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Molly Bowman

Ouachita Baptist University

Ouachita News Bureau

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Ouachita Composers Symposium to feature student compositions April 21

By Molly Bowman

April 17, 2014

For more information, contact OBU's news bureau at newsbureau@obu.edu or (870) 245-5208.

ARKADELPHIA, Ark. -- Several students at Ouachita Baptist University will present their original music compositions on Monday, April 21, at 7:30 p.m. in Mabee Fine Art Center's Francis McBeth Recital Hall. The event is free and open to the public.

The Composers Symposium, which has been part of the OBU music program for more than 50 years, offers students the opportunity to hear their musical works come to life. Different groups within the Division of Music, including choir members and instrumentalists, will perform the pieces created by their peers.

"As a senior, this year's symposium means a lot to me," said Kassie Coleman, a senior music composition major from Hot Springs, Ark. "This will be a great opportunity for my instrumentalists to perform for an audience.

"I have always appreciated the fact that OBU hosts a Composers Symposium," Coleman added, "as it gives students a chance to hear their works performed live—something which is not always easy to come by. It's also exciting to hear other students' works being performed and getting to know them a little better by listening to their music."

The event is open to students who have either enrolled in music composition courses or have been granted special permission from a composition instructor. These students work alongside a professor for two to four months in preparation for the event.

"For inexperienced students, much of the help provided by a composition instructor regards things such as planning the piece, instrument ranges, finding a balance between unity and variety and how to notate the music," said Dr. Patrick Houlihan, professor of music at OBU. "For those who have taken composition a few semesters, every student displays an increased level of musical maturity. They begin to notice things in scores that they never noticed before."

Coleman noted how the program has stretched her as a musician, saying, "Ouachita's composition program has changed me as a musician in every way. Composition is really a culmination of all the other musical subjects we study, and composing has helped me to synthesize what I've learned into a final and meaningful product. I feel so prepared for the world after college with all that this wonderful program has taught me."

For Tori Clark, a sophomore vocal music education major from Bonnerdale, Ark., composing began as an independent interest her freshman year. As she continued her education at Ouachita, she began to realize the potential of her work.

“As I started to learn more about music theory and began to think more critically of music, I became increasingly interested in exploring my own potential for creating it,” Clark said. “It has been really awesome to be able to be in the rehearsal of my own piece! It's truly magical to write it and then be involved in the rehearsal process and performance of it.”

In addition to Clark and Coleman, participating student composers include: Sean Jackson, a junior music composition major from Livingston, La., and Joel Rogier, a senior vocal performance major from Glen Carbon, Ill.

For more information, contact OBU's School of Fine Arts at (870) 245-5129.