

NEOSonicFest: Concert No. 4 to feature CCS, CYO, Young Composers & an Ed London tribute

by Mike Telin



When NEOSonicFest presents its fourth concert on Tuesday, March 24, at 7:30pm in Cleveland State University's Waetjen Auditorium, the Cleveland Chamber Symphony (CCS) will pay tribute to its founder, the late Edwin London. The two-part musical evening will feature pieces by CCS's 2015 Young and Emerging Composers competition winners, as well as a side-by-side performance with the Contemporary Youth Orchestra (CYO) of Bernard Rands' *London Serenade*.

"We're very excited about this concert," said CCS's conductor and Festival music director Steven Smith. "For the first time we will join forces with CYO for a side-by-side performance. This will be one of the highlights of the Festival, because Bernard wrote his *London Serenade* for the Chamber Symphony. We've played it several times over the years, and, I think there's something poignant about bringing the piece back to life

alongside a new generation of players."

First presented in 1980, the annual Young and Emerging Composers Concert — featuring work by student composers selected through a competitive process — has become a longstanding tradition of CCS. "This program has always been a very important element of Chamber Symphony," Smith said. "Ed thought that it was one of the great services that we could bring to young composers, and I whole-heartedly agree. The opportunity for young composers to work with and to hear their work performed by professional musicians is so important to their development as composers. There's no substitute for that kind of experience. And this year we've selected five pieces that represent an interesting stylistic range."

Clint Needham, who coordinated this year's competition, said that he received twice as many scores as he did last year. "The level was also really high," Needham said. "Steven

and I talked through some things, but ultimately it was his decision. I do know that he had a tough time choosing because there were a lot of very good entries — which of course is a great problem to have. It was fun to get to know these pieces, and I cannot wait to hear them performed.”

Tuesday’s concert will include performances of Buck McDaniel’s *Three Movements for String Orchestra* (Cleveland State University), Aubrie Powell’s *The Hermit* (Baldwin Wallace Conservatory), Joseph Caffrey’s *Thinking* (College of Wooster), Samuel Boateng’s *Pi Lolo* (Kent State University) and Steven Hecking’s Third Movement from *Collapse and Resurrection* (College of Wooster).

The concert will also give conductor Liza Grossman and her acclaimed Contemporary Youth Orchestra an opportunity to display their musical prowess with a reprisal of Stefan Podell’s alluring *Concerto for Two Violas and Orchestra* featuring violists Lynne Ramsey and Jeffrey Irvine. The work was premiered by CYO with Ramsey and Irvine as soloists in December of 2014. If you missed that performance, here’s another chance to hear the concerto. Having experienced it the first time around, I look forward to the opportunity to hear it again.

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