Laurence Sherr

Newsletter 2008-2009

Reconciliation in Germany

Martina Rühmkorff performs *Elegy and Vision* in Egelsbach, Germany. Photo by Klaus-Dieter Zühlke.

Accepting an invitation to Germany, Laurence Sherr collaborated with his hosts to present Holocaust memorial events in Egelsbach and Seligenstadt, the birth cities of his grandparents. Sherr and his German counterparts modeled respect and tolerance during their presentations and musical performances. Musical highlights included cellist Martina Ruhmkorff's performance of Sherr's *Elegy and Vision*, Sherr's *Remembrances* performed by violinist Stephan Berg, Rühmkorff, and Sherr, and Sherr's interpretation of a traditional klezmer melody. Sherr gave a presentation about his family and his Holocaust memorial music, and historical researchers in both towns spoke about the fate of local Jewish families, especially Sherr's ancestors.

In Egelsbach, artist Gunter Demnig installed Stolpersteine (sidewalk memorial stones). He placed these memorials to three generations of the Katz and Bacharach families in front of the house where Alice Bacharach, Sherr's mother, lived. She was the only Holocaust survivor from her family. Widespread press coverage of Sherr's visit included more than half a dozen articles in several newspapers. The title of one article: "The Sound of Reconciliation."

National Park Residency

Superintendant Fernandez receives *Ouachita Waters*

The U.S. Department of the Interior awarded Laurence Sherr the position of Artist-in-Residence at Hot Springs National Park in Arkansas in 2009. While residing in the Park in June, Sherr created *Ouachita Waters*, a piano prelude, based on the most unique natural feature in the Park. "*Ouachita Waters* is my musical rendition of the journey through various ecosystems of the thermal waters that surface in Hot Springs National Park. The 4,000 years that the water travels underground is the portion that required the greatest imagination", Sherr observed. While in Hot Springs, Sherr presented the lecture "Nature in Classical Music" at the Park, and worked with the musicians who performed a movement from his Duo Concertante at the Hot Springs Music Festival.

Josie Fernandez, Superintendant of Hot Springs National Park, is enthusiastic about the work created by the first composer in the Park's artist residency program. She has invited Sherr and pianist Hee-Kyung Juhn to present the world premiere during National Park Week in April 2010.

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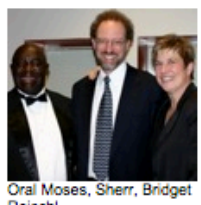
Composition Prize

Four Short Pieces for solo violin by Laurence Sherr was one of three winning compositions in the 2009 Association for the Promotion of New Music Composition Competition. The awarded works were performed on October 23, 2009, at the Tenri Cultural Institute in New York City. Airi Yoshioka, an internationally recognized violinist trained at Yale and Julliard, gave a virtuosic and impassioned performance that was enthusiastically received by the audience. Sherr traveled to New York for the event; he and Yoshioka collaboratively shaped the lines and timbres in the work in their engaged rehearsal. Yoshioka noted that "Sherr's colorful writing is a good vehicle for my playing, and I'm going to include [Four Short Pieces] in my repertory for the coming season."

CD Release

Chroma: New Music for Piano was released on Capstone Records in 2009. The CD features pianist Jeri-Mae Astolfi, a champion of music by living composers, performing works by contemporary American creators. Laurence Sherr's Nocturne is included. Astolfi took the Nocturne and other CD repertory on 2008 and 2009 tours of California, Wisconsin, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Kentucky, Alabama, and Georgia. The CD is available from Amazon.com and other sites.

Flame Language Premiere



Oral Moses, Sherr, Bridget Reischl

The premiere of Laurence Sherr's new Holocaust memorial work, *Flame Language* for baritone and orchestra, was staged on October 22, 2008 at Kennesaw State University in Atlanta. Bass-baritone Oral Moses rendered a sonorous realization of the vocal solo as guest conductor Bridget Reischl from the Oberlin Conservatory of Music led the KSU Orchestra. The event included a presentation by Sherr about the poetry of Nobel laureate Nelly Sachs that he selected for *Flame Language*, and Dean Joseph Meeks' remarks about the importance of the arts in remembrance. Sherr gave a pre-concert lecture on his Holocaust memorial music.

A national consortium of vocalists and chamber orchestras commissioned *Flame Language*. One of the consortium vocalists, Elliot Z. Levine of the Western Wind Vocal Ensemble in New York City, will give the premiere of the version for vocalist and chamber ensemble in April 2010 concerts in Athens and Atlanta.

Oy Klezmer! in Nashville

Take five parts frailach spielers. Add one part Borscht-belt crooner. Whaddya get? Oy Klezmer! plus Mrs. Schmalz!! The expanded band captures Yiddish, Ladino, Gypsy, swing, and klezmer styles in their Old World euphoria. After Atlanta gigs with their new configuration, Oy Klezmer! headed to Nashville in February 2009, where Mrs. Schmalz fronted the group for the Big Megillah gala event at the Lowe's Symphony Space Ballroom. The dancing antics of the costumed crowd can be seen in videos at the Oy Klezmer! website.