FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

The Big Joe Duskin Music Education Foundation is very excited to announce we are partnering with Northern Kentucky University’s jazz outreach program EMPOWER!!!

Hopefully, you already know our mission is “to provide educational music experiences and encouragement to participate in school band for as many public elementary students as possible, primarily using local professional musicians.” In the 2011-2012 school year, we funded 47 in-school music presentations for 14,000+ students in Greater Cincinnati and Columbus, Ohio and plan even more for the 2012-2013 school year. Our best success has been at College Hill Fundamental Academy, where the entire band is in their third school year of voluntarily arriving at school an hour early everyday, just so they can practice for two hours per day, instead of one hour. EMPOWER has been doing similar great work with Dayton and Holmes high schools in Dayton and Covington, KY for the past two years. NKU Director of Jazz Studies, Brian Hogg, founded and coordinates this program. We will now be funding EMPOWER with 75% of the proceeds from all of our Greater Cincinnati fundraisers and they will be coordinating our Greater Cincinnati school presentations, allowing them to expand into Greater Cincinnati elementary and middle schools. In addition to educating students about jazz, research has proven that “learning to play a musical instrument changes the brain, leading to a slew of potential benefits, including improved learning and understanding of language”. This is why music education should be as much a requirement for children of all ages as reading, writing and arithmetic. Starting now, in-school presentations can be requested at hoggw1@nku.edu or by calling Brian Hogg at 859.572.5885.

Along with partnering with EMPOWER, our foundation also provided a grant for $5,000 to the World Piano Competition to help fund their 2012-2013 Bach-Beethoven-Brahms outreach program for inner-city children and funded a jazz presentation for children at the Underground Railroad Freedom Center this past summer. We plan to continue these partnerships in the future, too.

Dr. Richard Van Dyke, NKU adjunct professor of piano, began a two year term as President of the Ohio Music Teachers Association at the Fall Conference held in Columbus Ohio on November 10, 2012.

Dr. Van Dyke was selected to present, Ten Steps to Parnassus: the Works of J. S. Bach, at the Music Teachers National Association National Conference on March 10, 2013. The 2013 National Conference will be held at the Disneyland Resort in Anaheim, California.

Adjunct Professor of Theory and Composition Douglas Pew has been commissioned by the Washington National Opera and Kennedy Center to compose a new, short opera.
Washington National Opera Announces Details of First Season of New Commissions of the American Opera Initiative

by Monica S. Holt

Three new 20-minute works to be presented November 19, 2012
in the Kennedy Center Terrace Theater

New hour-long opera to premiere in June 2013

Inaugural mentors to include:
Composer Jake Heggie
Librettist Mark Campbell
Conductor Anne Manson

(WASHINGTON, D.C.)—Washington National Opera (WNO) today announced initial plans for the first season of its American Opera Initiative, a comprehensive new commissioning program first announced in January.

Three young teams of composers and librettists—Douglas Pew and Dara Weinberg, Liam Wade and John Grimmett, and Scott Perkins and Nat Cassidy—will premiere new 20-minute operas, each based on a contemporary American story, in a concert performance on November 19, 2012 in the Kennedy Center Terrace Theater. In June 2013, a new hour-long opera by D.J. Sparr and Davis Miller will premiere in the Kennedy Center Terrace Theater.

The composer/librettist teams will collaborate on their work with distinguished mentors who have each enjoyed professional success with new American opera: composer Jake Heggie (Dead Man Walking, Moby-Dick), librettist Mark Campbell (winner of the 2012 Pulitzer Prize for Silent Night), and conductor Anne Manson (Manitoba Chamber Orchestra). Conductor Robert Wood (UrbanArias) will serve as an advisor to the program and its artists. The composers and librettists will work with these mentors and advisors throughout the creative process and during workshops held at the Kennedy Center in October 2012.

These presentations will be the first of WNO’s new program to stimulate, enrich, and ensure the future of contemporary American opera.

New 20-minute operas will explore the diversity of the American experience

The three original 20-minute operas presented on November 19 will each highlight a very different aspect of American life and culture. Each of these new works will be presented with accompaniment by a small chamber orchestra and will be performed in English. Following the performance, there will be a Q&A session with the artists and creative team.

Composer Douglas Pew and librettist Dara Weinberg will present The Game of Hearts, a comedic opera about a group of widows in a Seattle nursing home. Pew and Weinberg first met in Poland last year at the start of their two-year terms as Fulbright Scholars studying music composition and theater.

Part of the Act, by composer Liam Wade and librettist John Grimmett, is a comic opera set in a vaudevillian theater in New York City in 1924. Sparks fly between actresses in a backstage dressing room when a glamorous star is accused of infidelity by her rival. Composer Scott Perkins and librettist Nat Cassidy have created Charon, an allegorical tale of the ferryman of the River Styx and the cross-section of American characters he transports from the land of living to the world beyond.

Full casting and creative teams will be announced soon. Tickets for the November 19 presentation will go on sale to the public on July 23, 2012.

New hour-long opera will capture the spirit of boxer Muhammad Ali

Composer D.J. Sparr and librettist Davis Miller will premiere The Tao of Muhammad Ali (A Ghost Story) in June 2013 in the Kennedy Center Terrace Theater. This original hour-long opera tells the story of a reporter’s transformative meeting with the boxing legend Muhammad Ali.

The Tao of Muhammad Ali (A Ghost Story) will be performed with a chamber orchestra and receive a complete staging by a young director and design team (with mentorship provided by WNO Artistic Advisor Francesca Zambello). Open workshops at the Kennedy Center will be held throughout its development cycle.
Complete casting, creative team, and ticketing information for the June 2013 performance will be announced at a later date.

**Leading American artists to mentor next generation of opera creators**
A key element of the American Opera Initiative is connecting the young composers and librettists to professional mentors who have successfully brought new American operas to the stage. Each of the inaugural mentors—composer Jake Heggie, librettist Mark Campbell, and conductor Anne Manson—as well as advisor Robert Wood will work with the artists selected for both the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 seasons.

**WNO: American Opera Initiative**
**Three 20-Minute Operas**

*The Game of Hearts* by Douglas Pew & Dara Weinberg  
*Part of the Act* by Liam Wade & John Grimmett  
*Charon* by Scott Perkins & Nat Cassidy

The first season of WNO's American Opera Initiative opens with the premieres of three new 20-minute operas in a concert performance, accompanied by a small chamber orchestra, and followed by a Q&A session with the artists and creative team.

Composer Douglas Pew and librettist Dara Weinberg present *The Game of Hearts*, a comedy about a group of widows in a Seattle nursing home. Pew and Weinberg first met in Poland last year while studying music composition and theater as Fulbright Scholars.

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From Music in Cincinnati

Charles Wadsworth a Treat for Constella

Posted in: Reviews
By Mary Ellyn Hutton
Oct 11, 2012 - 4:59:08 PM

“I will remember this concert for the rest of my life,” said violinist Tatiana Berman, following the Constella Festival’s “An Evening with Charles Wadsworth” Oct. 6 at Northern Kentucky University.

Doubtless, so will everyone else who attended the concert, held in Greaves Concert Hall.

Pianist and chamber music guru Wadsworth (founder of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center) not only lent his extraordinary artistry to the program, he thoroughly charmed the audience as a raconteur. Speaking from the stage, he introduced and commented on the music, his delight in coming to Cincinnati, himself (disparagingly) and just about anything else that came to mind, including the evening’s Cincinnati Reds game. He was equally engaging meeting people after the concert.

The event was presented by NKU as a partner organization for the 2012 Constella Festival of Music and Fine Arts. Bringing Wadsworth to Cincinnati was a coup engineered by Nina Perlove, instructor in flute at NKU. Perlove, who performed with Wadsworth along with Berman and cellist Nathaniel Chaitkin, is also executive director of the Cincinnati-based American Classical Music Hall of Fame. As such, she traveled to the Spoleto USA Festival in Charleston, South Carolina last spring to induct Wadsworth into the Hall of Fame (Wadsworth heads chamber music activities at Spoleto USA, as well). The invitation to Cincinnati followed.

Beyond charming the audience, Wadsworth was above all an inspiration to his fellow performers (as all agreed in addition to Berman).

The concert opened with Haydn’s Trio for Piano, Flute and Cello in G Major (Hob.XV:15), a work, Wadsworth noted, filled with the composer’s famous wit. The Allegro took off with numerous perky appoggiaturas (a dissonant pitch struck on a strong beat and immediately resolving step-wise). The Andante that followed was given welcome nuance by the performers, while the Finale, a merry rondo was made even merrier by repeated pauses and a deceptive cadence near the end. Perlove joined Wadsworth in his own “Song Without Words,” a lovely piece which would be quite at home at the movies. There is a love story behind it, he said, and it came through in the music’s romantic sheen and the outpouring of piano as Wadsworth moved into the main theme.

The first of three sonatas by French composers came next, beginning with Poulenc’s Sonata for Flute and Piano. Perlove and Wadsworth made exceptional collaborators in this favorite work, giving it a ravishing performance, always at one with the music. Berman and Chaitkin followed in the first two movements of Ravel’s Sonata for Violin and Cello, a work not heard as often as it should be. It was a feast for the ears and filled the hall with gesture and color. The second movement, "Très vif," was
particularly rewarding, with its Hungarian flavor and virtuosic effects.

The Trio in C Minor for Flute, Violin, Cello and Harpsichord by German baroque composer Johann Joachim Quantz made a fine contrast with the predominantly Gallic repertoire on the rest of the program. Berman led the ensemble with baroque-informed taste and expression. The Allegro (second movement) had a spring in its step, Chaitkin provided a warm-colored “walking bass” in the Larghetto, and the closing Vivace sparkled. Wadsworth, who appeared to be enjoying himself enormously, performed on the French double manual harpsichord crafted by Northern Kentucky harpsichord maker James Campbell in 1984.

As Berman correctly felt, there was true energy in Debussy's Sonata for Violin and Piano, which she performed with Wadsworth. It was an extraordinary performance by both artists. Mutual tone production and inflection were perfectly crafted and every detail was exquisitely in place. Berman projected with ease and beauty on the violin’s lowest string, delivered suave pizzicato in the second movement, and was all over the fiddle in the Finale.

Perlove and Wadsworth brought the concert to a memorable end with French composer Cécile Chaminade’s Concertino for Flute, Op. 107 (1902). Chaminade’s most popular work today (and never out of the repertoire), it was a perfect vehicle for the prodigious Perlove (also known as “the internet flutist,” see www.REALFLUTEproject.com). From the elegant, assertive opening, through passages of jollity and downright virtuosity, it was a brilliant conclusion to a thoroughly enjoyable concert that drew plaudits from the crowd.

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From Music in Cincinnati

Nico Muhly Meets the Digitorium

Posted in: Reviews
By
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Nico Muhly, 31, has been called “the hottest composer on the planet” -- and not without reason. To say that he is on the cutting edge of musical composition is no exaggeration, as a rapt crowd learned Tuesday evening (Oct. 9) in the Digitorium in Northern Kentucky University's Griffin Hall.

Composer-in-residence for the 2012 Constella Festival of Music and Fine Arts, Muhly hosted, explained and performed over an hour’s worth of mind-bending, electronically-laced musical art. Working with him was visual and electronics artist Jordan Munson, who filled the 285 micro tiles on the wall of the Digitorium with light, color and abstract imagery.

The music was all-Muhly, including a world premiere, Three Songs for tenor and violin, featuring tenor Grant Knox and violinist/Constella artistic director Tatiana Berman. Also on the program were “Keep in Touch” with Joanne Wojtowicz on amplified viola, a set of pieces with Muhly at the piano, and a choral work, “Like as the Hart,” performed by the NKU Chamber Choir conducted by Randy Pennington.

Centerpiece of the program was Three Songs, a setting of surrealist love poems by Andre Breton ("Always for the First Time") and Jacques-Bernard Brunius ("I Love"), separated by a song-without-words for solo violin. Opening electronically on a soft, stark interval (Muhly manipulated the electronic elements throughout the concert), it transpired as a dialogue between Knox and Berman over drones. Breton’s poem was drenched in longing. Brunius' was upbeat and hopeful. The solo violin's dramatic, sorrow-filled song was insightfully and beautifully rendered by Berman. Lines from the poems were interspersed with Munson’s atmospheric projections, which keenly reflected Knox’s heartfelt vocalism.
Wojtowicz “plugged in” her viola for “Keep in Touch,” which Muhly introduced in droll, viola-joke fashion: “What could I possibly do with a viola?” Quite a lot, actually. Muhly describes it as a lament, cast loosely in the form of a chaconne (a baroque form based on a repeated cycle of chords). The electronic element consisted of a pre-recorded CD, featuring vocalist Antony Hegarty (of Antony and the Johnsons) whose androgynous sound is intended to reflect the viola’s position as the “in between” voice of the violin family. It was a fascinating work, with percussive, even violent effects, as well as ecstatic ones, ambiguous faces on the Digitorium wall and Muhly ever-busy coordinating the electronics on his laptop computer.

The concert opened with “The Adulteress,” a setting of the biblical text about Jesus and the woman taken in adultery. It was the most traditional work on the program (no electronics), essentially an opera scene, given a touching rendition by soprano Samantha Stein and pianist Rosemary Ritter, with projections of blues and reds that became suffused with light at the end.

Muhly took to the piano for “Skip Town,” a rhythmically charged work with pre-recorded percussive effects, providing a sudden, brief splash of fun. He followed with “A Hudson Cycle,” a tribute to a pair of departing friends and “the saddest piece I’ve ever written,” he said. Beautiful colors were projected here, reflecting the minor-mode harmony of the work. Muhly closed the set with “Drones and Piano.” His objective here, he said, was to array sounds that surround us in daily life over a drone (in this case two notes repeated throughout). There were scratching strings, bell and organ-like sounds and some dramatic acoustic piano, requiring Muhly to address the piano with one hand and the keyboard interacting with his computer with the other.

Final work of the evening was “Like as the Hart,” inspired by Psalm 42. Violinist Elizabeth Steva and percussionist Joe Bedel performed the acoustically conceived work with 30-voice NKU Choir, who unfolded the text with slowly changing harmonies, placing the central emphasis on the word “God.” Complementing the voices were soft touches of gong, triangle and wood block and melodic fragments and figurations on the violin.

The concert was followed by a reception and art exhibit by Andrey Kozakov in the lobby of the Digitorium. The Constella Festival continues at 8 p.m. tonight in Patricia Corbett Theater at the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory with the Café MoMus Contemporary Music Ensemble performing more Muhly. Admission is free.

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