

A Memorial Tribute to

CURTIS CURTIS-SMITH



Thursday, February 26, 2015
7:30 p.m.
Dalton Center Recital Hall
Western Michigan University



Program

Welcome: Bradley Wong, Director, School of Music, WMU

Fantasy Pieces (1987)

C. CURTIS-SMITH

I Echoes

IV Capriccio

Renata Artman Knific, violin; Silvia Roederer, piano

Remarks: Daniel Gustin, Director, Irving S. Gilmore International Keyboard Festival

Rhapsodies (1973)

C. CURTIS-SMITH

I "...a swift pure cry..."

II "But Wait! Low in dark middle earth. Embedded ore."

III "And a call, pure, long, and throbbing. Londindying call"

IV "Listen! The spiked and winding cold seahorn."

Barbara Lieurance, piano

Remarks: Richard de Peaux, Professor, Frostic School of Art, WMU

Games (2003)

C. CURTIS-SMITH

III Charades (The Chase)

IV Endgame

The Western Brass Quintet

Scott Thornburg, trumpet

Robert White, trumpet

Lin Foulk, horn

Daniel Mattson, trombone

Jacob Cameron, tuba

Remarks: Peter Blickle, Professor, World Languages and Literatures, WMU

"Blue," from *Cabaret Songs* (1977-1985)

WILLIAM BOLCOM

AND ARNOLD WEINSTEIN

Night Meditations

WILLIAM BOLCOM

IV. Calmo-moderato

Graceful Ghost

William Bolcom, piano; Joan Morris, voice

Curtis Curtis-Smith



An eminent member of the Kalamazoo arts community, C. Curtis-Smith was a nationally recognized composer, teacher, and pianist, and a professor of music at Western Michigan University for many years.

C. CURTIS-SMITH was born in 1941 in Walla

Walla, Washington. After early piano studies, he studied with John Ringgold and David Burge at Whitman College, with Alan Stout and Guy Mombaerts at Northwestern University, with Ken Gaburo at the University of Illinois, with Bruno Maderna at Tanglewood, and at the Blossom Music Festival in master classes with Pierre Boulez.

As a composer, he was the recipient of over 100 grants, awards, and commissions throughout his life--including a Guggenheim Fellowship, an award from the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, the Koussevitzky Prize at Tanglewood, the Medaglia d'Oro from the Concorso Internazionale di Musica e Danza G.B. Viotti, the Prix du Salabert, the Concorso Internazionale de Composizione, and 26 consecutive Standard Awards from ASCAP. He also received grants from the Martha Baird Rockefeller Fund, the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York State Council for the Arts, the Arts Foundation of Michigan, and the State of Michigan Governor's Award, as well as commissions from the Barlow Endowment, the Fromm Foundation, Fontana Chamber Arts, the Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra, and the Gilmore

International Keyboard Festival. At age 38, he was the youngest faculty member at WMU ever to be awarded the Distinguished Faculty Scholar Award, the university's highest academic honor. Mr. Curtis-Smith also taught composition at the University of Michigan.

Commissioned by WMU's Faculty Creative Activities Fund, his *Twelve Etudes for Piano* were selected in 2001 for the repertoire list for the Eleventh Van Cliburn International Piano Competition. After a performance of several of the Etudes in Alice Tully Hall by his esteemed WMU colleague Lori Sims, the *New York Times* wrote: "Mr. Curtis-Smith takes up where Debussy's lonely, bleakly beautiful last music ends. Yet these pieces have a voice of their own. One hears ideas at work and a momentum that carries thoughts coherently and convincingly from first note to last."

In 2002, Mr. Curtis-Smith gave the first complete performance of the *Twelve Etudes* at the Gilmore Festival. Early in his career in 1972, he developed the technique of bowing the piano, using flexible bows made of monofilament nylon line. This technique, exemplified in such pieces as *Rhapsodies* of 1973, has been widely imitated and used by many other composers, including George Crumb.

As a pianist, C. Curtis-Smith appeared early in his career as a soloist in recitals at Western Michigan University, the National

Gallery, and the Phillips Collection in Washington, D.C., as well as the Gilmore Festival. Orchestral appearances included concerts with the Indianapolis, Seattle, Spokane, and Kalamazoo orchestras. In 1986, he premiered the last three etudes of his devoted colleague William Bolcom's Pulitzer Prize-winning *Twelve New Etudes*, and *Knockstück* from Bolcom's *Three Dance Portraits*. More recently, he and Bolcom wrote an unusual collaborative piano piece, *Collusions*, in which each composer took turns writing successive phrases of the music. He performed *Collusions* at the 2010 Gilmore Festival.

His music has been performed many times by the Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra, the Merling Trio, Fontana Chamber Arts, and regularly at the biennial Gilmore Keyboard Festival. The Festival commissioned and premiered two major works from him: the *Concerto for Left-Hand & Orchestra*, performed by soloist Leon Fleisher and the KSO in 1991, and the *Concerto for Violin, Piano & String Orchestra*, performed by 1994 Gilmore Artist Ralf Gothoni and violinist Elina Vähälä in 2006. The *Left-Hand Concerto* has been performed several times by Mr. Fleisher, including with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, Neemi Jarvi conducting; with the New Japan Philharmonic Orchestra; and with the American Composers Orchestra in Carnegie Hall conducted by Dennis Russell Davies. Mr. Davies also conducted Mr. Curtis-Smith's *Great American Symphony* (which he subtitled "GAS!," displaying his characteristic wit and sense of humor) twice

with the American Composers Orchestra in Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center. Other GAS! performances by Davies include the Stuttgart Opera Orchestra, the Indianapolis Symphony, the Cabrillo Festival Orchestra, and the West German Radio Orchestra where it was recorded for CD release. The eminent violinist Sergiu Luca premiered the *Violin Concerto* with the ProMusica Chamber Orchestra in Houston. In 2011 the Kalamazoo Symphony and conductor Raymond Harvey premiered his *Fanfare Lyrique* to open their 2010-11 season.

Also notable are Mr. Curtis-Smith's several important vocal works setting the poetry of Walt Whitman and Herman Melville (*A Civil War Song Cycle* of 1987, *The Mystic Trumpeter* of 1991, and *Oh Wondrous Singer* of 2008); Theodore Roethke (*Six Roethke Settings*, 1989, rev. 2008; and *The Shimmer of Evil*, 1989); Sylvia Plath (*Tulips*, 2007); and the cantata/melodrama *Gold Are My Flowers*, 1992, among others. His chamber music includes string quartets, two piano trios, piano-wind and brass quintets, and a host of other varied works.

In his long and fruitful career, Mr. C. Curtis-Smith is cited in *The Oxford Dictionary of Music*, *The Harvard Biographical Dictionary*, *Bakers Biographical Dictionary*, *Groves Dictionary of Music*, *Contemporary Composers*, and *The Encyclopedia of American Music* (Edward Jablonski, Doubleday & Company). His music is published by Editions Salabert (Paris), Elkan-Vogel (Theodore Presser), Mel Bay Publications, and Edward B. Marks Music.

Please join us for a reception in the lobby
following the recital.
