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ART

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INSIDE

Painter
Anita Baarns

Composer
David Gaines

Loudoun's
Globe Theatre

Snicker's Gap
(an ode to old
Loudoun)

The Universal Languages of David Gaines

by Christopher Maré

When asked why he continues to compose, given all of the challenges facing composers today, David Gaines replies, "We, meaning those of us in the music world, do this because we cannot help doing it! I think that composers, similar to painters and other artists, have an urge to create something. The creative urge is extremely fundamental to human beings, and people do it because they can't help but do it!"

David's manner becomes increasingly intense as he speaks of the two great passions in his life: composing new classical music and championing contemporary classical music by other composers. Most people, he says, don't realize that classical music is being composed today as it has been for centuries. Perhaps this is because today's music world allows few opportunities for performing and recording new music. Especially in the United States, the larger audience for classical music tends to avoid concerts featuring new music. So, from a financial perspective, it is important to perform popular favorites, music from the standard repertoire. It is also a fact of life in the music world that patrons aren't likely to make significant financial contributions to organizations promoting newly composed music.

But there is hope! With the dissolution of the Soviet Empire, the music world is discovering many fine musicians in Eastern Europe. David finds these musicians to be superb, and they are available at a reasonable cost to make recordings of new music. Taking advantage of this opportunity, he currently is in the Czech Republic assisting with the recording of two of his own compositions: Symphony No. 1 for Mezzo Soprano and Orchestra, and his Concerto for Euphonium and Orchestra. Major distributors of classical

music will be releasing these recordings soon in the U.S.

Addressing the criticism that new music is not easily understood or may not be very enjoyable, David answers, "Specifically, about composition in the last couple of decades, there have been so many different types that have become acceptable within the academic world and outside the academic world. No one has a foothold on a certain type of composition which was the case in the 20th century up until fairly recently. These days there are so many different types of styles; eclecticism is really what is governing, what's going on. In any particular pool of composers, a meeting of the American Composers Forum, or Peabody Conservatory, if you sit down with a group of composers, you can't predict with any particular accuracy what style any one of them is going to be working in. You could have

people who are interested in minimalism along the lines of Philip Glass. At the same time, you could have a traditional serialist, someone who is in the tradition of Milton Babbitt, Gunther Schuller, reaching back to Webern and Schoenberg. There are people who mix fairly conservative styles that go back to Shostakovich or Mahler, back to 19th Century ways of looking at things with techniques that have been introduced

throughout the 20th Century. I personally borrow bits and pieces from all of the above, and I think that is where composition is these days, to try to come up with a meaningful synthesis of everything that's gone before."

David began composing music when he was an undergraduate student at Northwestern University. Among his choices for a major were music education,

euphonium performance, or theory and composition. (For those who wonder what a euphonium is, it is a brass musical instrument similar to a baritone tuba but somewhat smaller.) While David is a euphonium player, he didn't find majoring in euphonium performance or in music education to be particularly attractive, so he decided to become a composer. He emphasizes that he always had been very interested in music theory and somewhat

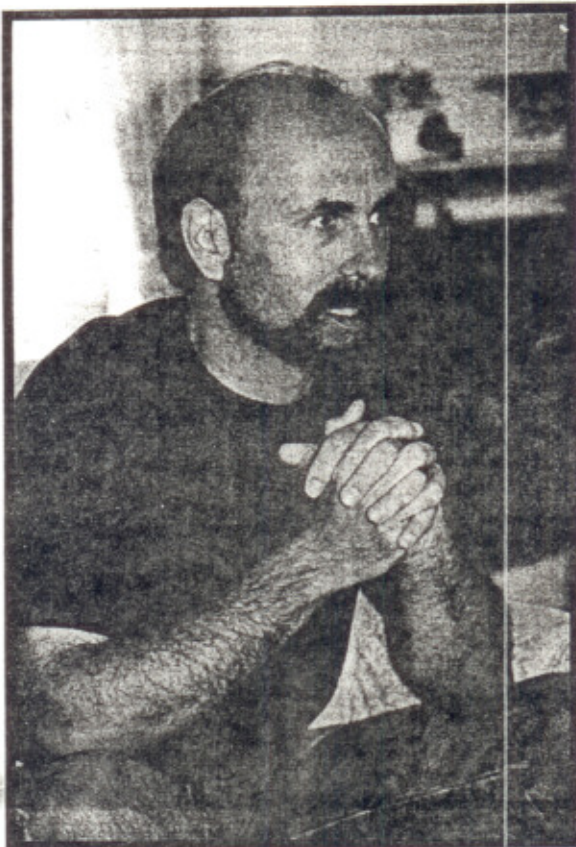
interested in composing, although he had never really attempted to compose. The first real piece he remembers writing was a duet for flute and euphonium composed in 1983. He sold the score, and it has since been performed. He considers it one of his best compositions.

The music he was playing at Northwestern, David says, "was very neoclassical, like the music of Hindemith,

Copland; angular, lots of perfect intervals, highly rhythmic, polyrhythms, odd meters. I was also influenced by the progressive rock music that I was listening to at the time, which has the same elements. All of these influences, the neoclassical, the progressive rock, the chamber music, all come from Stravinsky. I was heavily influenced by the music that I was listening to and playing." David explains that at most academic institutions, at the time that he was a student and even to a degree today, it was believed that if you weren't writing twelve-tone music, or very avant garde electronic music, your music was completely irrelevant. "So," he says, "I spent two, three years being completely irrelevant. My music was far too conservative. So, if you hear my piece for flute and euphonium today, it sounds kind of charming. It's very listenable. Since that time, I've gotten more harmonically adventurous." He says, however, that his music remains solidly in the Copland, Hindemith, Stravinsky tradition. He dreams of the next work that he wants to compose: a piece for tenor saxophone and chamber orchestra.

Today, David lives in Ashburn and still enjoys listening to the progressive rock groups that he was introduced to in high school. He finds the music of Pulitzer Prize winning composer Ellen Taaffe Zwilich, who teaches at Julliard School of Music, most similar to his own. He enjoys the music of John Corigliano, who also teaches at Julliard, and the music of older composers, such as the late Alan Hovhaness which he describes as a

continued on page 15



David Gaines



demonstrative

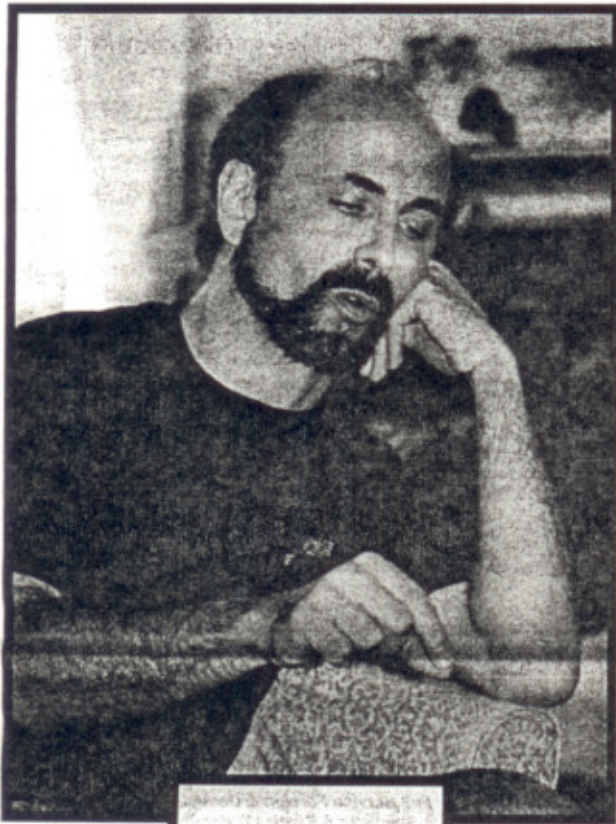
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The Universal Languages of David Gaines

continued from page 7

mixture of Eastern harmony and Western avant garde techniques. He enjoys the music of Bach, as well. David says that his musical

rearranging it. His sister had an AM radio, and he listened to all of the pop music of the early '20s. His father had all of the classical recordings from his music appreciation class in college, and David also listened to these. When the band director came recruiting to his junior high school, David chose the baritone.



previews, articles, and album reviews on all types of music in international, national, and regional periodicals. In 1995, HTD Records in England asked him to write the liner notes for the special CD reissues of *Turn of the Cards* and *Scheherazade and Other Stories*, considered the two finest albums from the mid-1970s by the British progressive rock group *Renaissance*.

He is also a student of and an advocate for the language called Esperanto, an artificial, international language with a vocabulary based on word roots common to many European languages. This seems perfectly logical since communication is what David is all about. Music is often referred to as the universal language and its magic touches all people, all cultures, and expresses the feelings that all share. It seems natural, then, that a man dedicated to composing and performing music should seek another universal language with which to communicate. Wherever he is, David finds others who are also fluent in Esperanto; in Eastern Europe the language will surely facilitate the complex process of recording his music.

Wanting to get his music in circulation, David talked to his twin brother who helped make it happen with the support of a good friend who agreed to fund the project. So, with funding in hand, David met with William Thomas McKinley, a successful contemporary composer who, like David, recognized that recordings were the way to build public awareness of new music. Some years ago, McKinley founded his own record company, MMC Recordings, and has been making and selling new music recordings successfully. David comments that MMC has produced a remarkable collection of contemporary

American music which otherwise would not be available because of the availability of excellent Eastern European orchestras, and because they will work for far less than orchestras in the West. McKinley made the arrangements for David to go to the Czech Republic and chose the Moravian Philharmonic under the direction of Vit Miska. The orchestra is the principal orchestra for Olomouc, the capital city of Moravia, in the eastern part of the Czech Republic, which is where the recordings will be made.

McKinley has obtained two acclaimed soloists: mezzo soprano Kimball Wheeler from California will participate in the recording of the *Symphony No. 1* for Mezzo and Orchestra, and Mark Kellogg, Euphonium Professor at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, will be the soloist in the *Concerto for Euphonium and Orchestra*. At the conclusion of the recording sessions, the Moravian Philharmonic will perform both works at a public concert.

David Gaines will have returned from Europe by the time this article is printed, having added another credit to his long list of honors, awards, and prizes. On the local front, and for all of us involved in the arts world of Loudoun County, David Gaines is known as the new manager of the Franklin Park Performing and Visual Arts Center where he is working to bring a dream we all share to reality.

After a long career in public education, Christopher Maré has chosen to devote his energies to supporting and promoting performing arts organizations. He is the producer of the *Neale Concert Series* and is active in many other organizations devoted to making the performing arts accessible to all.

interests can best be described as music written before 1750 and from 1900 on. When asked if he has no interest in 19th Century music, he admits that he has always been attracted to Eastern European music and particularly to the music of Dvorak and Smetana. He adds that "the transparency of things like Copland's duo for flute and piano and Stravinsky's small, chamber music—that's what really appeals to me!"

When did his passion for music begin? David speaks of his early childhood when the family had a piano in the living room and his mother played regularly. He remembers "stealing" her sheet music and

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After two lessons, he was ready to play in the band. He tells of trying to arrange music for his fellow players, unsuccessfully. At the time, the Stamford, Connecticut, schools had an excellent music theory program, and David participated in the complete program. He purchased his own euphonium in high school and went on to Northwestern. Following college, David attended Peabody Conservatory of Music of Johns Hopkins University and obtained his Doctor of Musical Arts degree.

An accomplished writer as well as composer, David has published over 50



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