

SCI

Society of Composers, Inc.

...dedicated to the
promotion, composition,
performance, understanding
and dissemination of
new and contemporary
music...

NEWSLETTER CONTENTS

XXXVII : 1, January-February 2007

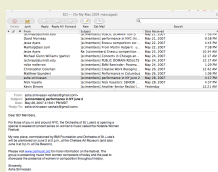
Resources

Learn about the
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Join SCI



SCI is an organization
for composers. Our
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student member, retired
member, or life member.

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ANACRUSIS...

New SCI CD Series Release on Capstone Records

Richard Brooks, President of Capstone Records, is pleased to announce the release of the latest offering in the SCI Compact Disc series. Number 22 in the series, it is titled "Musings" and includes *Kandinsky* for soprano, baritone, electric guitar and percussion by Kyong Mee Choi, *Sometimes the City is Silent* for flute solo by Janice Misurell-Mitchell, *...d'ogne luce muto* for solo piano by Dimitri Papageorgiou, *Stationary Fronts* for amplified flute and electroacoustic playback by Mike McFerron, *88 Keys* for solo piano by Carl Schroeder, *Four Fables* for flute, clarinet and piano by Karim Al-Zand, *Needlepoint* for solo guitar by Dorothy Hindman, *Churn* for cello and piano by Nathan David, *Posthumous Orpheus* for mezzo-soprano and lute by Jonathan Chenette, and *Shadow Tree* for alto flute and guitar by John G. Bilotta. For more information on the disc, visit the Capstone Records website:

<http://www.capstonerecords.org/CPS-8787.html>



www.societyofcomposers.org

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2008 National Conference: Georgia State
It is my pleasure to welcome you all to Atlanta. We are looking forward to an outstanding conference filled with your music and wonderful performances by our students, faculty and area...

been a long-time member of SCI and currently serves as the Student Chapter Representative on the National Council.

About the Newsletter

Editor: Sam Hamm

Assistant Editor: Brandon Hendrix

Circulation: 1400

Annual Subscription Rate: free with membership ((electronic delivery, hard copy to institutional members only))

Frequency of Publication: bimonthly

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How to Submit Items to the Newsletter

Articles: The Newsletter welcomes submissions of articles to run in future issues. Articles, if accepted, may be edited for length and content. Send to

newsletter@societyofcomposers.org

Member News + Photos: Please send these materials to Assistant Editor Brandon Hendrix at

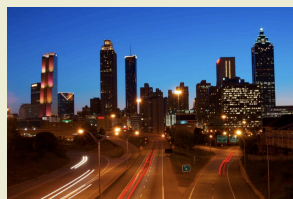
brandonh72@hotmail.com

Ideas/Suggestions: Please send any other ideas or suggestions to Newsletter Editor Sam Hamm via email at

newsletter@societyofcomposers.org



Upcoming SCI Events



February 20-23, 2008

SCI National Conference

Georgia State University
Atlanta, GA

Host: Nick Demos [ndemos@gsu.edu]
Submission deadline: TBA

Spring 2008 (April 16-19)

2008 Region VI Conference

Sam Houston State University
Huntsville, TX

Host: Trent Hanna [trenthanna@hotmail.com]
Submission deadline: TBA

Spring 2009 (dates TBA)

2009 Region VI Conference

The Bass School of Music at
Oklahoma City University
Oklahoma City, OK

Host: Edward Knight [eknight@okcu.edu]
Submission deadline: TBA

Spring 2010 (dates TBA)

2010 Region VI Conference

Kansas State University
Manhattan, KS

Host: Craig Weston [cweston@ksu.edu]
Submission deadline: TBA



Internet & Email

www.societyofcomposers.org

The SCI website is an up-to-date source of information:

- Conference dates and submission guidelines
- Contact information and links to member webpages
- Student chapters and opportunities
- CDs and journals produced by SCI
- Details on SCI such as membership options, listings and contacts for officers, regional structure, by-laws, newsletter archives, and more...

SCION

SCION is a listing of opportunities on our website exclusively for members. It is updated on a continual basis so that it may be checked at any time for the most current notices. In addition, members are emailed on the first Monday of each month to remind them to visit the site for new or recent postings. The large number of listings is easily managed by a table of contents with links to the individual notices. In-depth coverage--contest listings in full--all items listed until expiration--this is a valuable resource that you may print in its entirety or in part at any time.

John Bilotta, SCION Editor
scion@societyofcomposers.org

[scimembers]

scimembers is a member-driven e-mail mailing list that is intended to facilitate communication between members of the Society on topics of concern to composers of contemporary concert music. It conveys whatever notices or messages are sent by its members, including announcements of performances and professional opportunities, as well as discussions on a wide variety of topics. For more information, including how to join and participate in the listserv:

<http://www.societyofcomposers.org/data/publications/listserv/listserv.html>

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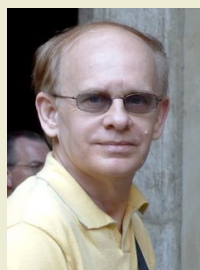
Student Conference Host

Jennifer Barker
University of Delaware

President Emeritus

Greg Steinke

Message from The President



Dear Fellow SCI Members,

I hope this message finds you well--and for our members from academe, enjoying your summer break.

I want to congratulate our new Newsletter Editor, Sam Hamm, and Assistant Editor Brandon Hendrix, for this beautiful issue. Please keep them apprised of your activities so that the Newsletter can continue to be a mirror of the rich variety of SCI member achievements.

Another SCI publication is in its startup phase: a web-based refereed journal, with its inaugural issue appearing this fall. This journal will feature scholarly articles by our members as well as invited papers from colleagues from outside our organization. Craig Weston and Jason Bahr have agreed to serve as Co-Editors and have assembled a fine editorial board, consisting of Elliot Schwartz, Steven Heinemann, Robert Rollin, and John White.

Our web-based services continue to improve, with a new faster server for .mp3 and .pdf files based at The Ohio State University, as well as many improvements to the infrastructure of our web services, courtesy of Webmaster Mike McFerron and Web-content Manager Matthew McCabe. Another addition to the SCI web presence: check out the SCI goings-on at Facebook.com. John Bilotta continues to do a terrific job with SCION, SCI's invaluable on-line opportunities list that is distributed to all members.

The Atlanta National Conference, scheduled for February, 2008 is well into its planning. Host Nick Demos will be sending out the call for submissions soon.

The 2009 National is lined up for beautiful Santa Fe, New Mexico at the College of Santa Fe. More news on conferences soon.

Overall, the prospects for SCI look very good: membership is increasing; we have vigorous activity in student-memberships and student chapters; the financial and management picture looks good, thanks to the able stewardship of our General Manager, Gerald Warfield; and we continue to provide new services to our members.

We at the National Office welcome your input. Please don't hesitate to e-mail me, Gerald, or Jim Sain, the Chair of the Executive Committee, with suggestions or criticisms.

All the best,

Tom Wells
President, SCI

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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University of Florida

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Learning from the Listserv

One member's experience in posting a query to the listserv, and making the most of the responses.

By **George Chave**

Associate Professor of Music at the University of Texas at Arlington

Fall 2006 afforded the opportunity to examine our curricular offerings in the Bachelor of Music degree. I felt we should offer composition majors greater exposure to relevant technology in their field of study. I asked the SCI listserv for your experience with Max/MSP and Pure Data (pD), and for sample syllabi as well as textbooks and relevant readings. I was overwhelmed with words of encouragement, practical responses and much sage advice. I would like to share some of your insights here, and share a bit of my experience since posting the initial request.

First, a bit of personal background. My experience and background in computer technology is limited. I had some exposure in the early 1980's to one of the precursors to CSound. In the late 1980's Dexter Morrill invited me to spend a few weeks in the summer to realize a work using Bruce Pennycook's MidiLive program. I never mastered either of these programs, but managed to compose a few modest pieces. In the mid-80's I took a course in BASIC Programming, bought a Commodore 64, and purchased a Roland D-20. I cranked out a few pieces on the D-20 using its internal sequencer and modifying some of its preset patches, and I played around a bit with the Commodore 64. Since 1990 I have spent most of my creative time composing acoustic music.

So here I am sixteen years later with a knowledge base and experience that is older than most of the undergraduates I teach. At 48 I'm feeling a bit intimidated by buzzwords---DAWs, GUIs, VSTs, plug-ins, etcetera. My old friends Fear and Doubt nibbled at my soul. Was I too old, too ignorant, too out of touch, too set in my ways to learn something new (and teach it the following year)? SCI listserv to the rescue.

Transferable Skills and Beginners Mind. One response reminded me that I do have transferable skills. As composers we are trained creative problem solvers. I would guess most of us are also quite tenacious. I regularly find myself working on a compositional problem only to find that I have hit a brick wall or gone down a dead end street. Returning to the problem the next day I will explore a different path and see where that leads. If that doesn't work, I'll continue exploring solutions until I find one that works. As it turns out, creative problem solving, patience and tenacity are assets essential to success in working with Max/MSP. To paraphrase another response, "Are your students geniuses? Max/MSP is too difficult for undergraduates to grasp!" No. My students are not exceptional. Neither I nor most of my students possess remarkable IQs. This was truly a great insight. I was reminded that I would be wise to approach this new thing with a beginner's mind, with a willingness to go slow, be methodical, and not allow frustration to rule the

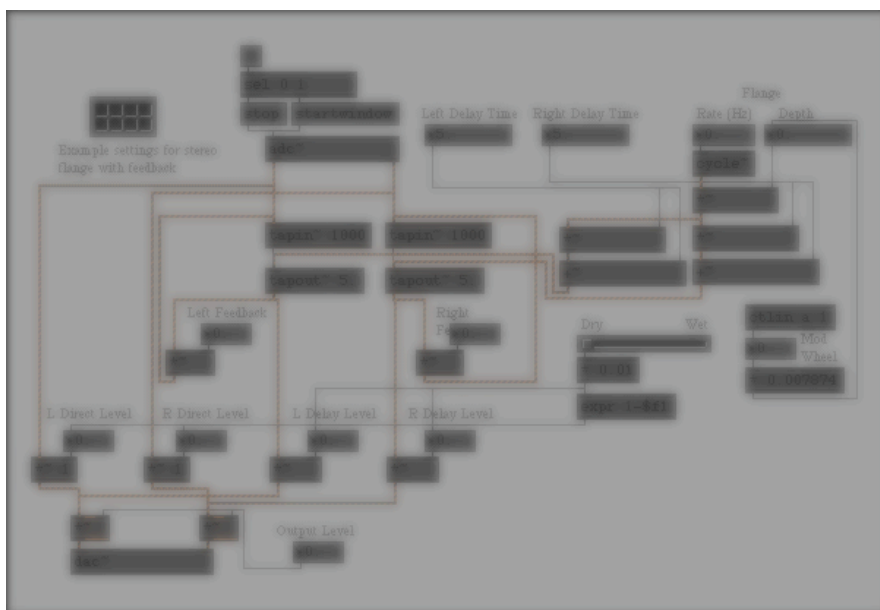
day. (One of the great advantages to pushing 50 is that I have had enough life experience to set aside ego from time to time, and approach life with greater humility.)

Max/MSP, Pure Data (pD), or Something Else?

One of the initial questions I posted on the listserv was whether I should teach (and learn) Max/MSP or pD? The overwhelming majority of responses I received recommended Max/MSP. The clear advantage to pD is that it is free, and from what

I understand it is an excellent program. I am not qualified to assess it. (I took a brief look at it, and it seems to be very much like MSP. There is also an extensive document that explains how to use it.) Max/MSP on the other hand does cost a bit of money. However, as many respondents pointed out, it is accompanied by an excellent set of tutorials and documentation. There is also an online community of Max/MSP users who answer questions and create external patches.

Perhaps the best response I received was in the form of a question: "What do you want to do?" This truly seems to be the core issue for anyone who wants to teach relevant technology to composition undergraduates. What is relevant? Well, it depends on what you want to do. There is a seemingly endless array of hardware and software that supports musical creativity. Our music students do gain some exposure to ProTools, Finale and Reason in an introductory "computers in music" course. Of course that is just the tip of the iceberg. But the answer for me, informed by my own prejudices, about "what do I want to do" was simple. I am fascinated by music that involves live



interaction. So the choice for me was to find software that would allow live interaction between performer and computer. Is that the only relevant choice? Of course not. Are Max/MSP and pD the only options? By no means. I could certainly envision designing a course or curriculum around any number of available software and/or hardware packages. I do believe that Max/MSP offers a strong foundation in software design and digital signal processing. I further believe that students with a background in Max/MSP may have an advantage in evaluating other hardware and software packages, but as with anything Max/MSP has its limitations. Ultimately it comes back to the question, "What do you want to do?"

Syllabi and Texts. Another question/request I posted on the SCI listserv related to how to organize course materials and what supporting texts to use. Many respondents shared generously providing links to their online syllabi. Others shared more general philosophies about how they approach teaching Max/MSP (or how they would like to teach it if they had more time). Not surprisingly there were about as many approaches as there were respondents. Some recommended introducing MSP shortly after introducing basic Max skills. Others recommended teaching Max and MSP as two separate courses. (I have since discovered that basic programming techniques in Max and MSP are identical in many cases---and of course they are designed to work together.) I concluded that how one chooses to design one's course depends on personal preference, and how much time (one semester? several years?) one has to cover material. Nearly all respondents recommended using the Max/MSP Tutorials as the basic instructional material. Several people recommended *Composing Interactive Music (Techniques and Ideas Using Max)*, by Todd Winkler. I have read and reread this book several times and can recommend it highly. It is written clearly, contains wonderful Max examples, and discusses at length real problems and solutions to composing interactive music. It does not discuss MSP. Other respondents mentioned supplemental resources from the internet (scholarly articles and external patches). If you were just starting to explore Max/MSP I would recommend the following:

www.cycling74.com

www.maxobjects.com

Experience and Conclusion. Since posting my initial inquiry last fall, I dove into teaching myself Max/MSP. I would generally steal three to six hours a week and try to work my way through a tutorial or two. Sometimes I would have a Saturday free, and would spend two or three hours working on Max. One piece of good news I discovered was that MIDI has not changed significantly since the 1980s. The Max/MSP environment is different from programming in BASIC, but the general principals of program flow are the same. The Max/MSP tutorials are valuable, and proceed logically from one to the next. I would sometimes hit a snag and not fully understand something, but usually I would continue working ahead and would have a better understanding of a particular concept later. I frequently

became sidetracked with an idea for a patch. I would sometimes spend a week or two trying to translate a particular idea I had into a functioning program (given whatever tools I had learned at that time in my Max journey). It was (and continues to be) truly exciting and fulfilling to finally get something to work the way I wanted it to work. In the past month I have started exploring MSP. It is a logical extension of Max, and am finding the same joy of discovery with MSP as I had with Max. Yes, there have been moments of frustration and annoyance. The right to left ordering convention in Max has "got me" once or twice. And other times I have spent several hours trying to figure out where my logic failed in trying to implement a particular feature or idea. But learning from my mistakes has been truly a gift, and I hope I can share with my students some of the lessons I have learned, and perhaps help make their experience somewhat less frustrating. (Or at least only as frustrating as it needs to be.) I would encourage anyone who has thought about learning Max/MSP to give it a go. It truly is fun to connect cords from one object to another and see (and hear) what results. Learning can at times be a bit slow, but with patience and tenacity you will begin to have an intuitive feel about how it all works. Thanks to all the members of the SCI listserv who provided so much valuable advice, and gave me the courage to dive in and learn something new.

George Chave teaches theory and composition at the University of Texas at Arlington. He is currently working on a commission from violinist Martha Walvoord to compose a work for violin and tenor voice based on poetry of Trudi Muro.

SEND US YOUR MEMBER NEWS!

Due to a shortage of submissions of Member News, and the constraints of page layout, we are not including that feature in this issue of the Newsletter.

The Member News feature will return in the next issue.

See the blue box in the lower lefthand corner of Page 2 for complete information on how to submit a report of your activities. Thanks!

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MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

For complete details, please visit <http://www.societyofcomposers.org/data/organization/membership.html>

FULL MEMBERSHIP (\$55/year): Eligible to submit scores to the National Conferences, regional conferences, SCI Recording Series, SCI Journal of Music Scores, and will receive the SCI Newsletter in electronic form. Optional subscription to [scimembers], the SCI listserv. Eligible to vote on Society Matters and in elections for the National Council.

JOINT MEMBERSHIP (\$75/year): Same benefits as full members

SENIOR MEMBERSHIP (\$27.50/year): Open to those 65 years of age or older, or retired. Same benefits as full members.

ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP (\$27.50/year): Open to performers and other interested professionals. Receives the SCI Newsletter in electronic form and can participate in national and regional conferences.

STUDENT MEMBERSHIP (\$27.50/year): Eligible to submit to regional conferences and receive the SCI Newsletter in electronic form. Optional subscription to [scimembers], the SCI listserv.

STUDENT CHAPTER MEMBERSHIP (\$17.50/year): Same benefits as student members, but only available on campuses having Student Chapters.

INSTITUTIONAL MEMBERSHIP (\$25/year): Organizations receive hard copy of the SCI Newsletter and other mailings.

LIFETIME MEMBERSHIP (\$1100 or \$120/year for 10 years): Benefits the same as full members, for life.

PUBLICATIONS

Publications include the *SCI Newsletter*, *SCI Recording Series*, *Performers CD Series*, *SCI Journal of Music Scores*, and **SCION** (monthly e-mail listing of announcements and opportunities for composers).

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Announcements of contests, calls for scores, and other solicitation appear in the *SCI Newsletter* and **SCION** as a service to SCI members. While every effort is made to assure the accuracy of these announcements, SCI cannot accept responsibility for errors, misrepresentations, or misinterpretations.



The SCI Newsletter
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