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Composing
With Eyes Open:
A Discussion of Commissions and Contracts

By Jeremy J. Beck

Ever since I first started working as a composer in the early 1980s, long before I began practicing law, I was negotiating and drafting my own contracts. There are some folks out there who prefer to work and collaborate based on a handshake and another party’s good word. But even where there is no reason to doubt that “good word,” such an approach to one’s professional work is a mistake. Misunderstandings and unforeseen events occur in life, at times leading to stress, tension, and disputes. The purpose of a contract is to spell out an agreement in advance so the parties know what to expect from one another and how to address such events should any crop up. Arguably, more now than ever, given today’s uncertain financial times as well as the challenges and opportunities provided by new media, it is important to start any collaborative project (such as a commission) with a clear understanding of each party’s obligations and responsibilities.

Different projects and ventures call for diverse types of contracts. In this article, I will be focusing on contract provisions related to the commission of new works. None of the following information should be taken as legal advice, for every situation is different, but this article provides points of reference for those working in the field.

Ideally, any successful contract balances the interests of the parties. In other words, it should not greatly favor one party’s interests over the other’s. This type of balance not only generates a better sense of trust and agreement between the parties to the contract, it also lends support to the enforceability of the contract, should a dispute actually end up in court.

Specifically regarding commissions, a successful contract should address (a) the scope of the composition; (b) the scheduling associated with the creation of the new work and its premiere; and (c) certain other matters related to the creation of the new work (such as copyright ownership).

What is the Scope of the Composition?

The contract should address the nature of the composition in as much detail as possible. Broadly speaking, the contract should state for which medium the new work is intended, i.e., for orchestra, band, chamber ensemble, chorus, or the stage. More specifically, the instrumentation and voicings should be delineated, or at least possible. Broadly speaking, the contract should state for which medium the new work is intended, i.e., for orchestra, band, chamber ensemble, chorus, or the stage.

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Taylor Brizendine (Los Angeles, California); Chinese-born Wang Jie (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania); Russian-born Polina Nazaykinskaya (Austin, Texas); Clint Needham (Bloomington, Indiana); Ben Phelps (Los Angeles, California); Thailand native Nareg Prangcharoen (Kansas City, Missouri); and David Weaver (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania). Photos and short bios of all seven composers appear on page 3 inside.

Seven emerging composers have been selected as participants in the Minnesota Orchestra’s 10th Annual Composer Institute, a national program offered in partnership with the American Composers Forum and the American Music Center. Composer Aaron Jay Kernis, the Institute’s director, recently announced the winners, who were chosen from a pool of 168 candidates through a competitive process. The seven composers selected represent four nationalities and reside throughout the U.S., and their scores encompass a variety of musical styles.

The 2010 Composer Institute participants are:

- Taylor Brizendine (Los Angeles, California)
- Chinese-born Wang Jie (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania)
- Russian-born Polina Nazaykinskaya (Austin, Texas)
- Clint Needham (Bloomington, Indiana)
- Ben Phelps (Los Angeles, California)
- Thailand native Nareg Prangcharoen (Kansas City, Missouri)
- David Weaver (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania)

“Everyone submitted a signature that was judged to be the most promising,” says Kernis, who chaired the selection panel.

“Toscanini was a strict adherent of the ‘good word,’ but even he said that ‘good word’ has its limitations. ‘To promise is human, to keep one’s promise is a virtue,’ he said. But even where there is no reason to doubt that “good word,” such an approach to one’s professional work is a mistake. Misunderstandings and unforeseen events occur in life, at times leading to stress, tension, and disputes. The purpose of a contract is to spell out an agreement in advance so the parties know what to expect from one another and how to address such events should any crop up. Arguably, more now than ever, given today’s uncertain financial times as well as the challenges and opportunities provided by new media, it is important to start any collaborative project (such as a commission) with a clear understanding of each party’s obligations and responsibilities.

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What is the Scope of the Composition?

The contract should address the nature of the composition in as much detail as possible. More specifically, the instrumentation and voicings should be delineated, or at least a framework should be defined. Will the piece be for orchestra alone or a combination of orchestra and choir or other mixed media? Must the composer utilize dynamics in the wind instruments? Are all of the usual percussion instruments available? Will the composer need to supply any less usual instruments, or will the commissioning party agree to purchase or rent such instruments? These are just a few of the many questions that one might need to raise in formulating this section of the contract.

In addition to basic decisions regarding the medium and the general length of the piece (e.g., 8-10 minutes), if there is a text and it is not in the public domain, continued on page 6

continued on page 3
The newsletter of the American Composers Forum
The views expressed in signed articles are those of the authors.

ACF Announces ChoralQuest

The Forum is thrilled to announce the launch of a new education program entitled ChoralQuest, a music series for middle-level choirs, written by world-class composers. The series is designed to breathe new life into the available repertoire for choral students in middle and junior high, introduce students to the composition process, and give commissioned composers the unique opportunity and challenge of writing new works for young, changing voices. Based on the success of ACF’s decade-long BandQuest program, the composers selected for ChoralQuest will partner with a middle school in their area. Composers will visit rehearsals and engage with the students before composing a piece specifically for them. These pieces will be published by ACF and will be distributed exclusively by the Hal Leonard Corporation.

Beginning this fall, composer Stephen Paulson will begin a residency at Oak Grove Middle School in Bloomington, Minnesota. The school’s Choir and Music Teacher, Bryan Blessing, will work with Paulson to engage his students in the composition process. The resulting piece will be premiered in December 2010 by Blessing’s middle school chorus. The other two pieces in the series launch will be composed by Alice Parker of Massachusetts in spring 2011 and Jerei Impichchaachaahá Tate of Oklahoma in fall 2011.

This past July, ACF convened the ChoralQuest National Advisory Committee to set composer guidelines and refine the marketing strategy for the series, as well as brainstorm a “wish list” of future composers for the series. Committee members include: Anton Armstrong (conductor, St. Olaf Choir); Bruce Becker (president, Minnesota American Choral Directors Association); Bryan Blessing (Choral Director, Oak Grove Middle School, Bloomington, Minn.); Nyssa Brown (Music Education Coordinator/CAAPP Coordinator, Perpich Center for Arts Education, Golden Valley, Minn.); Emily Crocker (Vice President of Choral Publications, Hal Leonard Corporation; founder, Milwaukee Children’s Chorus); Michael Culleitan (artist director, Honors Choruses of Southeast Minnesota & Choral Arts Ensemble, Rochester, Minn.); Robé Dwéówth (composer, conductor, clinician, and Director of Choral Activities and Music Education at the North Park University School of Music, Chicago, Ill.); R. Pulfer (National President-Elect, Designate of the ACDA); Diana Leland (Immediate past-President Minnesota ACDA, national ACDA steering committee); Eugene Rogers (Director of Choral Activities, Macalester College, St Paul, Minn.); and Mary Alice Stallak (Michigan State University, retired).

“This new series will foster collaborations between composers and young singers through a residency component,” says John Nuechterlein, the Forum’s president and CEO. “It gives the composers and the students the opportunity to learn from each other through this process.”

tokafi on innova

The Dutch folk who run tokafi describe their website as “a portal, a space for discovery, a magazine and a radio station.” They recently posted a flattering profile of the Forum’s innovate record label, based on an email interview with Philip Blackburn, ACF’s director of artist services and innova guru. You can read their profile online at www.tokafi.com/news/innova-label-profile.php

Composers Selected for 2010 Minnesota Orchestra Composer Institute and “Future Classics” concert on October 29th

Taylor Brizendine has written for many mediums, including prepared piano, brass ensemble, orchestra and string orchestra, as well as his music has been performed by such ensembles as the California Institute of the Arts Chamber Orchestra and Oregon Pro Arte South Yuba Chamber Orchestra. His studies composition and bandon from the California Institute of the Arts. The Orchestra will perform his “Mandragora Officinarum.”

Wang Je is the 2009 winner of the prestigious Underwood Emerging Composers Commission, which will enable him to have a Carnegie Hall premiere with the American Composers Orchestra. Her music has also been showcased by the New York City Opera, New Juilliard Ensemble, Rock School for Dance Education and other institutions. She studied at the Manhattan School of Music and Curtis Institute. The Orchestra will perform her Symphony No. 1.

Polina Nazaykinskaya attended the Music Academy Gymnasium and Moscow State Conservatory Music College in her native Russia, then continued studies at the Yale School of Music. She has won several composition competitions; and her music has been performed at festivals including the Music Academy of the West, Norfolk Chamber Music Festival and Cada Festival in Spain. The Orchestra will perform her “Winter Balls.”

Music by Clint Needham has been heard throughout the U.S. at prominent festivals and venues, including Carnegie Hall, the Aspen Music Festival, Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music and Music Educators National Conference. He has been commissioned by the American Composers Orchestra and New York Youth Symphony, among other ensembles. He earned degrees at Baldwin-Wallace Conservatory and Indiana University, where he is now a doctoral fellow. The Orchestra will perform his “Mystic Mutands.”

Current projects of Ben Phillips include “The Mysterious Adventures of Johnny Crumm,” a multimedia theater piece — for which he wrote the story, book and music — that was premiered by Los Angeles’ Rogue Artist Ensemble. He holds a degree from the University of California, Los Angeles, and is now a doctoral student at the USC Thornton School of Music. In addition to composing, he is also an active percussionist and has premiered many of his works for marmora. The Orchestra will perform his “Overture Maxima.”

Naring Prangcharoen has won many international composition prizes, and his music has been performed across four continents by such ensembles as the Tokyo Philharmonic, Pacific Symphony and Melbourne Symphony. He is the founder of the Thailand Composition Festival, and he has been named a Contemporary National Artist by the Thai government, which granted him the prestigious Spliathorn Award. The Orchestra will perform his “Namaskar.”

David Weaver is a composer and sound artist who has also pursued a career in science; he has studied at Swarthmore College and Cornell University. His works include orchestral and chamber music, as well as electronic music and other sound-art endeavors. The Orchestra will perform his “Mutatis Mutandis.”

“Forum Notes” continued on page 11

The seven Institute composers will be in Minneapolis from October 24 to 30, 2010, for rehearsals, seminars and tutoring sessions, as well as a public concert of their works by The Minnesota Orchestra at Orchestra Hall on Friday, October 29, led by Music Director Osmo Vänskä. For ticket information, visit www.minnesotaorchestra.org

Tune in to hear these seven new works wherever you are! The Minnesota Orchestra’s “Future Classics” concert will be broadcast live at 8 p.m., Central Time on Friday, October 29, 2010, on the network stations of Minnesota Public Radio (99.5 FM in the Twin Cities) and streamed worldwide online at http://minnesota.publicradio.org/radio/services/cms
My Journey to compose Sitar Concertos for Western Orchestra

By Hasu Patel, Composer-Performer

I had long dreamed of composing a concerto for my instrument, the sitar - a concerto that could be played by Western symphony orchestras. They say a journey of a thousand miles begins with one step, but in my case, it began with a single email message.

In March 2007, I received an e-mail from Nan Washburn, the conductor of the Plymouth Canton Symphony in Michigan, with an offer to collaborate with her orchestra in some manner. I responded positively. She called a few days later and suggested she would try to find some music that the orchestra and I could perform together. After several days, I had gathered up enough courage to call her back and asked if I could try to compose a sitar concerto myself. To my stunned surprise, she agreed. The performance date was set for March 29, 2008. Nan Washburn sent the list of the instruments available for their orchestra, and I set to work.

Just as I began to plan my concerto, to my even greater surprise, I received another call a few weeks later from conductor Libi Lebel of the Doctor's Orchestra of Houston, suggesting I compose another sitar concerto for their orchestra as well. I agreed and the performance date was set for February 10, 2008.

My first thought was to listen to recordings of famous sitar virtuoso Pandit Ravi Shankar, who had collaborated with Western musicians. I discovered that he played his music more individually and not like Western orchestras as I had envisioned. I decided I had to try to pursue my own course in writing sitar concertos and follow a more purely Indian classical form rather than attempt a fusion of styles.

For many years, I have been listening to Western classical music pieces of Mozart, Bach, Beethoven and other great composers on public radio and also attended many live orchestra performances.

This listening experience has helped me better understand the theories and structure of Western classical music. The dichotomy between the structure of Western and Indian classical music is a big challenge when an Indian musician like me tries to compose a Western symphony orchestra. Indian musicians are trained as performers, composers, and improvisers simultaneously, but Western musicians are trained for more structured playing with precisely notated musical scores in front of them, scores that allow many instruments to play together simultaneously and in harmony. I began with no clear vision how I could bridge the disparity between these two musical worlds.

The classical music of India is based on ragas and talas. The raga - the repertoire is a scientific, precise, subtle and aesthetic melodic form which is not only the simple linear arrangement of swaras (notes) but also the unique uses of shloks (microtonal intervals) between the swaras (notes) to evoke the human mood (mood). There are 22 shloks within the whole range of an octave. Each raga uses Vadi and Samvadi swaras – sanas and consonant notes. Vadi swara is acceptances from which all variations begin and end. It is being constantly heard and dominates the melody of the raga. Samvadi swara (note) reinforces Vadi aware (note) as it dialogues harmonically with it. The tala – the rhythmic cycle played on tabla with the certain number of matras (beats) and has a pattern of accents in the form of different time divisions.

The exposition of the raga begins with alap (improvisation) to invoke the mood of the raga, followed by the gat – rhythmic composition set in tetrachordal (rhythm) of 16 matras (beats) in a slow to medium tempo and medium to fast tempo gradually moves to jhala – a movement of complex rhythmic patterns in a very fast tempo (presto) to reach the climax of the raga. The grand finale of the concerto always ends in playing the cymbalos which has the movement of three tala: a rhythmic form consisting of three identical musical phrases with final ending on the first beat called sum. I decided to follow this structure in my concertos.

During this initial planning period, I was in Swarupam Yatra Vedanta Center in Val Morin, Quebec, Canada. Slowly, I started to write the music in the above sequence for each instrument separately, humming the raga tunes for the orchestra. I started writing the melody in raga ‘Dhani’ in Indian music score system. It is a pentatonic raga with the 2nd and 6th swaras (notes) omitted and 3rd and 7th are komal (flat). I wrote this all down using the Indian music score system.

Since Western musicians can’t read a traditional Indian music score, I needed help from a Western musician to transpose the music into the Western notation. I confess at the time I did not realize the difficulties this would entail. I asked one of my music students for help. Despite our best efforts, after three months into the “translation” of the Indian score into Western notations, the results remained inflexible, more like practice exercises than an orchestral score. With valuable critiques from several individuals, I had to try to pursue my own course in writing sitar concertos and follow a more purely Indian classical form rather than attempt a fusion of styles.

Hasu Patel

Swara Mangalam (“Musical Notes are Auspicious”) Concerto for Sitar and Orchestra, based on Raga: Yaman Kalyan by Hasu Patel

Premiered by the Orchestra Canton of Michigan, March 29, 2008

A Review by Roderic Knight, Emeritus Professor of Ethnomusicology (Oberlin College Conservatory of Music)

The Western concerto, a type of composition featuring a soloist with accompanying musicians, lends itself well to the sitar, since this is the normal format for sitar music in its traditional setting. To perform Raga Yaman Kalyan, for example, the sitar player would have with her on stage two accompanists, one playing the tambura, the other the tabla. The tambura is a lute, held vertically, its four strings repeatedly plucked to provide a steady background tone. The tabla is a pair of short drums, facing up in front of the player. This instrument is also mostly in the background, but plays intricate rhythms and drummed commentaries to the melody line. At times it does equal prominence with the sitar in a dialogue between the two instruments.

In Hasu Patel’s concerto, the traditional ensemble is retained, augmented by a dedicated orchestral chamber orchestra. The string section quite naturally complements the role of the tambura, but with the capability of playing melodies as well. A single flute and clarinet add echoes and doublings of the sitar melodies, while in the percussion section, a xylophone, glockenspiel, and timpani cleverly augment the sounds of the tabla. The deep tones of the timpani very much resemble the typical sound of the left hand tabla part, while the xylophone has just the right timbre to mimic the dry patter of the tabla player’s right hand.

The formal structure of the composition is not the typical sonata form of the classical concerto, with an orchestral introduction, soloist exposition, a development of the themes by both, and a recapitulation of those themes at the end. Rather, it is drawn entirely from the classical presentation of a Hindustani raga. The sitar begins alone, supported only by the droning strum of the tambura. In India, this is known as the alap section, in which the soloist presents the typical melodies of the raga being performed, in a leisurely untextured way. In a traditional raga performance, the alap might last for ten or twenty minutes, ending with the entrance of the tabla and the introduction of a metered structure. But in adapting the raga to the Western concerto style, Patel calls for the tabla to enter after only about three minutes.

A page from the score of the Sitar Concerto “Swara Mangalam” by Hasu Patel

American Composers Forum Concerts
Sound & Board
February 10, 2008

Concertos for Western Orchestra

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Composing With Eyes Open
continued from front cover
who is responsible for acquiring the rights to that text? Will the commissioning party pay any license fees for the use of the text, or must the composer bear that cost?

Is the commission for a professional ensemble where the sky’s the limit, or for a community group where discretion may be required? In other words, are there any concerns about limitations to the players’ abilities which the composer must take into consideration? It is not that the contract needs to limit a composer to writing solely in 4/4, but it may be prudent to generally indicate what the commissioner expects. This type of explication can help to avoid later misunderstandings should a composer complete and deliver a piece that a commissioner might consider “inappropriate” for her particular group (for whatever reason).

It is also useful to include information about the performance space for the premiere, as this could impact the nature of the new work. For example, if the commission is for a performance at an outdoor music festival as opposed to a concert hall, it could affect a composer’s approach to the new work.

Finally, it is important that the specific words of dedication be agreed upon between the parties, again, to avoid any later misunderstandings.

Scheduling Associated with the Creation of the New Work and its Premiere
The creation of the new work
In determining one’s fee for the commission, it is necessary to address the scope of what is included in that fee as well as the time and method of payment.

Is the fee all-inclusive? In other words, does it include copying costs, shipping of the music, and travel expenses? The fee may include all, some, or none of these things. It is essential to articulate the parties’ expectations and understanding in this area. For example, if the composer is expected or wishes to attend the premiere, is that attendance (and its related costs) included in the commission, or will separate fees and reimbursements be involved?

Regardless of scope, it is prudent to insist upon payment in parts, i.e., a down payment upon the signing of the contract, with further payments or the balance upon delivery of the score and/or parts by a certain date. These payments should be tied to specific deadlines for delivery of the full score, any rehearsal score (i.e., piano score), and a certain date. These payments should be tied to specific deadlines for delivery of the full score, any rehearsal score (i.e., piano score), and a certain date, with the return postage paid by the commissioner. Where the parties have agreed that the set of parts for the premiere performance for her finished piece.

As previously mentioned, the contract needs to address the circumstances where the premiere is postponed or cancelled due to no fault of the composer. As noted above, the composer’s right of first performance should be limited, but there may be a second level to this limitation, i.e., if the performance is cancelled through no fault of the composer, the limited exclusive right of first performance is waived by the commissioner. With this proviso allows a composer to immediately seek out an alternative premiere performance for her finished piece.

In conjunction with the above, it would be critical to require that all fees payable to the composer come immediately due upon any such cancellation.

Other Matters to Consider
A detailed and full discussion of copyright law is outside the scope of this article, but suffice it to say that the contract should clarify that ownership of the new work’s copyright for all purposes stays with the composer. In addition, the contract must make clear that the composer is an independent contractor, not an employee of the commissioner, and that the relationship between the parties does not involve a “work for hire.” This clarification is important, for under the “work for hire” provisions of copyright law, simply stated, an employee’s creation for her employer is owned by the employer. Similarly, even where a party is not a composer’s employee, if the “work for hire” doctrine is in play, the composer may be deemed the owner of the commissioned work. In order to avoid any ambiguity on this question, it is best to make the parties’ relationship clear in the contract.

The contract must also address whether or not a commissioning party may photocopy additional copies of the parts for rehearsal purposes. If so allowed, the contract should require that such photocopies be destroyed immediately following the premiere.

Where the parties have agreed that the set of parts for the premiere is on loan or being rented, the return of those parts to the composer or thecomposer’s agent must be guaranteed by a certain date, with the return postage paid by the commissioner. In addition, the composer may or may not wish for the parts to be returned cleaned of all players’ markings (sometimes it is useful for a composer to review such markings following the premiere, to better understand some of the individual players’ concerns).

Furthermore, it should be made clear that no changes may be made to the music by anyone without the composer’s express permission. The composer should also retain the right to make changes herself in the work up to perhaps 10 days or so before the premiere.

If possible, the contract should clearly outline the number of rehearsals that will be allocated towards preparation of the new work, that the composer may attend all such rehearsals and offer comments, and – where a conductor is involved – that the conductor will consult with the composer in preparation of the new work. There should be provisions addressing publicity associated with the commission and performance, i.e., that the composer’s name will be associated with all such materials relating to the new composition. The composer also should be provided with a certain number of complimentary tickets to the premiere.

Finally, it would be prudent to include provisions addressing the possibility of non-binding mediation for any disputes that may arise between the parties, which state’s law will govern the terms of the contract, and which state’s venue will be applicable should litigation ensue.

Composing with Eyes Open
Securing a commission can be a great event in a composer’s life. Besides the obvious financial benefit, it may provide encouragement and can communicate an appreciation for that composer’s particular creative approach. By keeping an eye out for the contractual details involved in finalizing the deal, the composer frees herself from some of the possible concerns surrounding the mechanics of the commission. And since the focus of this commission should be on the music and the art, taking care of the mechanics with eyes open assists the composer in keeping that focus clear of unnecessary distractions.
For two more minutes, the Western orchestra drives to a climax with punctuation by the timpani, followed by more active lines on all of the instruments, with rapid runs up and down. The lower strings have their say, echoing the melody line, and a second climax builds, using formulaic cadential patterns that signal the end of a major section in a traditional Indian piece. Now the sitar and tabla play along again, leading to a final tutti section with all instruments driving to a climax. The piece ends with the typical denouement: after ever so gently with entries by the flute and clarinet. The audience roars.

The interplay of instruments continues, with many beautifully crafted duets, including one with the clarinet and xylophone. Eventually the sitar returns to prominence, and the tabla, having been silent for a time, also re-enters. As the general intensity builds, themes with reiterated notes begin to appear, imitating an agitated style of sitar playing in which three rapid notes fill in between each melody note.

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New Music Minnesota
Spread the word — you can now keep track of music-related news, events, performances, and articles at www.newmusicmn.com. This innovative resource is a one-stop announcement list and news site for all things related to Minnesota’s new music scene. On the site, you can subscribe to the “New Playing” email list, read stories about Minnesota musicians and topics of interest to the new music field, and keep up to date with performances around the state. You can also make announcements of your own performances, or email related content to the site at newmusicmn@composerforum.org.

Tuesday Salons chez Zeitgeist
On Tuesday, September 21, the Minnesota Chapter’s monthly Tuesday Salon series resumed after a summer hiatus. These Salons offer regional composers and performers a venue for informal presentations of new work, open discussions, and networking opportunities. All Salons are free, open to public, and take place at Zeitgeist’s “Studio Z” at 275 E Fourth St. in downtown Saint Paul’s Lowertown neighborhood — just look for the big, red neon “Z” sign in the window. Remaining 2010 Salon dates for 2010 are October 19, November 16, and December 14. In 2011, Salons will be held on January 18, February 15 (featuring music by this year’s McKnight Fellows), March 15 (performed and curated by Zeitgeist), April 19, and May 17. The Tuesday Salon continues to be held on the ACF website for updated program and performer information, and plan to join us for a lively and diverse evening of new music.

Community Partners: Film Composer Grant
ACF Philadelphia is pleased to announce the result of the 2010 round of Community Partners: Film Composers Grants. An independent panel of local composers carefully reviewed the applications and made the following funding recommendation, which was unanimously approved by our board.

Daniel Shapiro will receive an $8,000 grant for his work on the score for the Corporation for Civic Engagement’s digital documentary “The Decameron.” Illustrations from an old manuscript of Boccaccio’s “The Decameron” was a pilot interview program on the topic of the influence of music and arts in political campaigns in the United States. The show was received well by the public and-

Philadelphia
Community Partners: Film Composer Grant
ACF Philadelphia is pleased to announce the result of the 2010 round of Community Partners: Film Composers Grants. An independent panel of local composers carefully reviewed the applications and made the following funding recommendation, which was unanimously approved by our board.

Daniel Shapiro will receive an $8,000 grant for his work on the score for the Corporation for Civic Engagement’s digital documentary “The Decameron.” Illustrations from an old manuscript of Boccaccio’s “The Decameron.”

Salons and other events are an innovative and unique opportunity for the evolution and growth of the local music scene.

New Voices
For the fiscal year 2011 New Voices project, ACF Philadelphia is partnering with International Opera Theater to present a new opera production based on “The Decameron,” a collection of 100 novellas written in the 14th century by Italian author Giovanni Boccaccio. Seven local composers — Ethrai Amaya, Michael Djaspeter, Daniel Shapiro, Adam Silverman, Tony Sellitto, Thomas Whitman, and Ya-Jhu Yang — are writing short opera scenes for four vocalists and six instrumentalists based on seven novellas from “The Decameron.” The new opera will premiere November 12-14, 2010 at the Prince Music Theater in Philadelphia. For more information, visit http://internationalopera.org/

New Music Minnesota
Spread the word — you can now keep track of music-related news, events, performances, and articles at www.newmusicmn.com. This innovative resource is a one-stop announcement list and news site for all things related to Minnesota’s new music scene. On the site, you can subscribe to the “New Playing” email list, read stories about Minnesota musicians and topics of interest to the new music field, and keep up to date with performances around the state. You can also make announcements of your own performances, or email related content to the site at newmusicmn@composerforum.org.

Tuesday Salons chez Zeitgeist
On Tuesday, September 21, the Minnesota Chapter’s monthly Tuesday Salon series resumed after a summer hiatus. These Salons offer regional composers and performers a venue for informal presentations of new work, open discussions, and networking opportunities. All Salons are free, open to public, and take place at Zeitgeist’s “Studio Z” at 275 E Fourth St. in downtown Saint Paul’s Lowertown neighborhood — just look for the big, red neon “Z” sign in the window. Remaining 2010 Salon dates for 2010 are October 19, November 16, and December 14. In 2011, Salons will be held on January 18, February 15 (featuring music by this year’s McKnight Fellows), March 15 (performed and curated by Zeitgeist), April 19, and May 17. The Tuesday Salon continues to be held on the ACF website for updated program and performer information, and plan to join us for a lively and diverse evening of new music.

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The objectives of the program are to support collaborations between composers and choreographers, to foster meaningful collaborations between musicians and dance companies, and to support and encourage the use of live music for dance performances.

Proposals may be submitted by Minnesota-based composer/choreographer teams and by professional dance companies based in Minnesota. Companies that have not yet received non-profit status may apply with a fiscal sponsor.

Grants will be awarded in three categories:

Category 1: Funds to support the commissioning of new work created by Minnesota-based composers/choreographers (i.e., individual artists). ACF defines “Minnesota-based” as a) Naturally born U.S. citizens who are currently living in Minnesota and who have lived in the state for a period of at least one year prior to the application date, and b) Foreign-born composers whose primary musical activity has taken place in Minnesota for a period of five years. For commissioning projects, applications involving composers who live abroad and have never lived or worked in Minnesota are not eligible.

Category 2: Funds awarded to Minnesota-based professional dance companies to hire an American composer, defined as a) a naturally born U.S. citizen, or b) a foreign-born composer whose primary musical activity has taken place in the U.S. for a period of five years. For this category, the composer does not have to be based in Minnesota.

Category 3: Funds awarded to Minnesota-based professional dance companies to hire live musicians (who may be from Minnesota or from outside the state).

Grants to Minnesota-based artists and companies may cover: Musicians’ rehearsal and performance fees for performances in Minnesota occurring between March 2011 and August 2012. Composer commission fees, including commissions and copying costs, for music to be created for new works, books, and ensembles; and awards grants to artists from the many genres of music represented in Indian Country, and from diverse American Indian, Alaskan Native and Native Hawaiian cultures. Indirect awards range from $500 to $5,000. This program also provides Native musical artists with the opportunity to enrich their work through contact with a variety of communities; makes Native musical artists more visible to under-served communities and/or larger non-Native cultural institutions; assists Native artists in collaboration with non-Native arts organizations in building audiences.

Applications may be submitted by an American Indian, Alaskan Native and Native Hawaiian made-maker of new music: composers, performers, groups, sound artists, songwriters, etc. Applicants must document achievement of Tribal/Community Affiliation. Accepted documentations of American Indian and/or Native Hawaiian culture include the following four constituencies: Native musicians, Alaskan Native communities, Native Hawaiian cultures, and non-Native cultural institutions. Full-time students may not apply unless coursework is completed (AB/BA/BS/BA honors status). Individuals may not take a leadership role in more than one project in a 12-month period. Selection Criteria: Significance of the project to your long-term career goals; Artists quality as demo

Updated Opportunities
Listed at www.composersforum.org/opportunities/cfm

Forum Opportunities

October 25, 2010
Subito In Philadelphia

Subito aims to give a boost to the careers of Philadelphia-area composers who are strongly dedicated to their art, who show artistic maturity, and who propose an excellent project. Grants range from $500 to $1,000. Grant applications are due October 25, 2010 (postmark deadline). Please review the guidelines carefully, as we have made a few minor revisions since the last deadline. Full information available online at www.acfphiladelphia.org/programs/subito/opportunities.html

November 1, 2010
American Composers Forum

The American Composers Forum will select one member to attend the American Academy in Rome for a 4-6 week fellowship during 2012/2013. This is a unique opportunity for a member to develop his/her artistry in Rome. Applications are due November 1, 2010 (postmark deadline). Please review the guidelines carefully, as we have made a few content changes since the last deadline. Full information available online at www.acfphiladelphia.org/programs/special/rome.htm

Three new innova releases for Fall and Winter 2010

innova 233
The NYFA Collection: 25 Years of New Music for Dance

This 3-CD set features 52 New York artists and composers, ranging from concert hall works to experimental jam bands, newly-invented instruments, electronic manipulations, ethnically-specific styles, and more.

Brannon’s Time Remaining Band, featuring Brannon plus four vocalists (David Bryon, countertenor; John Brauer, tenor; Keith Borden, baritone; and Mark Lin, bass), a cellist, Matt Goldberg, and percussionist, Alex Vitam, interprets the deep drama in the work's text.

Music by Erickson, Ky, Ligeti, Silverstov, Rzewski, and Vivaldo, with fluteist Molly Barth (formerly of eighth blackbird) and trumpeter Brian McWhirter (formerly of Meridian Arts Ensemble), with pianist/cellist David Wiley, percussionist/woodwind specialist Phillip Patti, and contributions from THE THM Yorkke and Colin Greenwood of Radiohead.

innova 727
Kitty Brazelton: A Modern Oratorio

The orchestra at the New York University Summer Music Festival, conducted by Susan Z水利, performs Kitty Brazelton’s A Modern Oratorio, featuring Brazilian pianist/vocalist, Anna Rinaldi; butaco Mattia; and the Brooklyn Youth Chorus, conducted by Carolyn Johnson. The work is based on the writing of Nanette Reid, and is a tribute to the life and spirit of the accomplished singer, pianist, and teacher Kitty Brazelton.

innova 775
Beta Collide: post...post...


Sounding Board
Updated Opportunities listed at www.composersforum.org/opportunities/cml

November 15, 2010 American Academy in Rome $$$ Seeks applications from U.S. composers for their Rome Prize residency in music composition in collaboration with the Studio for Electronics Music, Inc (SEMI). Maximum time duration is 10 minutes, works involving live performance are acceptable if the composer can provide their own music server. Deadline for submission is December 5, 2010. Contact contest@semi.org for information.

November 15, 2010 Sorel Organization ($$) Seeks musical settings of Longfellow texts in two categories: (1) sacred, with a text on the theme of the peace, from the King James Bible from emerging composers under the age of 30 for their 2010/11 Young Composers Competition. Cash award and performances. Contact info@thesorel.org for information.

November 17, 2010 American Academy in Rome $$$ Seeks applications from U.S. composers for their Rome Prize residency in music composition in collaboration with the Studio for Electronics Music, Inc (SEMI). Maximum time duration is 10 minutes, works involving live performance are acceptable if the composer can provide their own music server. Deadline for submission is December 5, 2010. Contact contest@semi.org for information.

November 17, 2010 University of St Andrews (Scotland) Seeks unpublished, unperformed original settings of specific texts: any music based on one of these, for a choir of 2-6 players (SATB or divided into as many as eight parts, SSAATTBB) with a text, sacred or secular, in any language, with a text on the theme of the peace, from the King James Bible from emerging composers under the age of 30 for their 2010/11 Young Composers Competition. Cash award and performances. Contact info@thesorel.org for information.


December 4, 2010 American Composers Orchestra Seeks recent, unpublished, avant-garde orchestral score (no concerto) under 15 minutes in duration from U.S. or full-time U.S. resident composers at the early stages of their careers for their 2011 Underwood New Music Reading: June 2-4, 2011, in New York City.

December 5, 2010 Furman University Seeks scores from New York City area composers for newly-composed songs to texts by Hart Crane (also James Joyce) for possible performance on their Voo Voo Up series. Please submit PDF scores between November 5 and December 5, 2010.

December 10, 2010 Windflower Donations (Portland, Maine) $$$ Seeks musical settings of Frederick Douglass texts in two categories: (1) a cappella or with piano accompaniment, and (2) a cappella (optional additional bassoon or baritone), and 2) also with piano accompanied, (optional additional bassoon or baritone) and performance, recording performance.

December 15, 2010 Avon Flutes $$$ Seeks online submissions of PDF scores and MP3 recordings for solo clarinet or clarinet duets. Payment is made when scores are published. Deadline for submission is January 31, 2011.

December 17, 2010 Los Robles Master Chorale Seeks a 24-piece chorus, an orchestra, and an operetta house for their upcoming season. Please submit PDF scores between November 15 and December 15, 2010.

December 17, 2010 Iazo (Malaga, Spain) Seeks original, unpublished, avant-garde string quartets, 4 musicians, under age 30 for their 2011 January International Chamber Music Workshop. Competitors will be chosen to participate in Individual lessons, masterclasses, and recordings. Deadline for submission is January 15, 2011.

February 11, 2011 Helsinki Church Choir Seeks unpublished, unperformed scores of any duration for three to seven instruments from composers under age 35 for their 2011 Helsinki Church Choir Awards. Two categories of submissions are available in each of four vocal parts (SATB) and keyboard/anthem formats for an experienced choir (such as a cathedral, mission church, or professional choral group) or unaccompanied (in up to eight parts, SATB unaccompanied or unison) and orchestral arrangements. Cash awards and performances in London (U.K.), and publication. Please Note: Applicants must register no later than January 15, 2011. Contact contest@helsinki.org for details.

January 15, 2011 Cincinnati Composers $$$ Seeks sheet music compositions for chorus and orchestra, including concertos, choral works, or works with electronic elements for this call.

January 19, 2011 Vancouver Chamber Choir Seeks chamber scores for any combination of two to five players (college level and high school level). Cash awards and performances. Compositions may be up to 15 minutes in duration.

January 31, 2011 Benefis Health System Brass Chamber Music Workshop Seeks early career brass ensembles for possible performance on brass ensembles for their Brass Chamber Music Workshop held in Anaconda, Montana. Cash prizes and performances.

February 11, 2011 Duke University Chamber Music Workshop Seeks score and performance opportunities for emerging composers and instrumentalists for their Emerging Composers and Performers Competition. Deadline for submission is March 15, 2011. Contact contest@duke.edu for information.

March 31, 2011 Delta Omicron $$$ Seeks unpublished, unperformed works for French horn written by composers of college age or older for their Triennial Composer Competition. Cash award and performances for the 2011 International Delta Omicron Conference. Seattle, WA.

April 8, 2011 New York City Singers Seeks a cappella works for female choir or choir ensembles with piano or other accompaniment for their 2011 Composer Competition. Performance in New York City and performance opportunities at the 2011 Oviedo International Conference.