

UPCOMING CONFERENCES

2006 Region VII Conference
University of New Mexico
In conjunction with the John Donald
Robb Composers Symposium
April 2–5, 2006
Host: Christopher Shultis
E-mail: cshultis@unm.edu

2006 National Conference
San Antonio, TX
September 13-17, 2006
Co-located Conference with the
College Music Society

2006 National Student Conference
Arizona State University
October 2006 (Dates TBA)
Submission Deadline: TBA
Host: Glenn Hackbarth
E-mail: hackbarth@asu.edu

2006 Region IV Conference
Middle Tennessee State University
October 26–28, 2006
Submission Deadline: TBA
Host: Paul D. Osterfield
E-mail: osterfie@mtsu.edu

2006 Region II Conference
Hamilton College, Clinton, NY
November 10–11, 2006
Submission Deadline: TBA
Host: Sam Pellman
E-mail: spellman@hamilton.edu

2007 Region V Conference
Clarke College, Dubuque, IA
February 22–24, 2007
Submission Deadline: TBA
Host: Amy Dunker
E-mail: amy.dunker@clarke.edu

2005 SCI Region V Conference

Christopher Gable

Butler University
Indianapolis, Indiana
November 11–13
co-hosted by
Frank Felice and Michael Schelle

During the second weekend of November, 2005, approximately 48 composers from all across the country converged on the campus of Butler University for the SCI Midwest Chapter (Region V) Conference. After nine full-length concerts in three days, we were all exhausted, but thrilled by the experience and warmed by the generosity of the conference's co-hosts, Frank Felice and Michael Schelle. There was networking, socializing, rehearsing, and reuniting, all during informal meetings at the on-campus Starbucks, or local restaurants, as well as at the off-campus Broad Ripple Brew Pub. I always find it amazing how small the world of composition is, and am happy to meet someone who went to school with so-and-so, who also studied with this person, and who knows your best friend's sister. In any event, we were blessed by unseasonably warm weather and clear skies, which showed off the beautiful campus and pleasant residential setting in a great light.



Overall, the performances were outstanding, with special kudos to the students and faculty of Butler, who obviously invested a great deal of time into committed performances of often quite challenging music. Hats off in particular to Michael Schelle, who not only helped organize many of the

An Interview with Steven Stucky

Ralph S. Kendrick

RSK: *Congratulations on winning the Pulitzer Prize this year! How does one feel after winning such a distinguished award? Were you surprised by it, and has your life been much different since?*

SS: I can't pretend that I'm not pleased that this year my number came up. It's not that I think that objectively my piece was the "best" one, of course, but a committee of respected peers found the piece worth discussing in the company of some of the other terrific pieces American composers gave us over the past year. That's enough to encourage a composer to think he hasn't been wasting his time, and to inspire him to keep trying to do his best. And it's hard to be cynical about seeing your name inked in on the junior end of a list that contains your boyhood heroes (Aaron Copland! Charles Ives!).

I never expected to be singled out this year, not after various controversies surrounding the music prize in recent years, and not so soon after the criteria were broadened to reach beyond what we used to call "classical" music (a move that I seconded in principle, even while wondering how it might work in practice). Like many others, I thought that Pulitzer juries would feel compelled over the next few years to test the new boundaries—and perhaps they will. You can't really be prepared for the avalanche of attention that descends the minute the prizes are announced. There is a nice irony, though, in the fact that—since the Pulitzers are really about journalism and thus obsessively covered by journalists—the glare of the media machine alights once every spring on exotica like contemporary music and contemporary poetry. It may be a sort of accident that we composers get swept into the limelight once a year along with the journalists, but it sure can't hurt the cause we all believe in.

The Society of Composers, Inc.

The Society of Composers, Inc. is a professional society dedicated to the promotion of composition, performance, understanding and dissemination of new and contemporary music. Members include composers and performers both in and outside of academia interested in addressing concerns for national and regional support of compositional activities. The organizational body of the Society is comprised of a National Council, co-chairs who represent regional activities, and the Executive Committee.

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Daniel Adams



Daniel Adams's composition *Khromas Diabolus* for trombone solo and percussion ensemble was recently released on a compact disk entitled "Greetings From..." produced and distributed by the National Association of Composers, USA.

Greg Bartholomew



On February 15, 2006 Bethany Lutheran Church in Seattle, Nancy Kern directed voci femmine in a performance of Bartholomew's *A Rainy Day*. She also

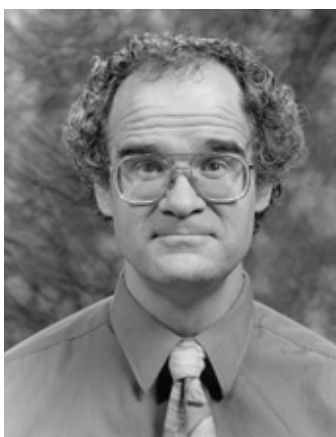
directed the Choir of Christ Episcopal Church in performances of Bartholomew's *Beati Quorum Via* and *The Tree*. On the same concert, the Quartet from Cornish College of the Arts—soprano Vanessa Rose Ament, flutist Samantha Bosch, cellist Tracy Hagen, and pianist Jessica Andrews—performed Bartholomew's *On the Trunks of Strong Trees*.

Jenni Brandon



Jenni Brandon's *The Wildflower Trio* for oboe, bassoon, and piano was performed on the New Directions Concert series on Sunday, February 26th at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Bakersfield, California. This series, part of the Bakersfield Symphony's concert season, is directed by Howard Quilling.

Tom Flaherty



Cellist Roger Lebow and marimba player David Johnson premiered Tom Flaherty's *Cellorimbian Flights* on the Monday Evening Concert series at the Los Angeles County Museum on January 9, 2006.

"Members"...continued on page 4

The SCI Newsletter

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SCION

John Bilotta, *Editor*

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Jerry Hui

Jerry Hui's "Three Facets of Love," was premiered on concerts by Sospiro, a graduate vocal chamber group in University of Oregon, in Eugene, Oregon on February 25th, 2006, and received a repeat performance on February 28th, 2006. It is a collection of three settings adapted from the Song of Solomon, in Latin, written for SATB double quartet, or large choir (divided into half choirs, with two optional solo SATB quartets).

Timothy Polashek



Timothy Polashek recently recorded a new album of his music, titled "Wood and Wire" (Albany Records, 2006), which includes the following compositions: *Porcupine Quest* (2002), *Piano Sonata* (2005), *Garden Rain* (2005), *Kite Sonata for Two Pianos* (2003), *A Few Moments Inside* (2005), and *Sockets Nocturne* (2004).

Tim's recent performances include *Sonata for Tape* at the Fifteenth Annual Florida Electroacoustic Music Festival at the University of Florida School of Music (April 2006) and the Society for Electro-Acoustic Music in the United States 2006 National Conference and Festival at the University of Oregon School of Music (coming in March 2006); *Hot-Tempered Arpeggios* at Spark Festival of Electronic Music and Art 2006 (Minneapolis, Feb. 25, 2006); *Stanzas for Alto Saxophone and Interac-*

tive Music System at New York University's Composers Forum Concert Series, Black Box Theater (New York City, Feb. 14, 2006); *Minute Percussion* at the 24th Concordia University Electroacoustics Festival (Montreal, Canada, Oct. 12, 2005); and *A Miniature Odyssey* and *Minute Percussion* on the Radio Broadcast, Martian Gardens, Massachusetts Public Radio (July 10, 2005).

His recent articles include "Beyond Babble: A Text-Generation Method and Computer Program for Composing Text, Music and Poetry," *Leonardo Music Journal*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (2005) and "An Integrated Technique for Transitional Synthesis Between Non-Pitched and Pitched Timbres," *Journal SEAMUS* (The Society for Electro-Acoustic Music in the United States), Vol. 18, No. 2 (2005).

Tim is a music professor and director of the electronic music center at Lehman College in Bronx, NY.

Daniel Powers



Daniel Powers' new CD, titled "Spring and Fall," is now available. This CD presents a selection of songs and (mostly) shorter chamber works, many of which have been heard, and in some cases premiered, at various SCI conferences over the past several years. Included are 10 songs, including "O You Whom I Often and Silently Come," which was the winner of the 2003 Ned Rorem Award for Song Composition, and was premiered at the

2002 Region VII conference at Northern Arizona University.

Powers' wife, Martha (who plays on every piece on the CD except one) takes center stage in *3 short piano pieces*, two of which she performed at the 2005 National Conference at Central Oklahoma University. Also heard are *Prelude and Bacchanal* for violin, horn, and piano, *Reading Issa* for viola and harp, and *In Silence Under Many A Star* for clarinet, violin, and piano (heard at the 2001 Region VI conference at the University of Kansas).

More information is available at www.swanswingpress.com, and the CD may be purchased online at CD Baby.

David Smooke

The music of faculty composer David Smooke, including a world premier and a Chicago premier, was presented at the Merit School of Music in Chicago on February 25, 2006. The concert featured some of the best performers of new music in Chicago, including pianist Amy Dissanayake, mezzo-soprano Julia Bentley, violinist Stefan Hersh, oboist Pat Morehead, members of the Fifth House Ensemble, and members of the Merit School of Music Faculty.

Pianist Amy Dissanayake, featured soloist for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's MusicNOW series, performed the *Requests*, which was written for her and recently recorded for CD release. She also made her conducting debut with the Chicago premier of *Stillness and Occurrence*, a composition for eleven players. Famed mezzo-soprano Julia Bentley gave the world premier of the song cycle *Anna Liffey*, which was composed for her. Violinist Stefan Hersh, founder of the Callisto Ensemble, was featured in *Perfect Mate*. Oboist Pat Morehead, founder of CUBE and member of the Merit School of Music faculty, played *Taste Sensation*, a CUBE commission written for Dr. Morehead in 2003, along with Merit School faculty member, cellist Herine Coetzee.

Other works included: *Dance Music* for electric guitar and flute, performed by Merit faculty member Tom Clippert and Jennifer Clippert, flutist for the Quintet Attacca; and *Castles in the Sky* for toy piano and two violas.

Composer David Smooke has taught music composition and theory at the Merit School of Music since 2000 and also teaches music theory and history at Roosevelt University. In his compositions, he seeks to create a pitch universe where the common ground between spectralist and tonal consonances is highlighted and juxtaposed with experimental compositional techniques. Natural phenomena serve as an inspiration, reflected in melodies reminiscent of bird calls and in pulsing yet unpredictable rhythms similar to tidal wave patterns. Moments of pure and sometimes static sonic exploration coalesce into long sinuous melodies or funk-style grooves.

The compositions of David Smooke have earned numerous awards including a MacDowell Colony Residency Fellowship and the William Schuman Prize for Most Outstanding Score from the BMI composer awards. His works have been featured on festivals nationally and have been played by ensembles including the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, the Pacifica String Quartet, eighth blackbird, the California E.A.R. Unit, the International Contemporary Ensemble, Syzygy (the faculty new music ensemble of Rice University), the University of Iowa New Music Ensemble, and the U.N.C. Greensboro Faculty String Quartet. He holds a B.A. from the University of Pennsylvania and an M.M. from the Peabody Conservatory and is nearing completion of his Ph.D. from the University of Chicago.

Terry Vosbein

Vosbein's composition *Village Scenes* for alto saxophone and piano was performed at Weill Hall at Carnegie Hall on February 6, 2006, featuring James Bunte on alto saxophone and David Riley on piano.

Jeffrey Hass Named 26th Annual Recipient of the ASCAP Foundation Rudolf Nissim Prize

Paul Richards Receives Special Distinction

Tyler White Receives Honorable Mention

The ASCAP Foundation announced that Jeffrey Hass as the recipient of the 26th Annual ASCAP Foundation Rudolf Nissim Prize. The Prize was awarded for *Symphony* for Orchestra with Electronics, a 27-minute work in four movements, selected from amongst nearly 250 submissions. Hass will receive a prize of \$5,000.

Jeffrey Hass is currently a Professor of Composition at Indiana University, Bloomington, where he serves as the Director of the Center for Electronic and Computer Music (CECM), having previously taught music theory and composition on the faculties of Rutgers University and the Interlochen Center of the Arts. His compositions have been premiered by the Louisville Orchestra, Memphis Symphony, and the Concordia Chamber Orchestra and have had performances at Lincoln Center and at national music conferences of the Society of Composers, International Computer Music Conference, International Double Reed Society, SEAMUS, and the College Music Society. Hass received a Bachelor of Music from Vassar College, a Master of Music from Rutgers University and a Doctorate from Indiana University. He studied composition with Richard Wilson, Robert Moevs, Frederick Fox, Donald Erb and Bernhard Heiden. His band and orchestral works have won several national competitions and are published by MMB Music Publishers and Ludwig Music Publishers. Recordings of his works have been released by Indiana University Press, Albany Records, Society for Electroacoustic Music in the US (SEAMUS), Arizona University Recordings, and RIAX Records.

The Nissim Jury recognized Paul Richards (Gainesville, FL) for Special Distinction for Music for *Midsummer*, a 13-minute orchestral work.

The Jury also awarded Tyler White (Lincoln, NE) Honorable Mention for *Mystic Trumpeter* (Symphony No.2), for Baritone and Orchestra with text by Walt Whitman, duration 22 minutes.

The judges for this year's Nissim Award were: Michael Morgan, Music Director of the Oakland East Bay Symphony, Artistic Director of the Oakland Youth Orchestra, Music Director of the Sacramento Philharmonic, and Artistic Director of Festival Opera in Walnut Creek; Gil Rose, Artistic Director of the Boston Modern Orchestra Project (BMOP); and Diane Wittry, Music Director of the Allentown Symphony Orchestra and the Norwalk Symphony Orchestra.

The Nissim Prize is funded by The ASCAP Foundation through a bequest of the late Dr. Rudolf Nissim, former head of ASCAP's International Department. Nissim joined the ASCAP staff immediately after emigrating to the United States from Austria in 1940.

The Nissim competition is open to all ASCAP members who compose concert works requiring a conductor that have not been professionally premiered. To encourage the professional premiere of the prize-winning work, ASCAP makes supplementary funds available.

Alert!

If you teach in a department or school of music, please ensure that concert programs presented by your university are being collected and sent to both ASCAP and BMI on a regular basis. Each agency, which relies on these programs, extracts performance information and determines the amount of royalty credited to each composer based on a sample rate.

logistics of the conference, but also conducted the Jordan College of Fine Arts Composers Orchestra on three performances of SCI composers' works.

Aesthetically, a wide variety of styles were exhibited, sometimes in the same piece. The only quibble I have as an audience member is that a majority of the compositions seemed to have a rather slow tempo. Many pieces fell into the 40-72 bpm range. Not that that is a problem *per se* (my piece was also rather slow!), but while listening to so many concerts in a short amount of time, one craved more rhythmic and emotional variety.

The conference kicked off on Friday morning in the newly renovated Eidson-Duckwall Recital Hall (nicknamed "The Duck"), a building that previously housed the University's chapel. It now has a bright and resonant acoustic, thanks to the happy absence of carpet on the floor. Matthew Lanier, a Master's student at Butler, got things off to a majestic start with his composition for violin and piano, *Kalte FüÙe*. Moon in Blue Shadows for flute and piano by Bruce Reiprich showed off the coloristic and impressionistic talents of both composer and performer (Jennifer Wittig, flute). Soprano Mary Anne Scott really woke us up with her finely controlled and huge instrument, on two songs by Michael Hegedus. The *Alleluia* was especially exhilarating. Next was my own chamber piece, *The Soldier's Angel*, ably performed by Michael Schelle and the JCFA Composers Orchestra. It is a companion piece to Stravinsky's *The Soldier's Tale*, using the same instrumentation. After intermission, clarinetist Erin Smith masterfully performed Ryan Jespersen's moody, meditative *scenes from a solitary beach*. British rock group Radiohead made an appearance at the conference...OK, not really, but Michelle McQuade Dewhirst's trio for horn, flute and percussion deconstructs the band's song "2+2=5." This piece nicely captured the angst and flavor of the original song and was expertly played by a Butler faculty trio. It was also one of the only pieces at the

conference that openly referred to this country's current political climate. Finishing off this opening concert in hilariously swanky style was Michael Schelle's *Gimme Shelter*, written for and performed by Butler faculty Larry Shapiro and Catherine Bringerud. The piece is basically a diptych: the A section being "harsh, jagged, rough," followed by a "bright and beautiful" B section. Part of the beauty for me was that Mr. Shapiro, after disappearing during a piano vamp, reentered the stage and performed the second part in a smoking jacket.

The second concert featured more chamber music, beginning with Biljana Bozinovska playing her own solo cello piece, *Nostalgia*. Haunting, beautiful melodies inspired by folk music from her native country, Macedonia. Next up was guitarist Zane Merritt, who performed his own technically demanding *Three Preludes* for guitar. He is a member of the "visiting" New Music Ensemble from Clarke College in Dubuque, Iowa, led by Amy Dunker. More about them below. Following Mr. Merritt was James Romig's *Piano Sonata*, confidently and expertly performed (from memory!) by Ashlee Mack. I must confess that although I am not a huge fan of serial composition, this piece blew me away. It was totally captivating and always interesting from beginning to end. The latter half of the recital was made up of music by Daniel Perttu, Arthur Gottschalk, and Stacey Barelos. Mr. Perttu's piece, *Tonospheres*, for violin and cello, made excellent use of double stops in both instruments to create a string-quartet-like sound with just two people. Mr. Gottschalk's *Beat* is a setting of four of Jack Kerouac's Choruses from the author's *Mexico City Blues* for soprano and piano. In this performance, Nancy Davis Booth gave a very "hip" reading of the songs, which have a 60s ethos. Rounding out the second concert was Stacey Barelos's *Phobias* for piano, which portrayed both the humorous and serious sides of phobias. One movement was pure theater, consisting only of Ms. Barelos shifting nervously from side to side on the piano bench; this was called

"Levodextrophobia (the fear of things to the left and right sides of the body).

Concert III featured electronic and electroacoustic music. Andrew Houchins was well-represented with *Tuba Concrete*, performed by Todd Kaufmann and recorded tuba sounds. Mr. Houchins at times drastically changed the tuba sound into all sorts of permutations, including a section that sounded similar to trumpets. *Perijove*, for DVD and computer-derived sounds, was a true multi-sensory experience. Beautiful images of water accompanied the music. The first half ended with Neil Thorncock's *From Huygens' Workshop*, for toy piano (amplified) and recorded sounds, most of which were derived from the toy piano. I found it interesting that the overall effect was not unlike a gamelan sound. Unfortunately, because Mr. Thorncock sat on the floor of the stage, many of us in the audience could not see him behind the projection equipment.

The second half of this concert began with my favorite electronic piece of the conference, Jason Bolte's *Friction*, which is a *musique concrete* piece entirely made up of sounds of things rubbing against one another. *Hard-Boiled Wonderland* was another DVD + audio collaboration, with music by Hsiao-Lan Wang, and images by Daniel Zajicek. Both image and sound were quite abstract, but still managed to convey a kind of whimsy and ironic sense of humor. The final piece of this concert was *Interaction* for piano and electronic sounds by Mei-Fang Lin, performed by Kate Boyd. This stood out from the rest of the pieces on this program because the composer deliberately did not use piano-derived sounds for the electronic part. In fact the piece was more about the search for similarities between the two contrasting mediums.

After dinner on our own, the SCI conference moved off campus to Northminster Presbyterian Church, for an evening of more chamber music and choral music. *Residual Air* by Ross Feller for solo baritone saxophone included prescribed

gestures and movements for the performer, Jon Flodder. The expectations that Mr. Feller sets up are, later in the piece, confounded by non-“natural” gestures and movements that don’t seem to make sense. But that is the point, and it made for a very interesting experience. *The Child in the Hole* by William Vollinger was chillingly and piercingly performed by Tammany Shankle (mezzo soprano) and Kristin Moreno (clarinet). This dark piece is based on a Holocaust story of a Polish boy who hid in a hole for three years, and survived. Virtuoso tubist Todd Kaufmann returned for the second time that day to perform five of Allen Molineaux’s *Etudes of “E”xpression*. All the etudes are based on human qualities and moods beginning with the letter “E”: from exuberant to envy. Charles Savage’s *Mad Rush to the End* did just that, winningly performed by David Elliot on clarinet, and Jon Flodder on tenor saxophone. Next up was the choral material, well-prepared and performed by the Butler University Chorale under the direction of Eric Stark. Host Frank Felice’s *The Word Made Flesh* was a beautiful, memorable canon in the tradition of William Billings. Frank LaRocca’s luminescent *Exaudi* was a highlight of this concert for me. Wonderful 12-part writing, with challenging half-step motion creating an incredibly rich harmonic palette. *Dei Angelus* was Michael Schelle’s contribution to the choral concert. This piece for organ and choir was sweet and powerful, and was written in honor of the birth of Mr. Schelle’s son (now 21).



The next day saw three concerts and a paper session. The first took place in the music building proper, in the nicely equipped large rehearsal hall (not the official name). This was the most brief of all the concerts, and it began with Kenneth

Jacobs’ *Drifter’s Heart* for viola and recorded sounds. Sheila Anne Browne skillfully maneuvered her way through this challenging piece. Next was another entry by our friends from Clarke College, this one a marimba duet by Marissa Lingl, who also performed it along with Adam Zeimet. Entitled *Beginnings*, it is the first composition by Marissa, who displayed a strong knowledge of the marimba as well as clearly-defined form. Two selections by Canadian composer Dan Rowsell were next, presented by the Butler University Jazz Combo. These pieces, one a straight ahead combo-style tune, the other a more updated fusion sound, featured excellent solos from just about everyone in the band. The Clarke College New Music Ensemble returned en masse for its conductor’s own piece, *Uh, Not Likely*, which featured the unique instrumentation of flute, clarinet, guitar, marimba, and percussion. A wonderful finale to the morning concert was Allen Strange’s *Extended Play* for percussion ensemble. The Butler Percussion Ensemble was as tight as, well, a drum in this exciting *moto perpetuo* piece.

The second day continued with another midday recital in the beautiful “Duck.” We opened with Hye Kyung Lee’s brilliant *GASP*, played by the composer in a display of nearly constant energy. Next was Daniel Gilliam’s *Nocturnes*, written for and performed by his wife Lacey, with piano accompaniment. All three texts, by Whitman, Thomas Moore, and Dickinson, dealt with various aspects of the night. Christopher Arrell’s *Phrase for L.L.* was a fascinating meditation on tone-color, with the intention of creating one “mega-instrument” out of a quartet of piano, cello, violin, and clarinet. Once again Michael Schelle conducted the Butler Composers Orchestra in this fine performance. After halftime, we were treated to a trip to the mall...not literally, of course, but through William Vollinger’s *Violinist in the Mall*, with piano accompaniment. This was a programmatic piece, with “Muzak” of the mall humorously competing with the violinist’s favorite excerpts from the classical repertoire. David Ward-

Steinman’s *Inside Out* was next, which was excellently performed, almost entirely inside the piano, by Butler student performer Molly Wood. Butler percussion faculty Jon Crabiel concluded this afternoon’s recital by negotiating the mind-blowing, phase-shifting and cross rhythms of Eric Simonson’s *Geometry IV* for solo marimba.

The only paper session followed later that afternoon, with fascinating discussions of the music of Tan Dun (by Michael Hegedus), Toru Takemitsu (by Bruce Reiprich), and extended techniques for the recorder, demonstrated by James Chaudoir.

“Saturday night’s alright for fighting,” as Sir Elton John sang, but none of that was evident at the conference dinner at Forbidden City, an excellent Chinese Buffet. It was said that composer Chris Arrell of Clayton State University filled his plate up approximately 53 times. After dinner, we all met back at the marvelous Clowes Memorial Hall on campus, originally built for the Indianapolis Symphony. It is quite a luxury for a university to have such a fine concert hall. The audience certainly luxuriated in the sounds of the Butler Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Richard Auldon Clark. This was a concert of entirely American music of the 20th and 21st centuries. SCI composers Jason Bahr, Daniel Powers, and Jonathan Graybill were represented on the program, along with other pieces by Jonathan Canning, Samuel Barber, and Aaron Copland. I found it interesting that all the SCI works had to do with, or referenced, stars. Mr. Bahr’s piece, *Ad astra per aspera* was a sensitive portrait of the

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history of Kansas, and was written to honor that state's sesquicentennial of its declaration as a Territory. The title is the Kansas state motto, and translates as "to the stars through difficulties." The second half began with Mr. Powers' *The Starry Messenger*, written in honor of the Terre Haute Symphony Orchestra's 75th anniversary. This piece was absolutely gorgeous: a colorful, lush work that was also an homage to Galileo. Just before the end of this concert (a finely-tuned reading of Copland's *Billy the Kid*) was perhaps the "highlight" piece for me of the whole conference. Closing the concert was a gorgeously slow-moving, rich piece for strings, *Nightscape* by the 23-year-old Jonathan Graybill. This composer from Eastman has big things ahead of him, I'm sure. What he has that a lot of young composers lack is the elusive quality of patience. He doesn't rush to get ideas out, at least in this piece, but rather waits and lets them unfold slowly over time. Mr. Clark's sensitive conducting certainly played a large part in this wonderfully handled performance.

Two more performances awaited us on Sunday after a good night's sleep and hopefully a decent brunch. The first was back at the recital hall, opening with *September Music* by Jeremy Beck. The JCFA Composers Orchestra handled Mr. Beck's colorful chamber writing very nicely. Cheryl Riggle provided the next piece, a very nice *Variation on a Gaelic Theme*, well-played by Butler faculty cellist William Grubb. Ernesto Pellegrini's *Duolog III* was a large-scale dialogue between bassoon and piano, written in a Romantically-inspired dissonant style. *Immaus* for solo violin, by Matthew Schreibeis began the second half. This piece was masterfully played, with several difficult double-stops and artificial harmonics. Despite the length of the work, it kept my attention the whole time. Next was an incredibly challenging piece by Keith Carpenter, performed once again by the Composers Orchestra. The piece was *Jackhammer* for saxophones, cello, piano, and percussion. The concept of the piece is to take traditional American work songs and "break them apart," using

the tools of music (instruments). It proved to be a colorful and energetic ride all the way to the last movement, "The Ballad of Casey Jones." This recital was concluded with Christopher Rutkowski's *Passages*, a piece that he wrote for the Ronen Chamber Ensemble. It concerns the passages that people at various stages of life experience, one movement a Lament, and the other an up-tempo "Halaka", based on a klezmer tune used for a child's first haircut. Both movements displayed a great sense of pacing and instrumental sensitivity.

The final concert of this very successful conference was given by the Butler Wind Ensemble, conducted by Robert Grechesky. Once again we were treated to a program of all 20th and 21st century works, some of them already classics of the Wind Ensemble repertoire (*Al Fresco*, by Karel Husa, *Hill Song No. 2*, by Percy Grainger, and *The Final Covenant* by Fisher Tull). The second half opened with David Gillingham's *Waking Angels*, and was followed by SCI composer Ken Metz's *A Mingus Fantasy*. This piece magically transformed the standard wind ensemble into a smoky nightclub in Harlem, circa 1968. Strange but catchy bass ostinatos merged with bursts of color from the woodwinds and percussion to form a fascinating musical experience. And last and certainly not least was Mark Kilstofte's *Ballistic Etude No. 3, Panic!*, whose humorous program note suggested that the piece is loosely based on the Orpheus myth, although recast in a 1930s gangster setting. The piece was a bright, nervous, and exciting conclusion to this otherwise long-lined and full-sounding program. Hats off to Mr. Kilstofte for such a breathlessly exciting finish. The Butler Winds showed great ensemble and was obviously expertly led by Dr. Grechesky.

And so concludes the narrative of this very pleasant time in Indianapolis. As we all made our way home, or to the airport, I'm sure we all replayed happy memories of Butler and the new friends we made there. I know I did!

"Stucky"...continued from page 1

RSK: You are a widely regarded expert on Lutoslawski. What interests you about his music?

SS: For me he is a composer who found an ideal balance between technical mastery and clear communication. Many people focus on his richly detailed textures, and these are of course admirable, but it is the control of harmony that matters most — and that makes the textural ideas beautiful and compelling. (No texture, no matter how imaginative, is worth anything without the right harmony.) Lutoslawski was also a model for how to live a life of discipline and integrity amid trying circumstances, and for his patient, painstaking work habits. (For each page of finished music in his output, there must be ten or twenty sketch pages of various sorts. He never, ever settled for the easy solution.)

RSK: I had the pleasure of listening to a cello concerto of yours, titled "Voyages." It is a fascinating piece, because while I found it to be texturally similar to the music of Ligeti or Lutoslawski, it seemed to have a greater sense of motivic unity throughout. Would you describe much of your music as being motivically unified and do you find that this is still important in fostering an understanding of musical progression and form?

SS: I was brought up in the 1960s and 70s, when motivic unity and development and the old organicist point of view were the norm (still following Schoenberg and Webern, as if fin-de-siecle Viennese angst were somehow an appropriate model in the late-20th-century American Midwest and Southwest!) At some point I rebelled against this training, trying hard to use contrast instead of unity and constructivism instead of organicism. I always find, though, that the old motivic habits are impossible to get rid of, try as I might, and I rather like the compromise that has emerged between Stravinskian and "German" (Bach-Brahms-Schoenberg) methods.

RSK: *I also enjoyed the clear sense of tempo change in "Voyages." You are unafraid to use unrelenting eighth notes to create a sense of fast music. Would you agree that the aperiodic rhythms found in much of the music we would call modernist, has sort of undermined the ability to create fast music?*

SS: Two things are required for fast music: pulse, and genuine harmonic rhythm (which in turns means a clear enough harmonic language that the harmonic rhythm can be detected). In 1950s and 60s modernism in its most extreme forms, both these resources were forbidden, so you ended up with what Donald Erb used to call the Allegretto Constipato: 4/4 time, quarter note = 60, barline means nothing, and everything sounds the same. Mind you, this is a caricature that only describes the bad works of that period (many of them literally academic, university-produced). I would never throw out the great music of mid-century modernism—most of Boulez, all of early Berio, all of Lutoslawski, for example—because those pieces are still powerful teachers and still provide powerful emotional experiences.

I have a love-hate relationship with American minimalism, but one of its chief virtues is that it influenced all sorts of composers all over the world to reclaim these crucial elements, pulse and harmony. Many of my favorite composers today are not minimalists, but their music betrays its effects in one way or another: John Adams, Tom Adès, Marc-André Dalbavie, Anders Hillborg, Magnus Lindberg, Colin Matthews, Esa-Pekka Salonen.

RSK: *In "The Muse that Sings," you talk about encouraging your students to continue playing their instruments. Why do you feel this is important to a composer?*

SS: A composer should be a musician, not just a writer, and she should be a true and equal colleague to the musicians performing her work—in the trenches facing musical reality every day, not holed up in the studio. The model where a score is just

handed down from on high and the players are left to sort it out somehow I would even call an ethical or moral problem. I don't believe that composers are higher in the artistic pecking order than performers. Not to mention the practical problems that arise when a composer loses touch with the physical realities of playing and the psychosocial realities of the rehearsal situation and thus ends up sabotaging her own piece.

RSK: *Also in "The Muse that Sings," you talk about feeling the pressure to create something completely original with every new piece. Is this a realistic aim for a composer?*

SS: Young composers (and some not so young) feel this pressure strongly, but it is destructive. Art is not about creating something absolutely new, but about adding small, personal contributions to an ongoing discourse in which the main ideas are community property, not private property.

RSK: *Is self-borrowing important to your compositional process?*

SS: I do borrow from myself often—technical procedures that recur (or evolve) from piece to piece, of course, but also actual material exported from one piece to another. The ban on ever repeating oneself was a superstition, a tribal taboo that never made any sense. I go further, though: I often borrow (always consciously, I hope) from other composers. These are not outright quotations (except in special cases where that is the whole point, such as *Dreamwaltzes*, *Whispers*, or *Funeral Music for Queen Mary*), but rather homages and allusions. The most important example is my Second Concerto for Orchestra, which among other things is a kind of "family reunion" of my musical heroes and friends.

RSK: *Many composers create a sketch score, then orchestrate the piece from the sketch. Is this a successful approach for you?*

SS: Working for orchestra, I always think directly in terms of the instruments and their combinations. Of course when necessary I will work out details in short-score form on the side, but then these are immediately transferred into full score. I do not recommend this method to my students; I try to get them to do complete continuity drafts in short score so that the orchestra doesn't distract them from the basic problems of composing: form, proportion, and harmonic coherence. But I can't seem to take my own advice.

RSK: *The Grinnell Singers will be giving the Iowa premiere of one of your new choral works. Could you tell us a bit about the piece?*

SS: The title is simply *Three New Motets*. I used Latin liturgical texts chiefly because one of the co-commissioning partners, the Seattle Pro Musica, had a specific need for sacred texts. Once that decision was made, it freed me to enjoy those wonderfully singable Latin vowels without worrying too much about what they meant. (And that's just as well: even if you are in sync with the theology, most of those medieval Latin texts are perfectly awful as poetry. Best to treat them as pure sound.) The Latin liturgical link and the specific text "O Vos Omnes" also gave me the chance to dedicate these motets to Thomas Tallis, whose 500th anniversary was (approximately) 2005. The format of double choir was suggested by Charles Bruffy, who directs the other two consortium partners, the Kansas City Chorale and Phoenix Bach Choir. Obvious in all this, I guess, is the fact that I am happy to work within limitations imposed from the outside. The idea of pure, unfettered inspiration doesn't interest me; that way lies self-indulgence and the paralysis that an excess of freedom can produce. Inspiration is easier to find in the friction between the real world, with its practical needs, and the realm of imagination.

This interview with Steven Stucky was conducted in December by SCI member Ralph S. Kendrick

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