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

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Music in the Mountains

A Look Back at the 2013 Aspen Music Festival and School

by **Nicholas S. Oiccioli**

The Aspen Music Festival and School presents more than 300 musical events during its eight-week summer season in the Colorado mountain retreat. Composer, Nicholas Oiccioli, attended the Aspen Music Festival in the summer of 2013. Nicholas is currently a resident with the Charlotte Street Urban Culture Project in Kansas City and production coordinator of newEar Contemporary Chamber Ensemble. For more information about Nicholas and his music, visit: www.nicholasomiccioli.com.

This past summer I had the pleasure of attending the Aspen Music Festival and School (AMFS) as a composition fellow for the full eight-week session from June–August. In previous years, the composition program was split into two four-week sessions and a film scoring program, which had been cut this year but may be reinstated in the future. Other than a small percentage of the AMFS programs, all students are there for the full eight-week session. This felt like an exceptionally long time to the composers, especially since we are used to summer programs that are typically 1–2 weeks

long. There was, however, a consensus among us at the end of the festival that we would not have wanted it any other way and that the full eight weeks had exceptional benefits.



Nicholas S. Oiccioli

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About the Newsletter

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How to Submit Items to the Newsletter

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.

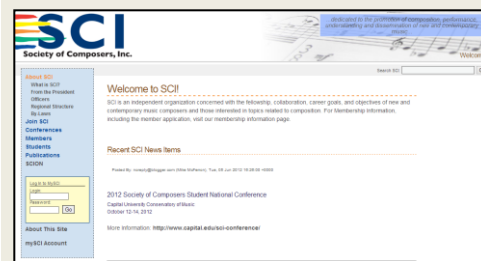
Submit to the newsletter via email at: newsletter@societyofcomposers.org



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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Music in the Mountains: A Look Back at the 2013 Aspen Music Festival and School

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The friendships you build with classmates and faculty is one of the highlights of AMFS and the bonds you form will last a lifetime. Many of the composition fellows have already collaborated, or will collaborate, with musicians they worked with at the festival.



The composers were mentored throughout the summer by Steven Stucky, who kept in close e-mail contact with us in the spring, preparing us for our summer in Aspen. Stucky gave masterclasses, private lessons, conducted the contemporary ensemble when needed, and was a liaison between us and the AMFS artistic and administrative staff. If there were any issues that came up, Stucky would take care of them. We were also privileged to work with John Corigliano, Stephen Hartke, George Tsontakis, John Harbison, and Joan Tower, whose visits lasted between two days to four weeks. Like Stucky, they gave presentations of their music, master classes, and private lessons. We generally met every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday for our sessions in a rustic cabin, which was unfortunately torn down shortly after we left to make way for the new campus opening in 2014. There were also a few AMFS composition program alumni in town for performances either commissioned by AMFS or ensembles that had programmed their works. This included Hannah Lash, Adam Schoenberg, and Paul Dooley. Sydney Hodkinson is also a major presence at the festival and runs the Aspen Contemporary Ensemble (ACE). His world famous “Ream-

out Session” lived up to the hype as fellow composers were singled-out for their notational blunders in their commissioned works. Unfortunately, Syd’s time with us was cut short due to minor injury, although, I am happy to report that he has made a full recovery and expects to be back at AMFS in the future.

In addition to an all-star cast of composers, we had additional sessions with Leonard Slatkin (Detroit Symphony), Robert Spano (Atlanta Symphony and AMFS music director), Alan Fletcher (AMFS president and CEO), and an informal session with David Alan Miller (Albany Symphony) who happened to be in town. The most informative session was with Asadour Santourain (Program Administrator of Aspen’s American Academy of Conducting) who gave the most in-depth talk about professional development for composers I have ever heard. Topics included how to get your music out there, approaching professional orchestras, negotiating with publishers, securing commissions, the importance of keeping office hours, what to include on your website, and many other things. A similar talk was given by Stucky and Hartke at the beginning of the festival in which Stucky gave an inspiring story of how he became composer-in-residence with the Los Angeles Philharmonic.



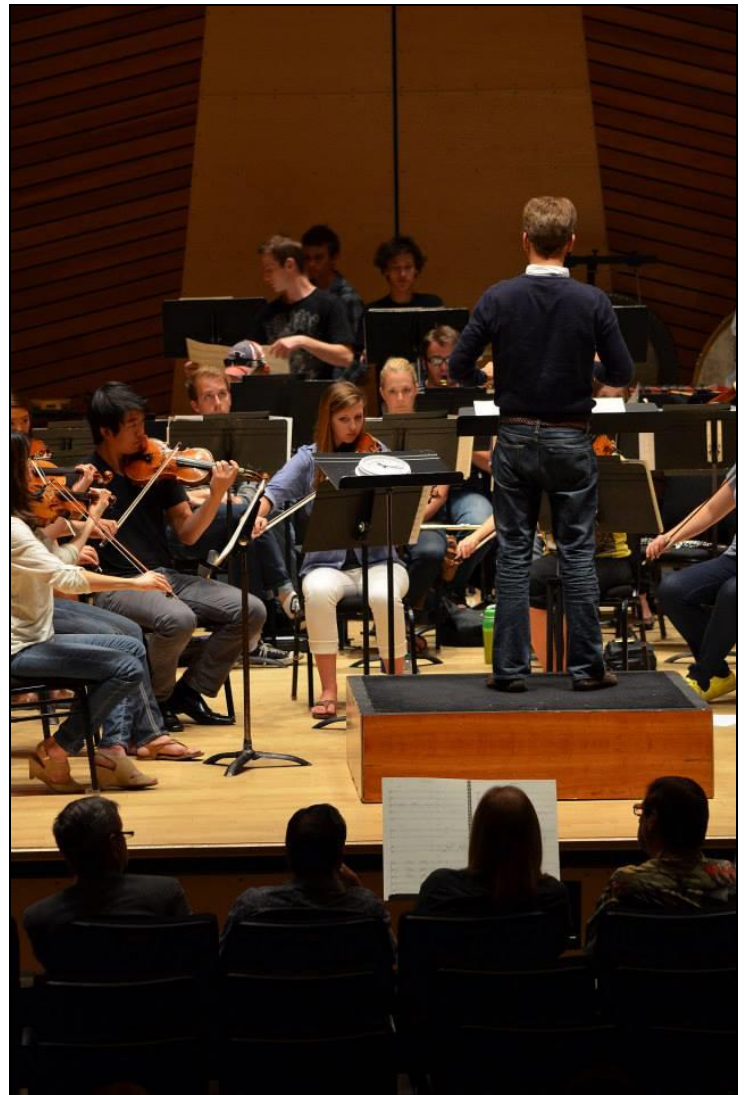
The guest composers and artist faculty were present around campus and in the town of Aspen during off hours, so it was fairly common to run into someone at a coffee shop, bakery, restaurant, hiking trail, or just walking down the

street. Even the mayor of Aspen was out and about and if he saw you around town carrying an instrument, he would stop and say hello. Since Aspen is a popular resort town for celebrities, at any time you could be sitting at a coffee shop and sitting at the table to your left could be a movie star and on the right could be an Olympic gold medalist. Former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice made an appearance at one of the Aspen Festival Orchestra (AFO)'s dress rehearsals and took pictures with students.

All the composition fellows received a commission by the festival under the heading of the "Chamber Music Project at the Aspen Music Festival and School" and had roughly 3–4 months to complete it. This time frame proved difficult for just about all of us due to the pressures of finishing the spring semester at our schools (preparing for finals, juries, completing research papers and other large projects, grading, graduation, etc.). For some of us, including me, it came down to the eleventh hour to finish our commissioned works. We had the option of writing for various ensembles including the Aspen Contemporary Ensemble (ACE), string quartets, brass quintets, and wind quintets, as well as other combinations and subsets of these groups. I choose to write for ACE (flute, clarinet, violin, viola, violoncello, percussion, and piano). The musicians in ACE receive a fellowship to perform solely in this ensemble. Only two composers had the opportunity to write for the full ensemble and it was on a first-come-first-served basis. Luckily, I was at my computer when the e-mail requesting ensemble preferences arrived in my inbox. Interestingly enough, it worked out that everyone had a chance to write for their desired ensemble. We had mixed results when working with our performers, though. ACE was top-notch, as was one of the student string quartets. However some of the other student groups were more resistant than others when working on new music. In the end, though, the musicians came together and just about all the composers were extremely happy with their performances.

Fellow composers also had the chance to have an orchestra piece read and recorded by the American Academy of Conducting at Aspen Orchestra (AACA). Two reading sessions were set aside mid-festival to give us a chance to work-

shop our pieces by the conducting fellows. Robert Spano, Steven Stucky, and any other guests that happened to be in town moderated the event and offered critical feedback. Like ACE, musicians in AACA are among the top players at AMFS and were able to handle anything we could throw at them. The orchestra was easy to work with and we were grateful to the conductors that put in countless hours of preparation in order to produce good recordings of our music. Because printing resources in Aspen are limited and cost is high, I would recommend that composers accepted to the festival bring your printed and bound scores and parts beforehand. Both you and your bank account will be glad that you did.



Composers were guaranteed at least one chamber music performance and one orchestral performance/reading. I ended up having my chamber music work, push/pull, programmed a second time on a subscription faculty concert and my orchestral work, flourishes, selected for two readings—once on the regularly-scheduled composer reading session and again on a composers' spotlight session at the end of the festival. We also organized our own chamber music concert of recently completed pieces during the final weekend of the festival. Some composers ended up with as many as five performances, but everyone had at least three.

Some of the highlights from this past summer's concerts included all of the Bartók string quartets performed by the Takács Quartet—which I believe they do just about every year—*Recollections* by Brett Dean and Ligeti's *La grand macabre* performed by ACE. Other notable chamber music concerts, which I was only able to attend the dress rehearsals for, included Gil Shaham performing all of Bach's *Sonatas and Partitas* and Sharon Isbin performing Corigliano's *Troubadours*. The standout orchestral performances—all by AFO—

included *Daphnis et Chloé*, Stucky's *Symphony*, and the best performance of *Le Sacre du printemps* I have ever heard with David Robertson (Saint Louis Symphony) conducting. AACA also receives credit for wonderful performances of *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* and Bartók's *Miraculous Mandarin*.

While each performance I attended was of exceptional quality, the one thing I desired was more adventurous programming in the realm of contemporary music outside of ACE. AMFS celebrated Benjamin Britten's Centennial by saturating audiences with his works. I admit to not being a huge fan and it seemed like some of the season-ticket holders were ready for something else by the last few weeks of the festival. With 2013 also being Lutosławski's Centennial, I was disappointed that not a single one of his pieces was programmed, although, I say that with extreme bias as he is one of my favorite composers. Regardless, there was enough variety in programming at Aspen to make it an incredibly enjoyable experience and it ranks as one of the top summer festivals I have attended.

SCITINGS : MEMBER NEWS & ACTIVITIES

SCItings

Member News and Activities

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

Vivian Adelberg Rudow

The premiere of Rudow's *I Will Bless Thee*, from Genesis 22:15–22, was given by the Maryland State Boychoir in a *Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols* on December 15, 2013 at the Maryland State Boychoir Center for the Arts.

Jason Bahr

The Fort Myers Symphonic Mastersingers at Sanibel Community Church on December 15, 2013 premiered Bahr's *O magnum mysterium* for choir, organ, brass and percussion, commissioned for this concert.

Hugh Levick

Signature, the label attached to Radio France, released *The Unimagined: Preparations for the Unknown*, Levick's CD of three string quartets performed by the Diotima Quartet, in 2013, distributed by Harmonia Mundi in the US.

Justin Morell

Morell's CD *Subjects and Completions* was released in 2013 and features ten jazz musicians from the East and West coasts playing twelve new works.

Kirk O'Riordan

O'Riordan's CD *Strange Flowers* was released by Ravello Records in 2013, featuring performances by pianist Holly Roadfeldt, flutist Reuben Council, clarinetist Marianne Gythfeldt, and cellist Lawrence Stomberg.