

## **Composer building bridges for students**

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CLASSICAL MUSIC

### **PREVIEW**

#### **Cleveland Contemporary Players**

Soprano Tony Arnold, pianist Jacob Greenberg, trumpeter Jon Nelson and the Venner Trio perform music by Morton Feldman, George Benjamin, Jeffrey Stadelman, Luciano Berio, Michael Colgrass and James Primosch.

When: 8 p.m. Tuesday.

Where: Cleveland State University's Drinko Recital Hall, 2001 Euclid Ave.

Tickets: Free.

Bridging the gap between academic and professional life is a reality every student faces. Just consider the challenges facing a young composer: Writing a piece of music; producing a printable, accurate score; hearing the work performed on a high level; securing a decent recording that can be used for posterity and contacts.

Andrew Rindfleisch knows the terrain well. An award-winning composer who serves as coordinator of composition studies at Cleveland State University, he long has been eager to expand the possibilities both for young composers and contemporary music.

The result is the Cleveland Contemporary Players, not an ensemble, but an organization with many educational components that are being folded into the curriculum at CSU's music department.

In its inaugural season, Cleveland Contemporary Players is presenting concerts by well-known visiting new-music experts, who are in residence for several days to work closely with student composers and play and record their music.

The next event Tuesday at CSU's Drinko Recital Hall is a free concert by soprano Tony Arnold, the Venner Trio and others and will feature the music of Morton Feldman, George Benjamin, Jeffrey Stadelman, Luciano Berio, Michael Colgrass and James Primosch.

As music director of the Cleveland Contemporary Players, Rindfleisch has intriguing ideas that go beyond staging concerts. He has begun to raise money to create a music composition resource center at CSU.

The center, which will inhabit a former electronic-music studio on the third floor of CSU's Music and Communication Building starting next fall, promises to be a haven for student composers. The room will have machines for photocopying and binding scores and for duplicating compact discs. Students will have access, at no cost above tuition, to unlimited supplies of recordable CDs and computers with notation software.

"In short, it will be a place where all the stuff that composers require to become involved professionally will be available," says Rindfleisch, 41. "I don't know of any program that has all of those things at a student's fingertips." Most universities and conservatories with composition programs provide few or none of the resources the CSU program will offer. Young composers tend to take lessons and occasionally hear their creations played — largely sight-read — by student colleagues.

Rindfleisch is aiming to raise the bar. His program will provide students with the means to create a portfolio that could affect their careers.

One of the potential beauties of the concept is the extent to which a student's music is taken seriously. It is not merely performed and recorded on the spot. Long before they arrive at CSU, the specialists receive the music so they can prepare it and provide students with valuable comments in advance of their residencies. Once at CSU, the visiting composers and performers workshop the music with the students to discuss practical and aesthetic issues.

"Composers watch other composers evaluate their music," says Rindfleisch. "They hear about what's possible, what works, what doesn't. The key is that the level of performance is incredibly high. I think it is a remarkable experience for a student composer."

Rindfleisch estimates the annual budget for Cleveland Contemporary Players and the resource center will be \$120,000, which he is raising himself. He has received some money from the Bascom Little Fund and the CSU music department. He also has raised more than \$100,000, with seed money from an anonymous donor, for a fund to support projects involving Jewish composers and performers.

Enrollment in the composition program at CSU varies from year to year. Rindfleisch said he and the department's other faculty composers, Greg D'Alessio and Eric Ziolek, generally teach six to 10 undergraduate and four to six graduate students. But they would like to see those numbers rise as the new program settles and becomes a competitive force.

It's already having an impact. This week's guests include Pulitzer Prize-winning composer Michael Colgrass. Next year, Rindfleisch will bring in Paul Moravec, last year's Pulitzer winner, and the Either/Orchestra, an acclaimed 10-piece jazz ensemble from Boston.

The point, he says, is to give students and the community the broadest possible palette of contemporary-music culture.

Amid the plans, fund-raising and teaching is Rindfleisch's own activity as a composer. He holds composition degrees from the University of Wisconsin, New England Conservatory and Harvard University, and his works have won him numerous honors, including the Rome Prize, Aaron Copland Award and Guggenheim Fellowship. His next commission is a piece for a consortium of collegiate wind ensembles, and other projects are in the early stages.

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