ANDREW NORMAN WINS PRESTIGIOUS GRAWEMEYER AWARD FOR MUSIC COMPOSITION

USC Thornton faculty member recognized for Play, an orchestral work inspired by video games.

Andrew Norman (‘02, MM ’04), USC Thornton School of Music alumnus and a member of the Composition faculty, has won the Grawemeyer Award for Music Composition. Norman received the honor for Play, a 45-minute orchestral piece originally commissioned by the Boston Modern Orchestra Project in 2013.

“The Grawemeyer Award is reserved for special works that change the musical landscape,” said Donald Crockett, chair of the Composition program. “Andrew’s Play is just such a piece, and we are delighted at this very significant honor.”

Play is inspired by the narrative arc and energy of video games. Since its premiere in 2013, the work has been performed by numerous orchestras, including the Los Angeles Philharmonic. The Boston Modern Orchestra Project’s 2015 recording of the piece received a GRAMMY Award nomination.

When the award was announced, Norman took the opportunity to advocate for greater diversity in the field of composition in an interview on National Public Radio. “The canon is so overwhelmingly white and male, but we can use new music to fix that problem,” he said. “There are so many voices who should be heard in the concert hall today, of people whose music reflects a wide variety of experiences. That, to me, is the most important issue right now for contemporary classical music and classical music generally — how to get what happens in the concert hall to reflect the diverse society that we are.”

“We are thrilled for Andrew for this well-deserved award, and applaud him for calling for more diversity in the world of classical composition,” said Robert Cutietta, Dean of the
USC Thornton School of Music. “It is wonderful to see Andrew use his growing stature as a composer to address social issues that are important. He will be an inspiration for us to examine what we do.”

Norman, who is based in Los Angeles, received a Guggenheim Fellowship earlier this year and has been named Composer of the Year for 2017 by the Musical America organization. He is currently working on a children’s opera inspired by *A Trip to the Moon*, the 1902 film by Georges Méliès.

The Grawemeyer Award, which comes with a $100,000 prize, is presented annually by the University of Louisville. Past recipients include Kaija Saariaho, Pierre Boulez, Thomas Adès, and John Adams.

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