Spotlight on the Composers

USC Thornton Wind Ensemble features program celebrating the Thornton School’s renowned composition faculty including Donald Crockett, Stephen Hartke, Morten Lauridsen, Frederick Lesemann, and Frank Ticheli.

LOS ANGELES (October 27, 2010) — on Sunday, October 31, the USC Thornton Wind ensemble will present a concert featuring the work of the composition faculty of the University of southern California’s Thornton School of Music. Every piece on the program is by a living USC composer, and each piece either was originally written for or recently arranged for wind ensemble.

The concert underscores something that often goes unstated: the composition program at the Thornton school is led by a group of major American composers, very much in their prime and actively producing, who enjoy excellent relations with the school’s faculty conductors and their student ensembles.

USC composer frank Ticheli’s latest composition, the 21-minute *Concerto for Clarinet*, headlines the concert. The piece was written in tribute to the three 20th-century American icons: Gershwin, Copland and Bernstein. Its three movements are named: “rhapsody for George,” “song for Aaron” and “riffs for lenny.”

Internationally acclaimed Swedish clarinetist Håkan Rosengren, who commissioned the piece, will be the featured soloist at the Bovard auditorium concert. The new concerto received its world premiere in April at the Lithuanian National Symphony in Vilnius. But Ticheli wrote two versions - one for orchestra, another for wind ensemble. It’s the second version that the Bovard crowd will hear.

The concert also features *Pacific Rim*, a signature piece by USC faculty composer Stephen Hartke performed in a special arrangement for wind ensemble, and *O Magnum Mysterium* by USC distinguished professor of composition and national medal of arts winner Morten Lauridsen. Originally written for a cappella choir, the hugely popular piece was transcribed in 2003 for concert band by Thornton faculty member H. Robert Reynolds, who along with Sharon Lavery directs the USC Thornton Wind ensemble. An all-USC composers program resulted from the accessibility of the internationally
renowned composition faculty. “We have a lot of support from composers at USC,” said Reynolds. “The whole thing happened because I have such high regard for them, and I’m not alone in that. the world has high regard for the composers at USC. it’s one of the most distinguished composition departments in the country.”

Programming some of the pieces was straightforward. Island is one of only two works by USC composer Donald Crockett scored for wind ensemble. Written in 1998, it was commissioned by the concert bands of the Big ten universities. likewise, Fog & the Sun on Memory Beach by USC composer Frederick Lesemann is the composer’s only work for wind ensemble. the 10-minute piece premiered in 2004.

“Morten Lauridsen comes to many of our concerts,” Reynolds explained. some years ago after hearing a performance, the three-time Grammy nominee who in 2007 was awarded the national medal of arts, offered Reynolds a new brass-only arrangement of his signature O Magnum Mysterium. Lauridsen’s original choral setting of “the birth of the new-born King amongst the lowly animals and shepherds” has received thousands of performances and at least a hundred professional recordings since its 1994 premiere, making it a modern-day classic.

Intrigued, Reynolds raised the stakes: “I told him I thought it would make a really great arrangement for wind ensemble.” Lauridsen gave his blessing, and Reynolds arranged the choral work for wind ensemble in 2003. it since has joined the standard concert band repertoire. Lauridsen “would come in to rehearsals with the Thornton Wind ensemble and we would discuss it afterward,” Reynolds recalled. “He’s really a participating collaborator on that transcription.”

Reynolds was standing in the music school’s courtyard, telling some of his composer colleagues about his idea for an all-USC wind ensemble program. amazingly, Hartke’s large and eclectic opus did not include anything scored for wind ensemble. “I got an e-mail from him a few weeks later saying he himself was going to transcribe one of his most successful pieces, Pacific Rim, for the wind ensemble,” Reynolds recalled. The afternoon of Oct. 31 will be the world premiere of this new version of Pacific Rim, originally composed in 1988 for chamber orchestra.

Come hear them all at 4:00 p.m. in Bovard auditorium - not just because you like Gershwin, Copland and Bernstein, but also because you want to hear the next generation of American icons - Ticheli, Hartke, Lauridsen, Crockett and Lesemann. chances are, they will be in the audience.

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Editors, Please Note:

Calendar Listing

WHAT:
Spotlight on the Composers
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WHEN:
Sunday, October 31, 2010 at 4:00 p.m

WHERE:
Bovard Auditorium
3551 Trousdale Parkway
Los Angeles, CA 90089
(located on the USC campus in downtown L.A.; ample parking is available)

TICKET PRICES:
Free

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About the USC Thornton School of Music

The USC Thornton School of Music brings together a stellar faculty chosen from a broad spectrum of the music profession and musically gifted students from around the globe. Founded in 1884, and today the oldest continually operating cultural institution in Los Angeles, the Thornton School consistently ranks among the top one percent of the nation’s music schools and conservatories. Graduates of the school attain positions with major orchestras, ensembles, recording studios and music industry firms and perform on stages and in studios around the world.

Blending the rigors of a traditional conservatory-style education with the benefits of studying at a leading research university, the Thornton School offers students a thorough music education in a real-world context. Located at the center of Los Angeles, the school is the collegiate partner of choice for the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Los Angeles Opera, Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, the GRAMMY Foundation and The Recording Academy, to name a few.

In addition to their work with these ensembles, Thornton students are a constant presence in local classrooms, reaching out to the next generation of musicians through music
education and appreciation courses. With its faculty, its students, its events and its work, the Thornton School is one of the most important cultural resources in Los Angeles.