



July 2008-June 2009



AMERICAN COMPOSERS FORUM

Photos: (left to right) Maja Cerar performs her “Catharsis” for violin, computer, and video at the Spark Festival of Electronic Music in Minneapolis (photo: Harvest Moon Photography); Ojibwe student composer Hope Defore heard her music performed as part of a FNCI CANOE residency in Fond du Lac, Minnesota (photo: Georgia Wettlin-Larsen); Conductor Osmo Vänskä confers with composer J. Anthony Allen during a Composer Institute reading session with the Minnesota Orchestra (photo: Greg Helgeson).

## Annual Report 2009

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John Nuechterlein

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**“Someone who works in the arts is every bit as gainfully employed as someone who works in an auto plant or a steel mill. We’re going to make the point till people are tired of hearing it.”**

This quote from new NEA Chairman Rocco Landesman struck me as one of those “obvious” points that clearly is *not* obvious to a majority of Americans. Kudos to Mr. Landesman for deciding to use his new pulpit to help preach the need for support of individual artists in this country! The NEA’s new slogan is “Art Works,” a phrase that Landesman believes to say, “We matter.” I immediately thought of the professional development program we ran this year called *Making Music Work*, a two-day seminar for composers who are working hard to understand how to make a career from what they do so well. Over 100 composers signed up for the weekend, and we were delighted when some 30 composers traveled to St. Paul on their own dime to participate.

For the Forum as for the rest of the world, FY2009 was anything but business as usual. We were forced to make some painful sacrifices in the face of declining revenue from all sources. We continue to move forward. As you will read in these pages, our programs this past year were as vibrant as ever. We served hundreds of composers and communities, and engaged people with the creativity of living composers in diverse venues that included traditional concert halls, Indian pow-wows, schools, individual homes, and of course on the newest of mobile devices. Now more than ever, composers are a vital and creative force in our culture who remind of us the power of music to heal, incite and inspire.

We sincerely thank our board members, donors and friends for being such loyal supporters in these difficult times. We could not be a national resource for this field without your help, and we are deeply grateful to all who have said yes to “music works” in the past year.



The Minneapolis Youth Chorus was one of six participating choral ensembles for a Minnesota Voices premiere at the Minnesota State Fair.

The American Composers Forum enriches lives by nurturing the creative spirit of composers and communities. We provide new opportunities for composers and their music to flourish, and engage communities in the creation, performance, and enjoyment of new music.



ACF members in Philadelphia heard the ensemble Time for Three (pictured above) rehearse a new work by Jennifer Higdon during a Composer-to-Composer session with the composer and the Philadelphia Orchestra.

Many Thanks!

Program Summaries

Media	Grants & Fellowships	Residencies & Community Outreach
	ACF awarded over \$379,000 to a diverse group of composers and performers of new music from across the United States. Ranging from small project-related grants for emerging composers to substantial awards designed to reward artistic excellence, we provide artists at all stages of their careers with valuable resources for professional and artistic development.	By linking communities with composers and performers, ACF's composer residencies engage communities in the creative process and broaden the context in which new music is written, performed and heard. Recent residency projects have involved partnerships with schools, social service agencies, faith communities, hospitals, and performing ensembles.
	Education	First Nations Composer Initiative (FNCI)
	ACF's education programs address the full scope of K-12 educational needs, from curriculum and teacher training to composer residencies in schools. The Forum's <i>BandQuest</i> ® series of music for middle level bands composed by prominent American composers has reached an estimated 300,000 students since its inception in 1997, and has sold over 10,000 scores.	One of our newest programs, FNCI is building an infrastructure for the creation and performance of Native American music of all genres, and actively encourages the next generation of Native composers and performers in the creation of new work. To date, our national award program, <i>Common Ground</i> , has provided 32 grants to Native composers, performers and organizations to support activities that sustain and encourage their careers.
Professional Development	ACF Chapters	
ACF utilizes the full range of media and new technology to spread the word about our programs, members, and the new-music field. <i>Composers Datebook</i> ®, our daily radio feature, can be heard on over 300 public radio stations nationwide. Our label, <i>innova</i> ® Recordings, puts out an average of 25 releases a year.	Through collaborations with educational institutions and performing arts organizations, ACF supports composers' professional growth through a rich variety of programs and services. The Forum recently partnered with McNally Smith College of Music to present <i>Making Music Work</i> , a two-day seminar focusing on career-building essentials for the contemporary composer.	

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Program Highlights

Left to right: Chorus and orchestra at a Continental Harmony premiere of Peter Boyer’s “Dreaming a World” in Battle Creek, Michigan (photo: Robert Conway); a FNCI Common Ground grant funded Coast Orchestra performances at Rutgers University, the National Gallery of Art, and the Smithsonian Museum of the American Indian.

Grants & Fellowships

Providing artists at all stages of their careers with valuable resources for professional and artistic development, the Forum’s comprehensive slate of grants and fellowships includes the *McKnight Composer Fellowships* and *Visiting Composer Residencies*, the *Jerome Composers Commissioning Program*, the First Nations Composer Initiative’s *Common Ground*, *Encore* (a performance incentive fund), and *subito* (career advancement support for emerging composers). During the past fiscal year, 75 grants to composers and performers of new music representing all regions of the United States were awarded in these programs.

Residencies & Community Outreach

ACF’s groundbreaking composer residencies are central to our mission of providing new opportunities for composers and their music to flourish. Recent residency projects have involved partnerships with schools, social service agencies, faith communities, and performing ensembles. Examples from the past year include *Saint Paul Listens*, a pilot composer residency project in partnership with three middle schools in Saint Paul, MN, and the new music ensemble Zeitgeist (more information about this program follows in the Education section), and *Faith Partners*, which has composer residencies in process with churches in Atlanta, GA, and Marshall, Minneapolis, Princeton, Saint Cloud, and Sauk Rapids, MN.

Education

The Forum’s education programs provide resources and training to enhance composers’ skills as teaching artists, present professional development workshops for educators to encourage creativity and composition in the classroom, and instill young people with the understanding to both appreciate and create new music. Highlights of the past year include Chris Brubeck’s residency with the West Rocks Middle School Band in Norwalk, CT, on his new piece for *BandQuest*® titled “Ghost Walk”; a continued partnership with Perpich Center for Arts Education in presenting *Create, Respond, Perform*, a professional development workshop for educators; finalizing plans to expand the *Music by Kids for Kids* composition

curriculum via a tour of sites around Minnesota; and the pilot launch of *Saint Paul Listens*, a music literacy program that commissioned three composers to write new works and conduct school residencies in Saint Paul, MN.

First Nations Composer Initiative (FNCI)

While American Indians have successfully codified unique Indian expressions in literature, dance, theater, and the visual arts, only recently have they begun to fully express themselves within all the possibilities that lie in music. The Forum’s First Nations Composer Initiative (FNCI) was created in the belief that Native American composers and musicians of all ages, interests and abilities should have access to information and opportunities to express themselves creatively and facilitate ways for their music to be heard by a wide audience. To that end, FNCI provides a unique service to Native American musicians and performers. A new three-year strategic plan focuses efforts on the successful regional and national re-granting program *Common Ground*, and on fundraising for the future. The Initiative’s composition program for middle and high school students, *CANOE*, recently wrapped up residencies with the Fond du Lac tribe in northern Minnesota, and with urban Native populations in Los Angeles and Minneapolis.

Media

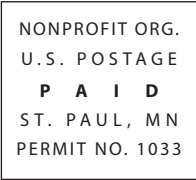
The centerpieces of ACF’s media programs are *Composers Datebook*® and *innova*® Recordings. Co-produced with Minnesota Public Radio, *Composers Datebook*® celebrates contemporary composers and their historical counterparts. The two-minute daily radio show can be heard on 280 stations nationwide, with a daily email newsletter delivered to over 12,000 readers. The Forum’s *innova*® Recordings releases an average of 25 CDs per year and has amassed a catalog in excess of 300 titles representing a diverse mix of musical genres encompassing experimental, electro-acoustic, jazz, world music, and contemporary classical titles. *innova* releases have received wide acclaim and are prominent in radio, media, and charts. Recently, ACF finalized an arrangement with Naxos of America for both physical and digital distribution of *innova* titles, as well as representing the entire catalog in its streaming library service.

Professional Development

At the heart of the Forum’s work is providing services to professional members. In our chapters across the country and in our national office, staff members serve as a helpful and friendly resource to composers. In addition to consulting via phone and email, the Forum regularly convenes a wide range of workshops, reading sessions and educational events. Two of ACF’s most visible national programs — the Minnesota Orchestra *Composer Institute* and VocalEssence’s *Essentially Choral* — provide opportunities for composers to hear their music performed by professional musicians and participate in seminars on musical, career, business and professional development issues. On April 4-5, 2009, ACF partnered with McNally Smith College of Music to present *Making Music Work*, a two-day seminar focusing on career-building essentials for the contemporary composer. Workshop sessions were led by panels comprised of industry professionals from the national as well as Twin Cities music scenes and drew composers from around the country.

ACF Chapters

In addition to the programs designed for Minnesota, the Forum operates a network of five chapters around the country with offerings tailored to the needs of their local communities: New England, Philadelphia, Washington, DC, San Francisco Bay Area and Los Angeles. Services range from grant programs like *subito* and *Community Partners* (San Francisco, Philadelphia and Washington) to commissioning programs (Boston and San Francisco Bay Area) and online services like [www.new-musicphiladelphia.org](http://www.new-musicphiladelphia.org). Performance opportunities also abound through the *House Concert Series* in Los Angeles, the *Kimmel Concerts* in Philadelphia and the *Sonic Circuits Festival* in Washington, DC. In addition to chapters, the Forum is pleased to partner with the American Music Center in bringing our services to students in ten academic institutions across the country. See our website for more details.



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