FeNAM features talented Sac State alumni

Sacramento State’s Festival of New American Music (FeNAM) returns Nov. 3-13 with an outstanding lineup that includes several Sac State alumni.

The 34th annual edition features free concerts by various artists during its run, with most of the events on the campus.

This year’s keynote speaker is composer Martin Bresnick, a Yale professor whose wife, pianist Lisa Moore, is one of the featured performers. Bresnick will address festivalgoers at noon Tuesday, Nov. 8, in the Music Recital Hall.

“Bresnick is a very prolific composer and has won numerous awards,” says Professor Stephen Blumberg, a FeNAM co-director, adding that many of Bresnick’s students have become well-known performers and composers of new American music.

“He’s one of the last big-gun composers we haven’t had here,” says Professor Keith Bohm, the festival’s artistic director.

The two directors had wanted to bring Bresnick to the campus for a couple of years but did not have any group that was performing his music. “This time, we happen to have three of the groups playing his music three nights in a row,” says Bohm.

The Left Coast Ensemble will perform Bresnick’s Ballade for Cello and Piano Sunday, Nov. 6. Moore will perform For the Sexes: The Gates of Paradise and Willie’s Way on Monday, Nov. 7, and the Iridium Saxophone Quartet will perform Everything Must Go on Tuesday, Nov. 8. All concerts are at 8 p.m. in the Music Recital Hall.

Sac State is well represented by alumni in the list of FeNAM performers, including its artistic director. Bohm is a 1995 graduate.

The six-musician group Citywater boasts four former students: violinist Charles Spruill IV (2010), cellist Tim Stanley (’08), pianist Jennifer Reason (’07) and
percussionist Ben Prima (’09). Together with flutist Cathie Apple and clarinetist Milun Doskovic, they have been performing at the festival for five years, just doing a number or two at first, then moving up to full concerts the last three years.

“They’re one of the biggest crowd-pleasers of the festival,” says Bohm. “Every concert they’ve done at FeNAM has been a full house.”

“They show off this department in a big way because they’re really a great group and they’re just getting better all the time,” adds Blumberg.

Composer and pianist Sunny Knable was a triple major – composition, piano and jazz studies – when he graduated in 2007. “He’s become someone to be reckoned with in the composition world in New York City,” says Bohm. “A lot of his pieces are being performed.”

Knable will perform his own music as part of Sunny Knable and Friends, featuring Sac State faculty, alumni and guest artists.

John Villec is a 1995 graduate and an instructor at Sacramento City and San Joaquin Delta colleges. He specializes in electronic and computer music, and often creates video that goes along with his digital soundtracks. He will be screening audio/visual pieces created by members of the Society for Electro-Acoustic Music in the United States (SEAMUS), including some of his own work.

Tomm Roland (’95) is now the percussion instructor at the University of Nebraska, Omaha, and, with flutist Christine Beard, forms the Zephyrus Duo. They’ll perform at the Crocker Art Museum in conjunction with an exhibit of metal artwork.

Also new this year, the festival will travel west to the UC Davis Mondavi Center, where the California Youth Symphony will premiere Subterranean River, a new composition by Blumberg.

He and Bohm note that the number of musical alumni and the level of their talent and success are confirmation of Sacramento State’s program.

“It shows Sacramento State can be just as strong as any conservatory in putting out quality students who can make it in this world,” says Bohm.

For a complete schedule and more information on the Festival of New American Music, visit www.csus.edu/music/fenam/index.htm or call (916) 278-5191. For media assistance, call Sacramento State’s Public Affairs office at (916) 278-6156.
Craig Koscho
ckoscho@csus.edu

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