More importantly, I met several bass players that are interested in future collaborative projects with me! Specifically, I met and talked with Alex Hannah, a bass player in the Detroit Symphony, and we discussed the possibility of working together on a piece in the near future. I am grateful to Pro Musica for their generous assistance.

Benjamin Taylor

Premiere of 7 Million Results at the Sixth Biennial International Contrabass Festival in Honolulu

Terra Nova, a trio specializing in new music, is based in Hawaii and consists of Mike Gorman (contrabass), Steve Draun (percussion) and Vicki Gorman (sextan). Terra Nova commissioned me to write a piece it could premiere at the 6th Biennial Hawaii Contrabass Festival in March 2010. After my arrival in Hawaii, I drove to the northern part of Oahu to give a lecture to composition students at Brigham Young University–Hawaii. I was honored and pleased to be their guest and enjoyed talking with several students after the lecture. Wednesday afternoon the trio and I gave a presentation at the festival. The audience consisted primarily of bass players from age 10 to adult. I spoke about my ideas behind the composition 7 Million Results and Terra Nova performed excerpts. I also led a short group improvisation illustrating the difference between free and structured improvisation. The younger bassists were particularly enthusiastic and responsive.

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John Gruber

Music Teachers National Association Young Artist Brass Competition in Albuquerque, N.M.

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Copyright 2009 Pro Musica
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Terra Nova premiered 7 Million Results Wednesday night at the Fresh Café and was well received by the audience of approximately 100 people. After the concert I received many compliments as well as specific questions about the piece. More importantly, I met several bass players that are interested in future collaborative projects with me! Specifically, I met and talked with Alex Hannah, a bass player in the Detroit Symphony, and we discussed the possibility of working together on a piece in the near future. I am grateful to Pro Musica for their generous assistance.

Student Essays

John Gruber

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My participation in this competition has allowed me to consider more career paths where I can combine expressing and performing music on my own instrument as well as my passion for teaching. That realization alone may prove to be far more valuable than any title or award money ever could.
Irene Fiesinger
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The highlight of this convention was a clinic in which the Louisville Leopard Percussionists performed. This ensemble is comprised of kids between the ages of seven and 12, most of whom start with no prior musical knowledge. I was transfixed. Some of the students could barely see above the keyboards, yet they were playing arrangements of Bach, Michael Jackson and Thelonious Monk. The kids loved the music and its variety; some were even given opportunities to improvise over a blues scale in one piece.

Since most of these young musicians cannot read music, they learn by rote. Verbal phrases are used to help remember the rhythm. In addition to working on their musical skills, they are becoming better leaders and teachers among their peers. The instructors first teach new pieces to the students who learn the quickest; these students then teach the parts to their peers while the teachers work with the students who tend to struggle more. The teachers’ initial focus is not on proper technique or learning to read music, but to simply develop a passion for playing music. Once this passion for making music has been cemented, then note-reading is introduced.

The directors were an inspiration to me, having taught their students more than just a love for music, but also necessary life skills such as leadership, patience, teamwork and pride in one’s accomplishments. If more students are exposed to music at an early age, I think more students would participate in music programs throughout high school and continue to grow personally as well. I would love to establish a similar program in my own hometown or, at the very least, to give students the opportunity to improvise and continue to grow personally as well.

Timothy Stulman
New York Youth Ensemble Carnegie Hall Premiere

Jessica Terban, Jacqueline Townsend and Sarah Ludwig
Midwest Band and Orchestra Conference

Christopher Nasch, Ben Borrin and Yiye Bu
2010 Music Teacher’s National Association Conference

I was proud to represent not only BGSU College of Musical Arts, but also the MidAmerican Center for Contemporary Music, Pro Musica and the Doctor of Musical Arts in Contemporary Music degree program. The feedback I received from the teachers, other participants, musicians and composers was encouraging and gave me confidence in my professional goals. I would like to thank Pro Musica for making this workshop possible, and I would also like to thank the many people who donate their time, energy and funds to make Pro Musica such an extraordinary resource for young musicians pursuing their professional goals.