

CIM New Music Ensemble to feature works by Guest Composer Stephen Hartke

by Mike Telin



“I’m looking forward to the concert, and I have to say that the ensembles are sounding really good,” CIM’s New Music Ensemble director Keith Fitch said by telephone. On Sunday, November 5 at 4:00 pm in Mixon Hall, the Ensemble will present a concert featuring works by Guest Composer [Stephen Hartke](#). The program will also include two pieces by Donald Erb.

On Saturday, November 4 at 1:30 pm in CIM’s Studio 113, Hartke will present a Guest Composer Symposium. The Grammy Award-winning composer and Professor of Composition at Oberlin Conservatory will discuss his music and approach to composition. Both events are free and open to the public.

Following his studies at Yale, the University of Pennsylvania, and the University of California at Santa Barbara — interrupted by stints as advertising manager for several major music publishers — Hartke went on to teach in Brazil as Fulbright Professor at the Universidade de São Paulo. He has also taught at the Thornton School of Music at the University of Southern California.

“Steve has been on my list of composers to invite for a while, even when he was living in California,” Fitch said, “and now that he’s in the neighborhood it made everything so much easier.”

Sunday’s program will feature Hartke’s [The Blue Studio](#) (2015) for violin, cello, and piano, [Oh Them Rats Is Mean In My Kitchen](#) (1985) for violin duo, and [Gradūs](#) (1999) for bass clarinet, vibraphone, piano, violin, cello, and double bass. “When corresponding with him, he made some suggestions, and I went to his website and listened to a bunch of things. I picked these three pieces because they are wonderful

and show a range of expression. They're beautifully crafted and I thought they were three pieces the ensemble to play well. They also give an overview of Steve's music going back 30 years."

Hartke's musical output embodies a variety of musical styles, ranging from medieval-inspired to blues-inflected to Biblical satire. "While it might be difficult to define his music as X, all of it is well crafted," Fitch said. "There's also a rhythmic profile in his music, and a sense of wit much of the time, but he does create individual worlds for each piece. That's why doing three of his pieces from three different decades will be an interesting overview of some of his esthetic concerns."

Hartke is the recipient of numerous fellowships and awards, including two Koussevitzky Music Foundation Commission Grants, a Guggenheim Fellowship, the Academy Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the Stoeger Award from the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, and the Deutsche Bank Berlin Prize from the American Academy in Berlin. In 2008, his opera, *The Greater Good*, received the first Charles Ives Opera Prize from the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

He is also a winner of the Rome Prize. Fitch said, "When I told Stephen that I was hoping to program a couple of Don's pieces on the program to celebrate his 90th birthday this year, he said, 'Oh, that's such a great idea because when I was at the American Academy in Rome, Don was there too. We became close friends and remained friends until his death.' So Stephen is thrilled to be sharing a program with him."



The two works by Donald Erb on Sunday's program are *Drawing Down The Moon* (1991) for percussion and piccolo — which Fitch described as a virtuosic piece that makes many demands on both players — and *The Devil's Quickstep* (1982) for chamber ensemble. "That's one of my favorite pieces of Don's," Fitch said. "It's so fun and inventive. It's only about nine minutes but it moves through

all of Don's musical worlds. Some of the players play harmonicas and slide whistles, and there's a tape part."

Fitch said he is very happy with the way the program came together. "There's a lot of variety and I think that Don's and Steve's music pair up nicely."

The next CIM New Music Ensemble concert will take place on Wednesday, February 7 at 8:00 pm in Mixon Hall. The program will include Elliott Carter's *Sonata for Flute, Oboe, Cello, and Harpsichord*, Toru Takemitsu's *Rain Spell*, Frederick Fox's *Upon the Reedy Stream*, and Keith Fitch's *The Range of Light*, featuring baritone Dean Southern.

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