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California Symphony composer-in-residence Mason Bates honored with prestigious Chicago Symphony appointment



Music Director Barry Jekowsky and the California Symphony congratulates its 2007-2010 Young American Composer-in-Residence Mason Bates for his appointment yesterday to the prestigious position of a CSO Mead Composer-in-Residence for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, beginning fall 2010.

Bates' three-year residency with the California Symphony culminates with the world premiere of a major new work next May, to be conducted by Jekowsky and performed by the Bay Area orchestra. His *White Lies for Lomax* and *Music From Underground Spaces* (to be performed by the Chicago Symphony next April) were both created under the California Symphony's award-winning Young American Composer-in-Residence program.

A past recipient of both the Rome and Berlin Prizes, Bates' unusual compositions fuse innovative orchestral writing, electronica and techno rhythms, and imaginative narrative forms through cutting-edge sound design. He is the sixth participant of the program, founded by Jekowsky in 1991. Previous YACRs (pronounced yak-er) have been Kamran Ince (1991-1993), Christopher Theofanidis (1994-1996), Kevin Puts (1996-1999), Pierre Jalbert (1999-2002), and Kevin Beavers (2003-2005).

“Working with Mason the last two seasons has been a privilege and a pleasure for me, as well as our musicians,” says Jekowsky, who selected the composer out of more than 85 applicants in 2007, while Bates was still working on his doctorate at the University of California, Berkeley. “Mason truly has a unique voice. His subtle blending of classical and electronica elements into his innovative and brilliantly-

crafted compositions have already resulted in an enduring body of work that is both fascinating and engaging.”

“It’s a very prestigious program with an incredible track record,” Bates said in 2007 of his decision to apply. “Both Chris Theofanidis and Kevin Puts, whom I know, said it’s a fantastic opportunity. It’s certainly a significant tradition to be a part of.”

Designed by Jekowsky to fill the gap between formal training and the reality of writing for an actual orchestra, the California Symphony’s Young American Composer-in-Residence (YACR) program is the only hands-on training ground of its kind in the world. Emerging composers under the age of 40 are given three-year residencies to hone their craft, using a professional orchestra as their laboratory. Among other benefits, they receive up to three taped readings, all conducted during regular subscription concert rehearsals, allowing them to make revisions before each new piece receives its world premiere as part of the California Symphony’s regular subscription program each May.

To date, the YACR program has been responsible for 27 new American works – including Pierre Jalbert’s *In Aeternam*, which won him the BBC International Masterprize. In recognition of its unparalleled contribution, BMI Foundation President Ralph Jackson awarded a Special Citation to Jekowsky and CSO “for their passionate commitment to young American composers,” declaring: “We know of no other orchestra anywhere in the world doing this type of groundbreaking work with young composers.”

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