

CIM Orchestra celebrates composer Margaret Brouwer's 75th Birthday

by Mike Telin



In his 2012 New Music Box feature on composer [Margaret Brouwer](#), Frank Oteri appropriately titled the article [Margaret Brouwer: Multiple Planes](#) — for Brouwer has undoubtedly enjoyed a multi-faceted career. Starting out as a violinist in the Fort Worth Symphony and Fort Worth Opera Orchestra, she has also toured with the likes of Johnny Mathis and Tony Bennett. But it was her passion for composing that eventually led her to abandon her violin career and pursue a doctorate in composition. From 1996 until 2008 Margaret Brouwer served as head of the composition department at the Cleveland Institute of Music.

On Wednesday, January 28 at 8:00 pm in Kulas Hall at CIM, guest conductor Michael Adelson will lead the CIM Orchestra in a concert celebrating Margaret Brouwer's 75th Birthday. The concert features Brouwer's *Caution Ahead – Guard Rail Out* (2012) and *Rhapsody for Orchestra* (2009) as well as Carl Ruggles's *Angels* (1921/1940), *Lilacs* (1924) and *Sun-treader* (1931).

Although Brouwer may have retired from teaching, she has not slowed down. Recent commissions have come from the Dallas Symphony (2010), Detroit Symphony (2009), Rochester Philharmonic (2012), American Pianists Association (2013), CityMusic Cleveland (2011), and the American Composer's Orchestra (2009). Her May 2014 CD, *Shattered*, which features her chamber music, was released on the Naxos American Classics Series. And in June of this year a CD will be released featuring the world premiere recordings of her Violin and Viola Concertos, with members of the Dallas Symphony Orchestra conducted by Jaap Van Zweden.

Upcoming Cleveland area performances of Brouwer's works will be given by Ars Futura and Brouwer's own Blue Streak Ensemble. In March, the American Modern Ensemble will perform *Lonely Lake* at New York's SubCulture and Adelphi University, to name a few venues.

At a recent forum held at CIM, Brouwer told attendees that the Music Division of The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center has started a Margaret Brouwer Collection. Her scores, manuscripts, papers, and recordings will be made available there for research by scholars, composers and performers. She also said that she had just finished a work for percussionist Evelyn Glennie.

During her informative and insightful presentation, Brouwer described her method of composing. "I go very much with what feels right to me. I start with an idea, whether that be melodic or rhythmic, and make it evolve." She said that sounds and colors are also very important to her, and she confessed to not liking atonality in large doses. She also has a terrible time figuring out how to end her works. "I struggle with choices. Should I fade away, end with a bang or simply just stop?"

Brouwer went on to discuss the two pieces that will be performed on Wednesday's program. *Caution Ahead – Guard Rail Out* was commissioned by the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra, who premiered it in May of 2012. Her inspiration for the piece came from James Gleick's 1987 book, *Chaos: Making a New Science*, which she pointed out immediately suggested ideas for creating a musical form.

In her composer notes Brouwer states, "*In his book he describes computer cross-section analysis of the motion of water through a pipe or of wind currents in a wind-tunnel. These analyses show the predominantly predictable nature of the molecules' relationship to each other in the water or the wind. But they also show that sometimes there are chaotic moments when the molecules mix up in unpredictable ways.*"

Rhapsody for Orchestra was commissioned by the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, who premiered it under the direction of Leonard Slatkin in January 2009. Brouwer went on to revise the work in 2014. "I threw away the first movement and wrote a new one," she said. "I think an important part of creating is learning to throw away," she added. She described the piece as a "concerto for orchestra" that shows the ensemble off in different ways though the use of melodies, powerful sound and electric rhythms.

On a personal note, I have had the good fortune to be able to speak to Margaret Brouwer on numerous occasions and I have thoroughly enjoyed our talks. She is a gracious, well-spoken and delightful person. Happy Birthday, Margaret!

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