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## President's Message



Greetings to all SCL composers!

I would like to introduce Dr. Larry Barnes as the new Secretary of the SCL. Dr. Barnes is Professor of Music at Transylvania University (in Kentucky) and is a great composer. He is the recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts Composer Fellowship, two Kentucky Arts Council awards, an AI Smith Fellowship, two Lexington Arts Council grants, and 31 ASCAP Awards. The New York Times reviewed his music as “showing a fine sensitivity” and the Village Voice called it “intriguing” and “remarkably controlled” in performance. Dr. Barnes has fulfilled over thirty commissions, including being twice named the Kentucky Music Teachers' Association's commissioned composer.

Our deadline for the receipt of Salop-Slates student competition entries is January 29, 2018. Please encourage your students to participate in these competition opportunities. Our students are the future of composition activity in our region, and we want the SCL to continue to encourage the development of young talent in the realm of creative activity.

We have come upon an idea whose time has finally come: a revision of the Constitution and Bylaws of the SCL. The document was last revised in 1980. A “document revision” committee of SCL members was established at a recent business meeting of the SCL because of the leadership of Jonathan McNair, who is a Past-President of the SCL. This committee is currently in a dialog, which will result in revisions to this important document, which will also be subject to membership approval. Whenever you see the individuals on this committee, please thank them for the strength of their ideas and their commitment to the ongoing viability of our organization. A list of the committee members is provided below (in no particular order):

## Music Now

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November 2017

### President's Message



Harvey Stokes

Terry Vosbein

Gary Nash

Joe Alexander

Jane Patterson

Judy Davies

Jonathan McNair

Paul Schreiber

And so, until the next time I write, I am wishing all of you the best of compositional activities, artistic growth, and music performances. Keep writing great music!

Warmest regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Harvey". The script is cursive and fluid.

Harvey Stokes

President

Southeastern Composers League

## Music Now

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November 2017

### Member News



Betty Wishart

Betty Wishart's *Prelude I* and *Toccata III* were performed by Max Lipchitz at Christ & St. Stephen's Church in New York City on June 8. The following evening Max Lipchitz and Lisa Hansen performed Betty's *Oracles for Flute and Piano* on the North South Consonance concert at the Tenri Cultural Institute.

On August 27 her *Variations on Shenandoah* were posted on Nancy Bogen's vimeo channel "On Wandering Forever".

On September 5 Campbell University presented a concert of Betty's piano music. Betty spoke about the compositions before they were performed by Dr. Jeri-Mae Astolfi. The program, which featured *Sonata II*, *Night Visions II*, *Variations on a Folk Melody*, *Toccata III*, *Three Preludes*, *Toccata II* and *Remembrance*, was repeated on September 22 at Christ & St. Stephen's Church in New York.



## Music Now

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Members News



Ken Davies

Things have been a little quieter here on the Mississippi Gulf Coast with the exception of a quickly passing Hurricane Nate on October 6-7. Of course, that was the same weekend Ken was at Fresno Pacific University in Fresno, CA, for the Christian Fellowship of Art Music Composers Conference. American Airlines contacted us and recommended a change of his flight schedule (thankfully without additional fee), and since his *Make a Joyful Noise* for SATB and rock band was performed on Oct. 6 by the “Crosswinds” group, Ken was able to leave early catching the last flight home before Gulfport closed its airport on Saturday afternoon! Fortunately, our only damage was a sizable tree limb down and a mess of yard debris. In August, Dr. Polashek, Director of Studio 300 at Transylvania University, selected Ken to play his *Notasonata* on their October 5-6 conference. However, due to the CFAMC conference, that opportunity had to be bypassed—perhaps next year!

We received a program from Henderson University in Arkadelphia, AR, showing a performance of Ken's *Divertimento for Five* on their May 5 Spring Brass Concert. Originally written for five trombones, this time the work was performed by four euphoniums and a tuba. Nothing like a little improvisation to keep things lively, and Dr. Jaime Lipton does a great job doing that at Henderson.

September 24<sup>th</sup> the Mississippi University for Women in Columbus, MS, hosted a NACUSA concert. Dr. Jessica Haislip gave an excellent performance of Ken's *Dark River* for English horn and digital media, and Ken premiered his new *Nocturne-August 2017* on the concert as well. On October 20<sup>th</sup>, Ken once again performed *Nocturne-August 2017*, this time at the University of Montevallo in Montevallo, AL, on a NACUSA concert and then premiered his latest trombone composition, *Nocturne-September 2017*. That's all the trombone works for now. Looking forward to doing other new compositions and enjoying some slightly cooler weather— hopefully without hurricanes.



Kenneth Benoit

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Kenneth R. Benoit's *A Leader's Prayer* was performed by the choir at First Presbyterian Church of Hollywood, FL, on October 15. The choir was under the direction of Dr. Robert Remek

## Music Now

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November 2017

### Member News



Gary Nash

Southeastern Composers League Vice President Gary Powell Nash's composition *Southern Grandparents* (2017) for soprano, tenor and piano, which is based on the poem *Southern Grandparents* by Hayley "Bugg" Davis, was commissioned by Delta State University for their Mississippi Bicentennial Celebration Concert on October 6, 2017. It was premiered by soprano Laurissa Backlin, tenor Jamie Dahman, and pianist Kumiko Shimizu.

Nash was a guest lecturer for Dr. Allison Ogden's composition seminar class at the University of Louisville on October 11, 2017.

His composition *Sui Generis Bastion* (2016) for viola solo, was commissioned and premiered by violist Ashleigh Gordon on November 4, 2017 on a concert titled Identity at The New School of Music, in Cambridge, MA. There was also an encore performance on a second Identity concert, November 5, 2017, at Clark University, Worcester, MA.

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Lauren McCall

Lauren McCall's composition *What the Bell's Tell* for carillon, was performed by Roy Lee this past September at the Metropolitan United Church in Toronto, Canada. This piece was commissioned by the Canadian Music Centre for their Opus: Testing Tower and Helm workshop,



Harvey Stokes

## On *The Compositional Muse* (or, the Creation of Art music against the Odds)

Harvey J. Stokes

### Preliminary considerations

One day, I was reading an article<sup>1</sup> by the theorist-composer Arnold Schoenberg (1874-1951) entitled *Composition with Twelve Tones* (1941). Of course, Schoenberg's article describes his system of "*Composition with Twelve Tones which are Related only with One Another*" as one which could replace the traditional tonal system for the creation of art music. While reading Schoenberg's seminal article, I came across the following statement—one which seems useful for a reflection in this article on what I call *the compositional muse*:

*“ . . . Whether one calls oneself conservative or revolutionary, whether one composes in a conventional or a progressive manner, whether one tries to imitate old styles or is destined to express new ideas—whether one is a good composer or not—one must be convinced of the infallibility of one's own fantasy and one must believe in one's own inspiration. . . . ”*

This statement from Schoenberg's article affected me deeply when I first read it in the late 1970's—and it still affects me deeply today. It seems that Schoenberg's statement is applicable to any compositional style as well as any approach to music creation. Specifically, I feel that the creation of any kind of art music cannot be made without *an absolute confidence in the superiority of one's compositional muse*. This means that composers should seek ways to nurture *the compositional muse* in us as well as avoid all suppressive elements.

*The compositional muse* has been defined in a variety of ways—and has been mentioned through other terminology also. For this article, I am suggesting that it is simply *the source of inspiration for creative activity*. In other words, as we look at a blank piece of manuscript paper (or some other compositional prompt) to begin the compositional act, what initial note will be written down? What initial gesture will be expressed? What initial mood will be realized? It is the accessing of *the compositional muse* in us which seeks to respond to these questions.

### ***The Compositional Muse: to suppress or nurture?***

It seems useful to discuss some areas which seek to suppress *the compositional muse* as well as areas which nurture it. I am sure that there are a variety of areas

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<sup>1</sup>See Arnold Schoenberg, "Composition with Twelve Tones," *Style and Idea: Selected Writings of Arnold Schoenberg*, ed. Leonard Stein (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1975), p. 218.

that can be mentioned here; nevertheless, a discussion of some areas which have affected me personally during my compositional experiences will be shared below. It is my hope that my brief thoughts can help to provoke a consideration of additional areas that are not mentioned below, but that are important to you as a composer. In any case, the creation of even more works among us is what we should all seek through *the compositional muse*—and regardless of whether those works are to be performed or not.

The following, then, represents a few areas which seek to suppress *the compositional muse*:

- **Criticism**  
This area includes not only criticism from peers, but includes those from the various print media (with various reviews, polemics, and so on). Of course, one can only experience “good” or “bad” criticism; nevertheless, *the compositional muse* gives you the privilege of placing “good” or “bad” criticism aside so that you might continue creating a strong body of creative output.
- **Work ethic**  
Without a doubt, procrastination is very harmful; *the compositional muse* is suppressed by procrastination more than anything that could be imagined. In other words, the more a “delay” to the writing of that next great composition of yours is made, a certain “rigor mortis” can begin to attach itself to you and so on (I hope you get the picture here.). Therefore, a clear *decision* to “get going with writing music” is needed if you are going to have the cooperation of *the compositional muse*. Be sure to get the complete concept of your work first, and then the details of that composition can be “filled in” afterwards.
- **Mass-Satisfaction vs. Self-Satisfaction**  
I feel that the act of composing art music is born from an *imperative* to communicate something that has not been communicated. Therefore, it is important to receive a personal self-satisfaction in the communication of ideas *regardless* of whether the music is to be performed in the future. In other words, if “the masses” are to be satisfied with your art, *you must be satisfied with it first*. Generally, I write music because at the specific moment of beginning a composition, I feel that I have something to say artistically that I have not expressed before; my hope, of course, is that I may draw the audience into the music-making experience.

And now, a reference to some areas which can nurture *the compositional muse* will be mentioned. I am sure that there are many additional areas that could be mentioned with the ones below:

- **Listening to music of the past**  
Much listening to the music of master composers from the past in a sedentary environment is an absolute requirement if one is to nurture *the compositional muse*. Ideally, one can purchase recordings and scores for this; also, a music library can be accessed. Nowadays, many websites can be accessed to listen to music analytically also. Indeed, no “shortcut” is possible in this area; additionally, it is necessary from time to time to listen to music non-analytically—even for personal enjoyment.
- **Interfacing with experienced living composers**  
All of us are enhanced by those living among us who have helped to propel our advancement as musicians—especially experienced composers who share their music with us. I feel that it is important to be able to “look up to and admire” all living composers that are more experienced than we might be, because this helps to nurture the compositional muse in us. An additional important teacher of mine in this regard was Avroham (Alan) Leichtling (1947- ); somehow, I received a digital copy of his Ninth Symphony for large orchestra and chorus from a friend, which is his magnum opus for “Mahlerian” forces of nearly two hours of length. And instead of asking the pertinent question of “who is going to perform this large work?” and so on, I decided simply to allow the “grandeur” of the work’s artistic expression to inspire me—and also because it was written by one of the greatest living composers of our day.
- **Instrumental Performance**  
One of my most important musical activities has been playing the oboe in various ensembles over the past 40 years or so. And it is this activity which enhances the compositional muse in an even more direct manner than just listening to music in a sedentary environment. There are many reasons for this; however, interactions with performance colleagues is surely one of them—even with those colleagues who provide feedback on performance practice with the various instruments that a composer might want to write music for and so on. This was encouraged above all else for the development of the compositional muse by the late Dr. John Corina (1928-2014), who was an important teacher of mine.
- **Divine inspiration**  
Often, *the compositional muse* is nurtured through an appeal to God—as was the practice (for example) of the great Joseph Haydn<sup>2</sup> (1732-1809) from time to time. The combination of divine inspiration and human *perspiration* as the tools of compositional craft represents the activity of not only Haydn, but also many other composers.

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<sup>2</sup>See J. Cuthbert Hadden, *Haydn* (London: J. M. Dent, 1902), p. 166-168.



### **Concluding considerations**

It is evident that many works of contemporary composers experience a fate of non-performance or neglect (for whatever reason); nevertheless, I am sure that you are still contemplating even now the creation of that next great electronic work, or that next great opus for Pierrot ensemble, or that next great art song cycle (and so on). But no matter what next work you may be seeking to compose, remember that *the compositional muse* will still be waiting for you and urging you on. After all, it seems evident that a composer writes music not because he or she *can* compose: a composer writes because they *must* compose—and therein is one of the mysteries of our great art.

Harvey J. Stokes is Professor of Music at Hampton University.

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*Announcing for 2018*

**Arnold Salop Memorial Competition for Undergraduate Students**

**Philip Slates Memorial Competition for Graduate Students**

Composers who are students of SCL members in good standing, or who become student members of SCL, may submit one (1) score of an instrumental or vocal composition for 1 – 8 performers, or for electroacoustic resources. Compositions may also combine acoustic and electroacoustic sounds.

Students should have teachers who are SCL members, and students must be studying in SCL's geographical region: Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia and West Virginia.

*There are cash awards for 1st and 2nd place winners in each category.*

Compositions that have previously won awards are not eligible.

Details, the application form, and submission links may be found at

[www.southeasterncomposersleague.org/contest](http://www.southeasterncomposersleague.org/contest)

**RECEIPT DEADLINE: Jan. 29, 2018**

## **SCL 2018 Forum Update**

Our host for the Southeastern Composers' League Forum is Chialing Hsieh, and the Forum will occur on the campus of Northwestern State University of Louisiana during February 23–24, 2018. The upcoming SCL Forum serves as a celebration of our 68th year as a composer organization. Chialing has provided some information on travel and lodging elements of the upcoming Forum below.

From Chialing:

Northwestern State University is located in beautiful historic Natchitoches (pronounced “Nack-a-tish”), the oldest town in Louisiana. It is also known as the filming location of “Steel Magnolias.” A guided tour for our SCL members is scheduled in the morning of February 24. Please join us.

Natchitoches is recognized as the Bed and Breakfast capital of Louisiana. If you would like to try the Southern B & B experience, please contact Angela Price at [angelaprice.nbb@gmail.com](mailto:angelaprice.nbb@gmail.com) <<mailto:angelaprice.nbb@gmail.com>>. The special SCL member rate of \$86 per night (plus \$9 for an authentic southern breakfast) is available at four B & B's: the famous Judge Porter, Queen Anne, Violet Hill, and Andrew Morris. Please let Angela know which one you would like to stay at.

If you prefer staying at a more modern place, please contact Cassy Gebhart at [cgebhart@chateausaintdenis.com](mailto:cgebhart@chateausaintdenis.com) <<mailto:cgebhart@chateausaintdenis.com>> or [318-951-4116](tel:318-951-4116) for lodging at Chateau Saint Denis. The special SCL member rate is \$97 per night plus \$9.95 Value Added Fee.

Airports serving Natchitoches are AEX at Alexandria (53 miles away), SHV at Shreveport (78 mi), BTR at Baton Rouge (177 mi), IAH at Houston (215 mi), MSY at New Orleans (260 mi) or DFW at Dallas (276 mi).

The Forum registration fee is \$25. Please visit <http://southeasterncomposersleague.org/forum/> for more information.

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## **The Southeastern Composers League**

Founded in 1950, the Southeastern Composers' League is an organization comprised of serious classical, modern, new scored, and electronic art music composers and scholars located throughout the southeastern United States. It is one of the oldest organizations of its kind in America. Many of our members fill distinguished faculty positions throughout the universities and educational institutions in the southeastern states (AL, AR, DE, DC, FL, GA, KY, LA, MD, MS, NC, SC, TN, VA, WV). Membership is for, but is not necessarily limited to, these states and Washington DC. Membership options include Composer, Associate and Student Memberships. Any SCL member can assist you in answering questions or in recommending you for a membership. If you are unfamiliar with the organization and would like information, contact one of the Current Officers (below) with your comments and questions. To obtain an application, click the member-new application under Site Navigation. Look for us on the Web: <http://www.southeasterncomposersleague.org> or Facebook – search for “Southeastern Composers League”.

### **Current Officers:**

President: Harvey Stokes- [harvey.stokes@hamptonu.edu](mailto:harvey.stokes@hamptonu.edu)

Vice President: Gary Powell Nash- [gpnashlj@hotmail.com](mailto:gpnashlj@hotmail.com)

Secretary: Larry Barnes- [lbarnes@transy.edu](mailto:lbarnes@transy.edu)

Treasurer: Paul Schreiber- [paul@psmus.com](mailto:paul@psmus.com)