COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Mizzou New Music Summer Festival encourages collaboration

By Mallory Benedict
July 8, 2010 | 8:13 p.m. CDT

He rode over Connecticut
In a glass coach.
Once, a fear pierced him,
In that he mistook
The shadow of his equipage
For blackbirds.

COLUMBIA — **MU composer Tom McKenney examined the ins and outs of Wallace Stevens' "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird" before turning it into an original composition.**

"To me, that's the darkest and ... the climax of the poem," McKenney said. "I have actually used that as a really intense place in the music, and then after that, the music really has motion in it — but it's a much quieter movement all the way through the end of the piece."

**McKenney composed the piece loosely inspired by Stevens' poem to be played by Alarm Will Sound during the Mizzou New Music Summer Festival starting Monday.** McKenney, who is co-artistic director of the festival, said that he wasn't sure what kind of shape the musical version of the poem would take but that each section reflects the 13 stanzas of the poem.

"It's a poem that I've known for a long, long time," he said. "And it's a poem that I've been very fascinated with, in my way of thinking the imagery, and the very stanzas are just striking."
McKenney is not the only composer presenting original music for the festival. Music by co-artistic director Stefan Freund — who, like McKenney, teaches composition and music theory at MU — will be featured as well.

Freund and McKenney selected eight resident composers from a sea of 120 international submissions. Each composer has summoned his or her original style for pieces to be played by Alarm Will Sound at the end of the week in a performance at the Missouri Theatre Center for the Arts called "Eight World Premieres."

One of the eight, Amy Kirsten, considers herself a late-bloomer, starting her master's degree in composition at age 30. Her background in vocal jazz performance has influenced her composing style.

"Because I was a singer, I really like melody a lot," Kirsten said. "What I really like is color. I try to combine different colors and textures and every once and a while have a beautiful melody come out of that."

Another resident composer for the festival, Christopher Dietz, describes his composition as behaving "like a hound with its nose to the ground in pursuit of a fox; it has intention and energy yet always feels like it is searching."

The premieres will result from collaboration throughout the week between the composers and Alarm Will Sound as well as other musicians. Alarm Will Sound is known widely for innovative performance of new music. As a cellist and founding member, Freund said the group's presence has also "attracted A-list composers to Columbia for the festival."

Joined by Alarm Will Sound and the eight resident composers are guest composers Martin Bresnick and Derek Bermel and guest performing artist pianist Lisa Moore. These musicians will play a key role in both public entertainment and private mentorship for the resident composers.

"(Moore) is a world-class pianist that focuses on 20th-century music," McKenney said. "She does things that are so unique and different that I think people would find it interesting."
After presentations and lessons from the faculty, the ensemble and guest composers and artists, the resident composers will work with Alarm Will Sound on their original pieces, leading up to "Eight World Premieres" on July 18.

The entire festival is an opportunity for the Columbia community to be present for the creation of new music and, according to festival administrative director William Lackey, provides the participants a good avenue to learn and share music with one another.

"It's a very special event to go to a festival dedicated to music that's being created today," he said, chuckling with excitement. "Not only do you get to hear those pieces, you get to meet (the composers). Just to have this opportunity is rare."

Kirsten said there's "a huge electric current that seems to be circling around Columbia with new music."

She described the city's unique relationship with the compositions as particularly exciting.

"When the community realizes that it's because of them that all these new pieces were written, you can't look at that and not get excited," she said.

The festival is the latest addition to the Mizzou New Music Initiative, a multifaceted program aiming to provide a "diverse array of programs intended to position (MU's School of Music) as a leading center in the areas of composition and new music," according to the website. The initiative is the result of a $1 million donation from Jeanne and Rex Sinquefield of the Sinquefield Charitable Foundation.

Other programs in the initiative include undergraduate composition scholarships, graduate assistantships, the Creating Original Music Project and the Composer Connection.

"(The festival) has already had the impact we were hoping for, and we're sure it will grow," Freund said. "All the programs of the initiative will play a role in establishing Columbia as a center for new music."

McKenney is optimistic about the uniqueness of the festival and said it caters to nearly every music palette.
"There is a very interesting mix in all of this," he said. "Almost everyone in attendance would hopefully have something they liked."

As for his own composition, McKenney said he is not trying to musically describe everything that’s going on in the poem.

"In one of his letters, Stevens said that the blackbird stanzas are supposed to create a poem of sensations," he said. "In a sense, that’s the way I’ve treated it musically. ... It’s really more the sensation."
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Advancing Renewables in the Midwest shines light on sustainable future

By Tim Wall
July 8, 2010 | 5:24 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — Running a computer network on grass clippings; using rotting garbage to power a city; connecting distant windmills to homes in Columbia: these goals were once science fiction.

The fifth annual Advancing Renewables in the Midwest conference will update attendees on the progress toward making environmentally friendly electricity a reality.

The conference will bring together engineers, entrepreneurs, scientists and policymakers Thursday in the Anheuser-Busch Natural Resource Building at MU. Speakers will explain the roadblocks to renewables as well as the opportunities in Missouri for wind, solar, biomass and other renewable energy industries.

The conference can also be a networking opportunity for people with diverse reasons for attending, said Connie Kacprowicz, utility services specialist for Columbia Water and Light, a co-sponsor of the event. Sustainable energy production was once largely the concern of environmentalists, she said. Now, energy independence and economic opportunity are becoming common reasons for interest.

Mark Templeton, director of the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, a co-host of the event, will begin the conference with a session on Missouri’s energy future in general, but later sessions focus on a variety of themes.

The presentations on economic opportunities will be one of the conference’s most important aspects, Kacprowicz said.
“More money leads to faster development,” she said. She said she thinks that by bringing together a diverse group of experts, the conference can inspire others and move projects forward.

Chris Chung, CEO of Missouri Partnership, an industrial advocacy group, will speak directly to the interests of Missouri industry in his session, "Developing Renewable Manufacturing Projects." Another session will focus on a data center fueled by grass biomass energy.

Smaller scale, decentralized power production may be the future for utility industries, Kacprowicz said. Larry Mansueti of the U.S. Department of Energy will present what is being done to update the electricity grid to ensure reliable service while still embracing renewable technology.

Missouri has a climate similar to Germany, a world leader in solar energy, yet the state produces little solar energy. The Midwest’s race to catch up will be the focus of a session by Tom Nicholas of the Solar Electric Power Association.

Other sessions will focus on climate change and energy efficiency in the home.

Columbia Water and Light, MU’s department of soil, environmental and atmospheric sciences and the state Department of Natural Resources are hosting the event.

The conference is being sponsored by Midwest Power Solutions, TradeWind Energy, Midwest Energy Efficiency Alliance, Iberdola Renewables and the Wind Capitol Group.

Registration will remain open until the event, and walk-up registration is welcome. Last year, there were 175 attendees.
Missouri S&T surpasses goal

By Janese Silvey

Posted July 1, 2010 at 8:28 a.m.

The University of Missouri's Rolla campus successfully ended a 7-year fundraising campaign yesterday.

Missouri University of Science and Technology surpassed its $200 million goal and raised $211.8 million through the Advancing Excellence Campaign, which began July 1, 2003.

A campaign to raise $200 million in private funds over seven years at Missouri University of Science and Technology ended on a successful note Wednesday (June 30), with the university surpassing the fundraising goal by nearly $12 million.

Among the major accomplishments during the Advancing Excellence Campaign:

• The creation of more than 200 new scholarships, which provide support for more than 600 additional students.

• Construction and renovation of Toomey Hall, the university’s mechanical and aerospace engineering complex, a $29 million project.

• Funding for a facility for the university’s award-winning student design teams.

• Funding for 11 endowed faculty positions in disciplines including biochemistry, computer science, energy, environmental engineering, and materials science and engineering.

• A new fitness center and varsity weight room complex.

• Support for summer pre-college programs, which bring nearly 2,000 elementary and secondary students to campus annually.

• Funding for a new indoor practice facility to provide year-round training for the university’s 360 student-athletes.