Young composer is at center of this year’s FeNAM


A young music phenom headlines this year’s FeNAM – Festival of New American Music – coming Nov. 7-16 at Sacramento State.

The “new American” classification covers a wide range of music that has influences of classical, art music, jazz and experimental sounds, and Sac State’s FeNAM ([www.csus.edu/music/fenam](http://www.csus.edu/music/fenam)) brings the genre’s best performers and composers for more than a week of free concerts and master classes. Professor Keith Bohm is the artistic director; Professor Stephen Blumberg is the co-director.

This year, the featured composer is Mohammed Fairouz, who will present the keynote address at noon Monday, Nov. 10, in Capistrano Hall 151. “He’s a very young but very successful composer who’s not even 30, and yet he’s written operas and concertos and orchestral music,” Blumberg says. “He’s getting lots of commissions and giving lots of performances throughout the country.”

Born in New York City, Fairouz combines the Western structures of classical and romantic music with Middle Eastern influences. “One person has called him ‘the post-millennial Schubert,’” Bohm says.

“And he’s a huge force for mutual understanding and religious tolerance,” Blumberg adds. One of Fairouz’s works, “The Named Angels,” explores the recognized angels shared in Jewish, Christian and Islamic works. “It’s as if he’s looking for overlap among the great world religions.”

Fairouz’s music will be performed by a number of FeNAM’s guests.

Pianist Lara Downes will present Fairouz’s works for solo piano during her recital at 8 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 9, at the Music Recital Hall, joined by the Del Sol String Quartet as special guests. Downes also will perform at the Gala Performance at 8 p.m. Friday, Nov. 7, playing a selection from a set of pieces she commissioned from various composers called “Thirteen Ways of Looking at the Goldberg.” That evening also includes Rootstock Percussion, and the quartet named loadbang – trumpet, trombone, bass clarinet and baritone voice.

loadbang’s solo concert at 8 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 8, will include nine West Coast premieres and two world premieres. “They’re going to create the most texture, the most different sound concepts with a lot of improvisational techniques,” Bohm says.

FeNAM is known for spotlighting Sac State’s pool of talent, and this year is no exception, including a number of alumni and instructors.

Returning alumnus Chase Spruill performs with keyboardist Michael Riesman. They will present new arrangements of music that Phillip Glass composed for the movies *The*
*Hours, Dracula* and *Candyman*. That concert closes the festival at 6 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 16.

Harpsichordist and alumna Faythe Vollrath will perform a world premiere of a work by another alumnus, Sunny Knable, at 8 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 15.

Other alumni performing include Tim Stanley (also an instructor), Ben Prima and Jennifer Reason of Citywater; and Bohm himself. “We’re so proud of our alumni – that they’ve gone out and done such great things,” Bohm says. “It’s nice to show off the talent that comes from here.”

Performing faculty include Anna Pressler, Daniel Kennedy and Chris Froh. Faculty composers include Blumberg, Richard Cionco and Laurel Zucker.

This is FeNAM’s 37th year, and the event is one of the few, if not the only, multiday festivals of new American music that run this long and still are free. “We work very hard writing grants,” Bohm says, “And the College of Arts and Letters and the Music Department have supported FeNAM from the beginning.”

“It’s a ‘who’s who’ of American music,” Blumberg says. “A big part of what makes Sacramento a great art and music city is the fact we have had this festival every year.”

For more information and a full schedule of events, visit the website or call (916) 278-5191. For media assistance, call Sacramento State’s Public Affairs office at (916) 278-6156. There are no performances on Veterans Day. – Craig Koscho