

## St. Paul composer premieres Wellstone memorial composition at St. Olaf

by Carl Schroeder '05

“Music empowers us, it heals us, and it also can create positive social change in the culture.”

So goes the philosophy that drives St. Paul composer Steve Heitzeg. Heitzeg, a native Minnesotan, has earned national recognition for his orchestral and chamber music, which often addresses important social and ecological issues of the past and present. His newest composition, *Peace March*, dedicated to the memory of Paul and Sheila Wellstone, received its world premiere at the Double Reed Concert in Urness Recital Hall on January 21st.

*Peace March*, composed in December 2002, is one of Heitzeg's trademark “ecoscores,” which are handwritten musical scores fully represented on a single sheet of tree-free paper. Heitzeg says he tries to compose at least one ecoscore each year as a way to break away from the confines of the commissioned musical work.

After the tragic Wellstone plane crash in late October of 2002, Heitzeg found himself compelled to create a tribute to the cause of the late Senator and his wife. “Paul and Sheila dedicated their lives to peace and justice,” said Heitzeg. “My wife and I were supporters, so I wanted to do something to honor their lives, and their unselfish gift to the world.”

The four-minute work, scored for English horn, snare drum and timpani, is centered around four repetitions of two lyrical horn melodies accompanied by percussion. Between each repetition, the performers are directed to say one of nine words and phrases, such as “economic justice” and “no war,” which embody the ideals of the Wellstones. “Most marches in music come from a military tradition,” explained Heitzeg, “and I thought that the idea of a peace march was just perfect.”

*Peace March*, performed by St. Olaf students Katherine Schouten, Joshua Rundell and Jeffrey Bina, was well-received by the audience and will be performed again this spring at a St. Olaf “Peace Concert” scheduled for the evening of April 8.

Other upcoming performances of Steve Heitzeg's music include the March 23 Minnesota Orchestra premiere of *We Are Met at Gettysburg*, co-written with Philadelphia composer Amy Scurria, at Orchestra Hall in Minneapolis, and the May 3 premiere of a three-movement work, *Of Wind and Wood*, commissioned for the 125th anniversary of the Gustavus Wind Orchestra.

For more information on composer Steve Heitzeg, visit his web site at [www.steveheitzeg.com](http://www.steveheitzeg.com).

For excerpts of a Muziko Nova interview with Steve Heitzeg, see **page 4**.

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*Nova Notes* is a monthly publication of Muziko Nova, the official St. Olaf student new music organization.

To contribute an article, feedback or ideas, email [novanotes@stolaf.edu](mailto:novanotes@stolaf.edu).



# St. Olaf student compositions recorded for CD project

by Carl Schroeder '05; photographs by Joshua Wyatt '05

Blood-curdling screams emanating from the stage of Urness Recital Hall, sound equipment filling vast portions of Studio A, and Dave Hagedorn's sudden penchant for Granny Smith apples were some signs that the always unpredictable student composers of St. Olaf were up to more than just their usual tricks during Interim.

Muziko Nova, St. Olaf's student new music organization, has been hard at work for several months laying the groundwork for the creation of a publicly-available CD of music by current student composers. In December, St. Olaf's Finstad Grant Office approved funds to support the recording and production costs. The project gained momentum when nationally renowned composer Mary Ellen Childs agreed to review submissions to select compositions for the CD.

Professional recording engineer and current St. Olaf student Joshua Wyatt held a series of recording sessions in various St. Olaf performance spaces throughout January.



Amanda Wessel '04 prepares to conduct a choir and string ensemble for her composition *Lamb of God*.

Composers and performers from all four current classes participated in the project, recording acoustic music in a wide variety of styles including jazz, classical, contemporary, experimental and popular. Several students taking Peter Hamlin's "Music in the Electronic Medium" Interim class submitted music as well.

For many of the composers and performers, the project served as an opportunity to become accustomed to the unique demands of studio recording sessions. Quickly realizing that a noisy page turn, rustling shirt, rumbling stomach or squeaky piano bench could ruin an otherwise perfect take, the performers and composers had to think about more than just the music.

"I swear, now my glasses are making noise," remarked Junior horn performance major Tim Bradley while preparing to conduct a take of his string quintet *Echoes of Adagio*.



Composer Mike Sweeney '05 assists pianist Kari Busiahn '03 in a recording of his composition *Horror Movie*.

By the time the dust settled at the end of January, twenty compositions were submitted to Childs, sixteen of which will be included on the upcoming St. Olaf student composition CD, *Music from the Hill*.

Live performances of music from the CD will be the highlight of the *Music from the Hill* CD release event scheduled for 9 pm in Urness Recital Hall on February 25. Admission to the event is free. Proceeds from the sale of the CD will fund future St. Olaf new music projects and events.

For more information, visit [www.musicfromthehill.com](http://www.musicfromthehill.com)

## Muziko Nova spring composition recitals A call for scores

Muziko Nova, St. Olaf's student new music organization, will be hosting two recitals during the spring semester. The first will be a student composition recital held on Friday, March 7th at 7pm in the Christiansen Hall of Music orchestra room. The second will be a peace-themed concert open to students, faculty and guests, and will be held in the CHM Urness Recital Hall at 8:15 pm on Tuesday, April 8th.

Muziko Nova is currently seeking student submissions for both events. To have your music considered for performance at the March 7th concert, submit a score and the names of your performers to the Muziko Nova PO Box (#138) in Buntrock by **Friday, February 28th**.

For consideration in the April 8th peace concert, submit a score of any composition that relates somehow with the theme of peace along with the names of your performers to the Muziko Nova PO Box by **Tuesday, April 1st**.

Email [schroedc@stolaf.edu](mailto:schroedc@stolaf.edu) with any questions.

## Nova Notes

Carl Schroeder, editor

### Muziko Nova officers

Carl Schroeder, President

AJ Wang, Vice President

Amy Jacobson, Secretary

Whitney Hedren, Design

Mike Bloem, Treasurer

Mike Sweeney, Webmaster

E-mail: [novanotes@stolaf.edu](mailto:novanotes@stolaf.edu)

Web site: <http://www.stolaf.edu/orgs/nova>

Muziko Nova is an official St. Olaf student organization dedicated to new music. The next Muziko Nova meeting will be held in the CHM Reception Room at 7 pm on Tuesday, February 18.

To join the Muziko Nova alias, send an email to [wang@stolaf.edu](mailto:wang@stolaf.edu).

# St. Olaf Band to premiere works by Libby Larsen, Mary Ellen Childs

By Elizabeth Child

The St. Olaf Band will premiere Libby Larsen's *Strut* and Mary Ellen Childs' *Zephyrus* in a band and pipe organ concert to be held at St. Olaf College's Boe Memorial Chapel on Sunday, February 9 at 7:30 pm. The concert is free and open to the public. The concert also will be broadcast on Classical 89.3 on Saturday, Feb. 15, at 3 p.m.

The new pieces were commissioned for the band's 100th-anniversary tour, ranging from Minnesota to New York City's Lincoln Center. The "home" concert is the final performance in the band's six-state tour.

In addition to the world premieres, the concert also features organ pieces written by Camille Saint-Saëns, Richard Strauss and Timothy Mahr, conductor of the St. Olaf Band -- and performed by nationally recognized organist and St. Olaf Professor of Organ and Church Music John Ferguson.

The second half of the concert opens with *American Fanfare*, composed by St. Olaf graduate Sharon Moe Miranda, a noted New York composer and French horn player. Miranda composed the work in 1971 for the brass section and tympanist of the American Symphony Orchestra at the request of its conductor, Leopold Stokowski.

"Larsen's new work, *Strut*, is marked by musical elements extracted from the popular music idiom," Mahr says. "These are developed with a very engaging rhythmic vitality."

Larsen's music has been praised for its dynamic, deeply inspired and vigorous contemporary American spirit. She has received numerous awards and accolades, including a 1994 Grammy for producing the CD *The Art of Arlene Augér*, an acclaimed recording featuring Larsen's *Sonnets from the Portuguese*. *USA Today* selected her opera *Frankenstein, the Modern Prometheus* as one of the eight best classical music events of 1990. The first woman to serve as a resident composer with any major orchestra, Larsen has held residencies with the California Institute of the Arts, the Minnesota Orchestra, the Charlotte Symphony and the Colorado Symphony.

Childs' new composition is titled *Zephyrus*, after the Greek god of the west wind. She notes that in *The Canterbury Tales*, Geoffrey Chaucer says Zephyrus breathes life into all things in the spring. Childs has been acclaimed for creating bold, kinetic compositions often integrating music, dance and theater. She has composed numerous "visual percussion" pieces for her company, CRASH, that embody the concept of music in motion.

In 2001, Childs received the "New Residencies" award from Meet the Composer Inc., a three-year residency that supports partnerships among composers, professional arts institutions and community-based organizations.

Last spring, she collaborated with the St. Olaf Art, Dance, Music, Theater and Interdisciplinary Fine Arts departments while in residence as an instructor specializing in music theory and composition. She is currently aiding Muziko Nova in the creation of a student composition CD [see [page 2](#)], and is helping to organize a St. Olaf student composition event at the Southern Theater in Minneapolis scheduled for February 2004.

Both Childs and Larson live and work in Minnesota.

For more information on Childs and Larsen, visit their web sites at [www.maryellenchild.com](http://www.maryellenchild.com) and [www.libbylarsen.com](http://www.libbylarsen.com).

## New Music Calendar

Upcoming new music events at St. Olaf College and in the Twin Cities

Events at St. Olaf College are listed in **bold**.

**February 9, 2003 -- St. Olaf Band Home Concert featuring premieres by Libby Larsen and Mary Ellen Childs**

February 20, 2003 -- Kronos Quartet at the Walker Art Center

February 21-22, 2003 -- Minnesota Orchestra performs Libby Larsen's *Water Music*

February 21-March 2, 2003 -- 50th Annual Edina Pops Concert featuring a Timothy Mahr premiere

**February 25, 2003 -- Music from the Hill CD Release Event (9 pm, Urness Recital Hall)**

February 28, 2003 -- Improvisational jazz ensemble UNOWNED performs works by Corey Sevett and Carei Thomas

March 2, 2003 -- Zeitgeist new music concert at the Southern Theater

**March 2, 2003 -- Senior composition recital, Jocelyn Hagen (4:30 pm, Boe Chapel)**

March 6-8, 2003 -- Society of Composers Regional Conference at Macalester College

**March 7, 2003 -- Muziko Nova student composition recital (7 pm, Orchestra Room)**

**March 9, 2003 -- Senior composition recital, Kristin Roust (3:15 pm, Urness Recital Hall)**

March 23, 2003 -- Minnesota Orchestra performs Steve Heitzeg and Amy Scurria's *We Are Met at Gettysburg*

**April 8, 2003 -- Muziko Nova Peace Concert (8:15 pm, Urness Recital Hall)**

**April 28, 2003 -- St. Olaf student composition recital (8:15 pm, Urness Recital Hall)**

**May 9, 2003 -- St. Olaf student composition recital (7 pm, Urness Recital Hall)**

For web links to more information on many of the above events, visit the Muziko Nova calendar online at: [www.stolaf.edu/orgs/nova/events.html](http://www.stolaf.edu/orgs/nova/events.html)

# Q&A with composer Steve Heitzeg

Excerpts from a Muziko Nova interview

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**Q.** *What made you decide to pursue a career as a composer?*

**A.** I always felt that music was a friend, and I found I had the ability to express my feelings through music that just came fluidly. Music is so inherent by itself, but at the same time there's also something about it that can move people. It empowers us, it heals us, and it also can create positive social change in the culture. I feel that the arts can serve the cause of peace. The arts give us insight into ourselves. They really show us our humanity.

**Q.** *Which composers do you consider major influences?*

**A.** I would say Bartok, Copland, Bernstein, Barber, Ives, John Lennon, David Bowie, Philip Glass, and if you want to go back really far, Mozart. I studied with Dominick Argento, so he's also an influence, and also [Twin Cities composer] Eric Stokes.

**Q.** *Can you talk about the process of composing the Peace March for Paul and Sheila Wellstone?*

**A.** I really believed in what Paul and Sheila Wellstone stood for. My wife and I were supporters, so I wanted to do something to honor their lives, and their unselfish gift to the world. I thought about writing a chamber piece, and when you think of most marches in music, they come from a military tradition, and I thought that the idea of a peace march was just perfect. Also, it plays to the idea of protestors marching in the streets. I wanted it to be sort of a funeral march, but also something with more energy. It's a piece for the Wellstones and for the people.

**Q.** *You've been quoted describing yourself as an advocate for the "peaceful coexistence of all species through music." Can you talk a little about that philosophy?*

**A.** Humans are not the only species that create music. Jim Nollman out in Seattle actually plays music underwater for whales, and he gets songs back from the whales. I really feel that the whole world is music, even what some people would call noise. There's an old native American legend that humans and animals used to share a language. If I believe that, then I really need to honor all species through my music.

**Q.** *Can you talk a little about your "ecoscores"?*

**A.** About 10 years ago I started doing what I call ecoscores. They are environmental pieces and they are an exercise in writing something that is limited to a single page. I started sending them out to friends in postcard form, and I've kept up that tradition. I try to do at least one a year. As composers get into our careers and everything, we get pulled into writing for commissions. For me the ecoscores are a way to release and do something that isn't driven by money or a commission. Also, it's an exercise for me to keep the score to just one page. That in itself is also an environmental statement, and I try to get them printed on tree-free or kenaf paper.

**Q.** *In general, have you found that making social and ecological statements with your music has limited or broadened your audience and career opportunities?*

**A.** I would say it has broadened them. Some people want to avoid the political thing with programming and want more of an absolute music. But as far as the audience is concerned, I think it's an easier entry for people when they know a title and it registers a certain image to them and gives them a sort of guidepost through the piece. My ultimate goal is that everyone would feel a greater responsibility to having some cause, and that includes people who listen to music, who value music, who understand music.

**Q.** *What are the best and worst things about being a composer in the 21st century?*

**A.** For me as a composer, one of the best things is the ability to go into different worlds with each piece through research. I do a lot of research before I start every piece. Each commission is different. If I'm doing a piece about orangutans, I'll do a ton of research on orangutans, check out their vocalizations and everything to try and infuse the piece with something as organic as possible. I think there is a sense of freedom in being a composer, not being stuck at a desk 9 to 5. But if you want to advance your career, or get bigger commissions, you end up doing not only the creative part of it, but also a lot of mundane work and politicking. On the upside, you get to know a lot of people, and that can be a comforting thing. You may not go out to dinner with them every night, but you know them, and you have a collective vision. You know those people are out there, that they believe in you. There's something positive in that that affirms what the artist is doing. For me, it gives a person peace and hope that there are good people out there, and the arts transform us and represent the best about humankind. That's true of all arts, whether it's music or dance or whatever.

**Q.** *What are some of your current projects?*

**A.** I just did a commission with the Philadelphia Orchestra and the Minnesota Orchestra called *We Are Met at Gettysburg*. It premiered in Philadelphia in January. It premieres at Orchestra Hall on March 23rd. I co-wrote that with Amy Scurria, who lives in Philadelphia. She wrote one movement, I wrote the second movement, and then we wrote the third movement together. The last movement, "The Last Full Measure," is dedicated to Paul Wellstone. The piece I'm working on right now is *Of Wind and Wood*, and it's a commission from the Gustavus Wind Orchestra that will premiere on May 3rd. The band is 125 years old this year, and the piece has three sections dedicated to past, present and future. I'm also writing a piece called *Free!* for Evelyn Glennie for percussion and piano, and I will be writing a piece for orchestra in memory of Eric Stokes.

**Q.** *What advice do you have for young composers?*

**A.** If you want to be a composer, than do it! Always believe in the music, and always be a good listener. You need to be open to all sounds. Being a good listener also means you need to be very calm and respectful in listening to other people's perspectives and voices. You can create new sounds and also be respectful of the past. New composers should listen to the culture and help to deepen our understanding of ourselves.

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Steve Heitzeg's web site is at [www.steveheitzeg.com](http://www.steveheitzeg.com).