



*... dedicated to the
promotion, composition,
performance, understanding
and dissemination of
new and contemporary
music ...*

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Career Advice for Composers Entering (or hoping to enter) Academia as a Profession

Edited by **Michael Rene Torres**

On August 25, 2013, composer Sy Brandon posed a question to the SCI community on the SCI listserv: “What is the competition like for getting a theory/composition position at a college or university after graduating with a doctorate in composition...?” This important question received some wonderful responses from members of the SCI community and certainly merits further exploration. The following comments are thoughts and advice from several SCI members regarding this topic. Hopefully this exploration of Sy’s question will be helpful to young composers who desire an academic career and also beneficial for educators who are preparing students for this field.

Joseph Klein - University of North Texas

Having served on over twenty search committees since joining the University of North Texas faculty in 1992 (and chairing close to a dozen of them myself), I am quite aware of

the vast amount of talent out there and the relatively miniscule number of academic positions available to accommodate them all. When you are receiving rejection letter after rejection letter as an applicant, it is too easy to take such rejections personally and slip into self-doubt, even depression. However, from the other end of the process, reviewing as many as a hundred highly-qualified applicants for any given position, you become aware of the fact that only one person will get the gig, even though there may be dozens of really fine contenders in the pool. Cold comfort for those who aren't chosen, perhaps; but the sting of rejection might be easier to bear once you realize it's not necessarily about you.

Or else it might make things worse to realize just how damn overcrowded our field is.

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THE SCI NEWSLETTER



...dedicated to the promotion, composition, performance, understanding and dissemination of new and contemporary music ...

Society of Composers, Inc.

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2012 SCI Region VI Conference
October 5-6, 2012, West Texas A & M University, Canyon, Texas

By Matthew Saunders

About the Newsletter

Co-Editors: Michael Torres and Benjamin Williams

Circulation: 1400

Access: available on the SCI website at <http://www.societyofcomposers.org/publications/newsletter/>

Frequency of Publication: bimonthly

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Articles: The Newsletter welcomes submissions of articles to run in future issues. Articles, if accepted, may be edited for length and content. Please include a photo with all submissions if possible (photo may be of author).

Member News + Photos: Please send all member news and activities with a photo. Submitted items may be edited.

Ideas/Suggestions: The Editors welcome any other ideas or suggestions.

Submit to the newsletter via email at: newsletter@societyofcomposers.org



Upcoming SCI Events

2015 Region VI Conference Spring 2015

Henderson State University
Phillip Schroeder, Host

Internet & Email

www.societyofcomposers.org

- Conference dates and submission guidelines
- Contact information and links to member web-pages
- Student chapters and opportunities
- CDs and journals produced by SCI
- Details on SCI such as membership, contacts for officers, regional structure, by-laws, newsletter archives and more...

SCION

SCION is a listing of opportunities on our website exclusively for members. It is updated on a continual basis so that it may be checked at any time for the most current notices. In addition, members are emailed on the first Monday of each month to remind them to visit the site for new or recent postings. The large number of listings is easily managed by a table of contents with links to the individual notices. In-depth coverage; contest listings in full; all items listed until expiration; this is a valuable resource that you may print in its entirety or in part at any time.

John Bilotta, SCION Editor
scion@societyofcomposers.org

scimembers

scimembers is a member-driven e-mail mailing list that is intended to facilitate communication between members of the Society on topics of concern to composers of contemporary concert music. It conveys whatever notices or messages are sent by its members, including announcements of performances and professional opportunities, as well as discussions on a wide variety of topics. For more information, including how to join and participate in the listserv:

<http://www.societyofcomposers.org/publications/listserv.html>

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Membership Information

For complete details, please visit
<http://www.societyofcomposers.org/join/membership.html>.

Full Membership (\$55/year): Eligible to submit scores to the National Conferences, regional conferences, SCI Recording Series, SCI Journal of Music Scores. Access to the SCI Newsletter in electronic form. Optional subscription to [scimembers], the SCI listserv and all other SCI publications. Eligible to vote on Society Matters and in elections for the National Council.

Joint Membership (\$75/year): Same benefits as full members

Senior Membership (\$27.50/year): Open to those 65 years of age or older, or retired. Same benefits as full members.

Associate Membership (\$27.50/year): Open to performers and other interested professionals. Receives the SCI Newsletter in electronic form and can participate in national and regional conferences.

Student Membership (\$27.50/year): Eligible to submit to national and regional conferences and to vote in society matters. Access to all SCI publications.

Student Chapter Membership (\$17.50/year): Same benefits as student members, but only available on campuses having Student Chapters.

Institutional Membership (\$25/year): Organizations receive hard copy of the SCI Newsletter and other mailings.

Lifetime Membership (\$1100 or \$120/year for 10 years): Benefits the same as full members, for life.

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Career Advice for Composers Entering Academia as a Profession

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Stephen Lias - Stephen F. Austin State University

Recent theory/comp search committees that I've served on (or had some inside information on) get between 50 and 130 applicants. Once they have been vetted, however, the list of viable applicants is usually considerably shorter. Often about a third or more are not actually qualified but are so eager to gain employment that they apply for everything.

Candidates who are applying immediately upon receiving a doctorate degree may be at a disadvantage if they haven't had the opportunity to gain teaching experience at the college level through an interim or adjunct position. Graduate TA experience is, of course, helpful, but doesn't carry as much weight as an actual appointment of some sort.

Secondary skills or qualifications differ widely from position to position, but piano is always a safe bet. No denying that competition is stiff, but it is not really much different than faculty positions in many applied areas.

Mark Phillips - Ohio University

The job scene is competitive now, but that was also true 40 years ago. Perhaps the biggest difference now is that simply jumping through the academic hoops is unlikely to be enough. Students need to enter competitions, respond to calls for scores, and seek out performances anywhere and everywhere. They should write and submit papers for presentations at conferences. Opportunities in these realms have exploded in recent decades and the web has made it much easier to find out about them. Any resume lacking evidence of such activities and accolades is unlikely to rise to the top of those being actively considered.

Students should also be encouraged to take advantage of every opportunity to teach and should spend serious effort working on their teaching/communication skills. Even for entry-level positions, our hiring committees routinely eliminate from consideration anyone who isn't already proficient and effective in front of a class.

James Paul Sain - University of Florida

As is the case with most employment opportunities during the current economic rollercoaster, the outlook is a

guess at best. Despite this uncertainty, it is heartening to see more entry-level jobs in composition, theory and technology announced through the usual channels during this job search season. One must consider current trends in the academy—a greater proliferation of degrees in music theory, which has been happening for some time, as well as those focusing in music technology, a more recent trend. Thus, it seems the days have waned when doctoral graduates with a focus in acoustic composition are hired to fill a wide number of posts. Recent graduates not only deal with degree inflation (there was a time 30 or so years ago when you could get a position at a community college with just a Masters degree) but increasingly degree specialization as well.

This said, there are still faculties that find attractive the uniquely synergistic approach a composer brings to teaching theory, technology and history as well as composition. These are the programs that are populated by a good number of composers rather than perhaps one or, often at best, two. I hope we're seeing a sustained upswing in the number of posts for composers. But, I harbor concerns about programs populated by great numbers of composition students. I would think it best if we, as composition faculty, focus on smaller, higher quality numbers of students. Unfortunately, these days we also experience increased pressure from administrations to justify our positions by encouraging increased numbers. How does our field survive without the requisite FTEs and SCHs? Such is the conundrum with which we're all faced. It's the age old struggle of quantity vs. quality. The current job market favors the student well prepared to take on a variety of teaching responsibilities.

Jonathan Santore - Plymouth State University

Two academia-specific spins on the best advice to composers I've ever heard: "Write music from this day forward until you die, love your work, honor your profession, and be flexible in the ways you create yourself." - Tina Davidson

(1) Broaden your toolkit/work experience. The more things you can bring to a department, the more employable you are. The time I spent during my doctoral program

teaching theory, fundamentals, and appreciation anywhere they'd have me ultimately paid off in a tenure-track job. (2) NEVER confuse success in academia with success as a composer—keep pushing yourself to engage meaningfully with the wider musical world, despite the fact that you'll

need to create space in your files for rejection letters from both academic jobs AND contests, publications, grants, performances, etc.! As everyone in the creative arts knows, you have to hear a whole lot of NOs to get to the YESes.

SCITINGS: MEMBER NEWS & ACTIVITIES

SCItings

Member News and Activities

Performances, Awards, Commissions, Honors, Publications and other Member Activities.



Man-Ching Donald Yu

Man-Ching Donald Yu

On Hearing a Monk from Shu Playing Lute for Chinese ensemble: dizi, erhu, pipa, zheng, and sanxian was premiered under the direction of the com-

poser at Tsuen Wan Town Hall on April 9, 2012.

The Lonely Hearts of Cosmos was premiered by the Hong Kong Amadeus Chamber Orchestra conducted by the composer at the Ngau Chi Wan Civic Center on March 26, 2012. This concert also included the premiere of *Oculus Non Vidit* for a cappella mixed choir by the Hong Kong Youth Choir, conducted by Christopher Cheng.

Secret and Fancy for solo violin was premiered by violinist Wilson Tong in Atlanta, Georgia on January 21, 2012.

Recede and Surge for clarinet and piano; *Wind and Rain* for erhu and piano; *Breeze* for solo flute; *Sonata "Echo"* for solo flute; *Drinking Alone under the Moon* for mezzo-soprano and piano; *Quantum Mysticism* for piano; *On Phoenix Terrace* for dizi and piano; *Contemplation* for piano; and *Three Characteristic Pieces* for piano 4-hands were premiered in a program called "In a Tranquil Night: A Night with the music of Man-Ching Donald Yu Series III" at St John's Cathedral, Li Hall on January 14, 2012.



Daniel Adams

Daniel Adams

Adams' *Camouflage* for contrabass and percussion trio was released on a CD entitled *Concerti for Strings with Percussion Orchestra* performed by the McCormick Percussion Group under the direction of Robert McCormick. *Camouflage* featured Dee Moses on contrabass. The recording is available on Ravello Records, a division of Parma Records.

Tamboo Bamboo for Steel Drum Ensemble and found objects was premiered at the Performing Arts Center of Harper College in Palatine, Illinois on March 30, 2012. Paul Ross conducted the William Rainey Harper Steel Band in the performance.

The Sleep of Reason for flute with electronic accompaniment was premiered on March 1, 2012 as part of the College Music Society South Central

Chapter Conference on March 1. The conference was held at East Central University in Ada, Oklahoma. Shannon Small was the solo flutist.

The premiere of Adams's trio *Two and One*, was performed by Lisa Cella, flute; Gita Ladd, cello; and Andy Andrist, piano as part of the Livewire 3 Festival the University of Maryland, Baltimore Campus on October 26 in the Fine Arts Recital Hall.

Hilary Tann

On March 17, 2012 Tann's *Contemplations (8, 9)*, setting of stanzas by Anne Bradstreet, were premiered in Boston by Cappella Clausura, celebrating the 400th anniversary of America's first poet.

On March 29, 2012 the 2012 Eastman School of Music Women in Music Festival gave two concerts of Tann's work. *Between Sunsets* for soprano and piano was premiered by the Beaudette-Strempel Duo midday and the evening concert, "Musical Landscapes of Hilary Tann," was devoted to her chamber music.

Guy Vollen

March 31, 2012 the Wichita Wind Ensembles Professional Band premiered *Carnival of Souls*, Vollen's 20-minute symphony for winds, percussion, strings and electronics at The Forum in Wichita, Kansas.

N. Lincoln Hanks

On April 2, 2012 the world premiere of *Monstre sacre*, Hanks' piano solo composed for Paul Barnes, was given

on Victoria Bond's Cutting Edge Series.

Jim Puckett

Soprano Leah Ralston performed *Meditation on 'Evening'*, a short art song based on the poem by Emily Dickinson on April 21, 2012 at the R.R. Hodges Chapel Thorne Auditorium on the campus of Mount Vernon Nazarene University.

Pianist Raquel Teare premiered *In the Gardens*, a piano suite inspired by seasonal scenes experienced at Gambier's Schnormeier Garden on April 23 at the Ludwig Recital Hall in the Music & Speech Building on the campus of Kent State University.

Charles Norman Mason

Radiate, Mason's three movement work for Wind Ensemble written for Gary Green, was premiered April 24, 2012 at Gusman Concert Hall on the campus of the University of Miami by the Frost Wind Ensemble, conducted by Gary Green.

Mason's *Spring Step* was premiered by Kookaburra (Matt Taylor, saxophone; Allyson Clark, violin; and Lika Pailodze, piano) April 26, 2012 at the Alumni Center at the University of Miami.

Eric Honour

On April 28, 2012 newEar premiered Honour's *Still, In Motion* for flute, bass clarinet, violin, violoncello, piano, percussion, and live electronics at All Souls Unitarian Universalist Church in Kansas City, Missouri.

Adam Himes

The Bronx Arts Ensemble gave the premiere of Himes' *a/part* on April 29, 2012, conducted by maestro David Gilbert.

Steven Rosenhaus

The premiere of *Nine Feet of Brass (A Concerto for Trombone and Band)* was given by the Sacred Heart University Band under the direction of Keith Johnston on April 29, 2012 in the Edgerton Center for the Performing Arts, conducted by the composer with Mr. Johnston as the trombone soloist.

Nicholas Vlaso

Monuments Emerge was released in April 2012 by Innova Recordings, featuring music composed by Vlaso since 2007.

Jonathan Santore

Santore won The American Prize 2013 in Composition in the category for professional composers of choral music. He's taught theory and composition at Plymouth State University in New Hampshire since 1994.