Colleen McDonald ‘09

Colleen in Prague, where she spent three weeks performing the songs of Vítězslava Kaprálová.

Colleen tells us, “Coming into my senior year at Muhlenberg College, I wanted to do something substantial with my summer. I am a music major, and I received a summer research grant to study and perform the works of the Czech composer Vítězslava Kaprálová (1915-1940).

Kaprálová began composing at the age of nine. By 15 she was a student at the Brno Conservatory, then continued her education at the Prague Conservatory before moving to Paris to study with her fellow countryman Bohuslav Martinů. Her first orchestral work, Military Sinfonietta, won the Smetana Foundation award in 1937. She was then chosen to represent the music of her homeland at the 1938 International Society for Contemporary Music Festival in London alongside other composers such as Bartok, Webern, Britten, and Copland. At 23, she was the youngest composer there. She was considered one of the brightest composers of her time, but her untimely death at age 25 contributed to her music being overshadowed by Smetana, Dvořák, Janáček, and her teacher, Martinů.

I became interested in Kaprálová’s works after being accepted into the Ameropa International Chamber Music Festival. Arguably, her greatest works are her art songs, in which, as a poet herself, she creates musical space for the Czech poetry, while writing brilliant and atmospheric piano accompaniments. I studied closely with many local musicians to learn Czech diction and understand Kaprálová’s musical language.

This was an amazing opportunity, and I look forward to continuing to explore and perform these works.”
BOOM Activities – Fall, 2008

This semester, BOOM (‘Berg Organization of Music) is gearing up for a diverse set of trips and events. BOOM is currently planning its annual trip to the Kimmel Center to see the Philadelphia Orchestra, and a trip to the Chamber Music Society of Bethlehem is also in the works. The club is looking to expand concert trips to include a more diverse experience of musical genres. This includes a trip to a live jazz club in Philadelphia and to a local rock show at Crocodile Rock in Allentown.

Furthermore, BOOM is looking to showcase more entertainment on campus through its semesterly talent show and to feature student performers by completing a long-term CD project comprised of Muhlenberg student bands.

BOOM will also be working on its annual tee-shirt sale and bake sales, and will continue the BOOM BOX newsletter, which delivers information on local concerts to student mailboxes.

Students interested in learning more about BOOM and attending meetings can contact Tom Bertorelli at tb235322@muhlenberg.edu.

Officers for 2008-2009:
- President- Rob McCrann
- Vice President- Mike Fau
- Treasurer- Ben Katz
- Secretary- Tom Bertorelli
- Publicity- Dylan High
- BOOM BOX Editor- Matt Indyke

BOOM is an acronym for the Berg Organization of Music. It also represents a musical sound!

Spotlight on Ensembles: Muhlenberg Wind Ensemble

The Muhlenberg Wind Ensemble, directed by Al Neumeyer (see p. 3), is a group of 35 woodwind, brass, and percussion players. The ensemble, with a long history at Muhlenberg, performs a concert each semester, and at least one student performer is featured as a soloist at each concert. In the past 4 years, the ensemble has played 5 world premieres, including works by Douglas Ovens, Chair of the Music Department, and student composers Gregg Rossetti ’05 and David Liskov ’07. Classic band literature, including original compositions by such notables as Vincent Persichetti, Broadway show tunes, and transcriptions of classical works, such as Tchaikovsky’s 1812 Overture, make up the group’s repertoire. The Muhlenberg Wind Ensemble can be heard in concert on Saturday, November 22, at 8 pm in Empie Theatre.
Focus on Faculty/Staff: Al Neumeyer

Al Neumeyer came to Muhlenberg in 1989 to direct the Muhlenberg Wind Ensemble (see p. 2) and the Muhlenberg Jazz Ensemble. Neumeyer discovered his passion for music when he began playing clarinet in the 4th grade. A native of Pittsburgh, Neumeyer received a B.S. in Music Education from Mansfield University and an M.A. in Conducting at the University of New Jersey.

Shortly after the Pittsburgh Pirates won the World Series in 1960, Neumeyer, who had played minor league baseball, attended a four-day camp at Forbes Field. After an unsuccessful attempt to join the team, he began his long career in music, teaching in New York for 3 years. He returned to Pennsylvania, and in 1968 was appointed band director of Emmaus High School, a position he held until 1982.

Neumeyer and his wife Shirlee purchased an historic Colonial tavern in Bethlehem, PA, in 1981. Neumeyer did most of the renovations himself, and in 1982, the Inn of the Falcon opened as a gourmet restaurant. In 2005, the Inn was named one of the top 16 restaurants in Pennsylvania by Gourmet magazine. The Neumeyers sold the restaurant last October.

Lehigh University recruited Neumeyer to be the director of its marching and symphonic bands, and he has held that position, in addition to his work at Muhlenberg, since 1995. Shortly before the sale of the restaurant, Neumeyer added yet another teaching job to his résumé when he began teaching elementary instrumental music part-time in the Saucon Valley School District.

When asked about his career, Neumeyer has this to say: “Music is a passionate part of my life, and as for retiring, I want to become the oldest band director in the world.”
Alumni News

Jason Carr ’03 obtained his Master’s degree in music theory from Temple University and has been composing extensively. As composer for Cuban choreographer Marianela Boan, Jason has traveled as far as Bogota, Columbia to perform. He intends to pursue a PhD.

Jon Crowley ’05 will return to Muhlenberg on Saturday, September 27, to perform with his Quintet at our Alumni Recital, held every year during Homecoming Weekend. Join us at 4 pm in Recital Hall!

Gina Forchelli ’06 will be attending Columbia University’s Master’s in Education – School Psychology - program this Fall.

Mike Gaydos ’06 is working in New York in the music department of J. Walter Thompson advertising agency. Mike chose the music and coordinated the sound design for a recent Visine ad and contracted and produced a new piece of music for a Zyrtec spot.

Gillian Greenbaum ’07 was accepted into New York University’s Steinhardt Master’s program in vocal performance with a concentration in musical theatre.

Sara Schmidtchen Phillips ’04 is a Major Gifts and Events Manager at the Urban Assembly, a small educational non-profit that serves 19 specifically-themed junior and senior high schools (performing arts, science, business, etc.) in underprivileged areas of Manhattan, the Bronx, and Queens.

Karen Uslin ’04 has finished the coursework for her PhD in Musicology at Catholic University. Karen won the student paper award at the College Music Society’s Northeast/Mid-Atlantic Super Regional Chapter meeting in Gettysburg, PA, in April. She serves as Student Representative for CMS’s Mid-Atlantic Chapter and for the American Musicological Society’s Capital Chapter.
Fall 2008 Calendar of Events

September
13, Saturday, 8 pm, Recital Hall—The Hassay/DeChellis/Nakatani Trio
18, Thursday, 8 pm, Recital Hall—Faculty Jazz Recital: Charles Fambrough, bass, Tom Kozik, guitar, Gary Kissmiller, drums
26, Friday, 8 pm, Empie Theatre—Piano Series: Joaquin Achucarro (admission charge)
27, Saturday, 4 pm, Recital Hall—Alumni Recital: The Jon Crowley Quintet

October
1, Wednesday, 8 pm, Recital Hall—Measure for Measure: The Music of Shakespeare’s Plays: Ensemble Chaconne
19, Sunday, 4 pm, Egner Chapel—Muhlenberg College Choir
20, Monday, 4:30 pm, Egner Chapel—Student Recital
25, Saturday, 8 pm, Baker Theatre—Interplay Jazz

November
7, Friday, 4:30 pm, Recital Hall—Student Recital
7, Friday, 8 pm, Empie Theatre—Piano Series: Alessio Bax (admission charge)
8, Saturday, 4 pm, Egner Chapel—Muhlenberg Collegium Musicum
11, Tuesday, 8 pm, Recital Hall—Jazz Improvisation Ensemble (Ted Conner, Director)
12, Wednesday, 8 pm, Recital Hall—Jazz Improvisation Ensemble (Charles Fambrough, Director)
15, Saturday, 8 pm, Empie Theatre—Muhlenberg Jazz Ensemble
19, Wednesday, 4:30 pm, Recital Hall—Student Recital
21, Friday, 8 pm, Empie Theatre—Muhlenberg Chamber Orchestra
22, Saturday, 8 pm, Empie Theatre—Muhlenberg Wind Ensemble

December
6, Saturday, 7:30 pm; and 7, Sunday, 3:30 and 7:30 pm, Egner Chapel—Candlelight Carols
13, Saturday, 2 pm, Egner Chapel—Lehigh Saengerbund Chorus Annual Christmas Concert

Unless otherwise noted, admission is free. Call 484-664-3363 for further information.
In the Classroom
Introduction to Electronic Music

In the words of Douglas Ovens: “This has always been one of my favorite courses to teach because it allows us to explore so many aspects of 20th century music: the concept of modernism and experimentation in an art form, the history of instrument design, as well as getting to hear some incredible pieces.

We begin by studying a short list of pieces of music such as Cowell’s, The Banshee, a piano piece played entirely on the strings of the piano and Charles Amirkhanian’s text-sound work, Just, which consists only of the four words Rainbow, Chug, Bandit, and Bomb. These very different pieces allow us to rethink what is potential sonic material for a piece of music.

The course consists of a basic introduction to multi-track recording, MIDI and sampling (digital recording of short bits of sound that become our “notes”). Students create a short work or two using powerful computer programs such as Digital Performer and Max/MSP, become acquainted with 125 years of electronic music technology, and, along the way, get to play (as do I) with some of the most fantastic gadgets ever invented.”

Music was my refuge. I could crawl into the space between the notes and curl my back to loneliness.
—Maya Angelou, Gather Together in My Name

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We’re on the Web: www.muhlenberg.edu/depts/music

We hope you have enjoyed reading about us. If you have ideas for articles, alumni news, or comments about this newsletter, please contact the Editor at dfollet@muhlenberg.edu.