Illinois State University Media Relations

New Music Festival to Bring Composers and Guest Performers to Campus

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Three women composers, each possessing credentials and international recognition that would make each a headlining guest, will be in attendance for performances of their compositions at the second annual Illinois State University New Music Festival March 23 to 26 in the School of Music.

Four evening concerts and four master classes will be presented, all free and open to the public.

Augusta Read Thomas, Sheila Silver and Laura Schwendinger will highlight the four-day festival. Thomas, whose composition, "Astral Canticle," was one of two finalists for the 2007 Pulitzer Prize in Music, was composer-in-residence for nine years with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and, until last year, chair of the Board of the American Music Center. In 2007 she resigned from her position as the Wyatt Professor of Music at Northwestern University to devote her time exclusively to composition, but not before receiving the Award of Merit from the president of Northwestern.

Silver is a professor of Music at the State University of New York, Stony Brook. Upon graduating with a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of California at Berkeley, she was awarded the coveted George Ladd Prix de Paris for two years study in Europe. She earned her doctorate from Brandeis University, where her studies also included a traveling grant to study for 18 months in London and a Koussevitzky Fellowship for a summer at the Berkshire Music Center at Tanglewood. A recent recipient of the 2007 Raymond and Beverly Sackler Prize in Music Composition in Opera, Silver has received many awards and commissions and her compositions have been performed by numerous orchestras, chamber ensembles and soloists throughout the United States and Europe.

Schwendinger is an Associate Prof. of Composition at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where she is also the Artistic Director of the Contemporary Chamber Ensemble. In 2007 she won a Copland Award and in 1999 was the first composer to be awarded the American Academy of Berlin Prize. She received her Ph.D. from the University of California Berkeley. Schwendinger’s works have been performed by soprano Dawn Upshaw, the Arditti Quartet and the Orion Ensemble. In constant demand with new commissions, she is on leave from Wisconsin this year on a Guggenheim Fellowship.

The Monday, March 23, concert will be attended by Thomas and ISU faculty member and composer Martha Horst. DalNiente, a Chicago ensemble that performs new music, will perform their works as well as a piece by Finnish composer Kaija Saariaho. Violinist Austin Wulliman will give a master class at 3 p.m. in Kemp Recital Hall and Augusta Read Thomas will give a master class at 4 p.m. in Centennial East room 224.

School of Music’s soprano Michelle Vought will sing works by Ned Rorem, Nancy Van de Vate and John Kander at 8 p.m. Tuesday in Kemp Recital Hall.
At 3 p.m. Wednesday, clarinetist Eric Mandat will give a master class in Kemp Recital Hall and at an 8 p.m. concert in Kemp he will perform the music of Shulamit Ran and Libby Larsen. Mandat is a touring clarinet soloist, chamber musician and lecturer who performs regularly as part of the Chicago Symphony’s new contemporary chamber music series, Music Now.

The festival closing concert at 8 p.m. Thursday in Kemp Recital Hall will feature ISU faculty and guest artists performing chamber works by guest composers Schwendinger and Silver, who will be in attendance. On the program will be Silver’s “To the Spirit Unconquered,” a musical response to writings on the Holocaust. Earlier that day, at 2 p.m. in Centennial east room 224, Schwendinger and Silver will give a master class.