

## Arkansas Composers' Forum

### Final Report

The Arkansas Composers' Forum and Concert was made possible by a Faculty Development Grant through the Office of Academic Affairs at Arkansas Tech University, submitted in October 2007 and approved in February 2008.

The project began with contacting five notable band composers from Arkansas, all of whom were eager to participate in the activities and musical performances associated with the event. They were: Philip Parker of Russellville (presenting and performing his "Dialogue for Alto Saxophone and Wind Ensemble"); Reber Clark of Chicago, IL (presenting "Fortress of the Rose"); Charles Booker of FortSmith (presenting "Symphony #1", mvt. 1); Steven Bryant of Austin, TX (presenting the Arkansas premier of "First Light"); and Arkansas Composer Laureate, W. Francis McBeth of Arkadelphia (presenting and performing his "Countless Halls of Air"). Saxophone soloist James Pianalto of Benton was selected to perform with our students on the Parker "Dialogue".

Prior to the arrival of the guest composers, Mr. Cooper prepared the selected pieces to 70-80% performance ready in order to eliminate the "note and rhythm" part of the rehearsing for the composers.

The entire event was divided into two parts: The forum, where each composer took 30-45 minutes of open rehearsal to work on his piece with our students, while describing the work and the intent of rehearsal changes that were being made. This part of the project was held in our auditorium, with seating area on stage and in the front rows of the hall, both areas supplied with scores of all of the music being rehearsed and performed. The forum portion was attended by many of our students, a large contingency of Fort Smith, Russellville, Dardanelle, Dover, and Little Rock area teachers and students. This portion of the project was especially enlightening for our students and the faculty and teachers in attendance. Comments were very favorable and the place was buzzing! The joy of watching and listening to the composer conduct and rehearse his own music is a special treat any time the opportunity arises. The second part of the project was held that evening, a live performance of all of the pieces, conducted by the composers. The event was one of our best attended concerts of the decade, and attracted listeners from a wide geographic area.

Overall, the Arkansas Composers' Forum and Concert was an overwhelming success. It was rewarding for the composers, artistically educational for the performers, and a real "growth" experience for students and music teachers in attendance at the "forum". The money provided by the grant allowed us to pay travel expenses for those coming in from out of state and make the most of the opportunity. We hope to have a second forum in the next few years. Letters from two of the composers and local news write-up for the event are attached.

Hal Cooper,  
Director of Bands  
Arkansas Tech University

From Steven Bryant's Website

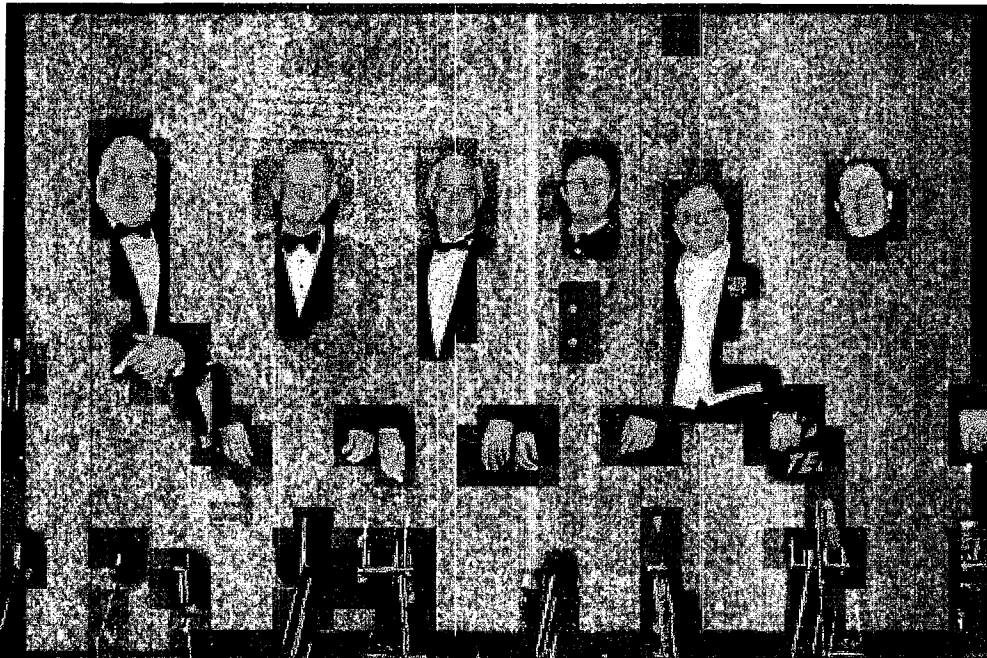
Wednesday, April 02, 2008

Arkansas Composers Forum

Last night was the Arkansas Composers Forum concert featuring works by Charles Booker, Reber Clark, Philip Parker, Francis McBeth, and myself. Hal Cooper, director of bands at Arkansas Tech University in Russellville was our host. The band did a great job on all the works, and I was particularly happy with their performance of my First Light. This was only its second performance, and the first time for me to hear the new ending, which I was extremely pleased with.

Each of the composers conducted his own work, so a big "thank you" to the band for putting up with a different composer for each work, and for tolerating a gaggle of composers to begin with! It was great to meet you all!

I was negligent in getting many pictures, but my mother managed to get one of all of us immediately after the concert:



(L-R: Reber Clark, Francis McBeth, Phil Parker, Steven Bryant, Charles Booker, Hal Cooper)

Big thank you to Hal for putting this together, and here's to hoping for a 2nd Annual Arkansas Composers Forum! ;)



Reber Clark

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April 8, 2008

**Hal Cooper, Director of Bands  
Music Department  
Arkansas Tech University  
Russellville, AR 72801**

Hal,

Well it finally happened! Congratulations on producing the first *Arkansas Composers' Forum*. Thanks so much for inviting me to participate, I was very honored to be there and had a wonderful time.

The band is excellent. They are attentive, accurate, flexible, *in tune*, and above all musical. The entire staff of the music department is to be congratulated for producing so many fine musicians and you especially for creating the atmosphere and standards which produce such a high quality ensemble.

Enclosed is the book we had mentioned, *Poetics of Music* by Stravinsky. It's a great little book which I'm sure is in the Tech library, but I thought you might like your own copy. It is straight and to the point and among other things has an excellent argument on the value of limits. I hope you enjoy it.

I hope we can work together in the future. I am happy to be associated with the Arkansas Tech Symphonic Band. Please convey my heartfelt thanks to the ensemble.

Sincerely,

Reber "Chip" Clark

## Tech band to host Arkansas Composers Forum

Sunday, March 30, 2008

Arkansas Tech University will be the site for a musical meeting of the minds Tuesday when the Arkansas Tech Symphonic Band hosts the Arkansas Composers Forum.

"This is an open rehearsal and performance of serious 21st century music for the band," said Hal Cooper, Arkansas Tech director of bands. "It will give us a chance to feature the work of these artists with Arkansas and Tech connections. It will also give students and professionals in the area an opportunity for professional growth as they witness the preparation of the music for performance."

Among the composers scheduled to attend the event are W. Francis McBeth of Arkadelphia.; Charles Booker of Fort Smith; Reber Clark of Chicago, Ill.; Steven Bryant of Austin, Texas; and Philip Parker of the Arkansas Tech faculty. James Pianalto of Benton will be a guest soloist on the saxophone.

The day will begin with an open rehearsal at 1 p.m. in Witherspoon Building, Room 101. Seating for the rehearsal is limited. Those wishing to attend the rehearsal can call Cooper at 747-1207 to reserve space.

"The rehearsal will give the composers a forum in which they will present the piece they have chosen for the event," said Cooper. "They will give a demonstration and explanation of its content and artistic meaning by highlighting specific performance events and/or effects."

At 7:30 p.m., all of the composers will conduct their pieces during a concert, which will be free and open to the public. The concert will be in Witherspoon Auditorium.

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at the Clarksville High School Fine Arts Center.

The pageant is part of the Miss Arkansas' Outstanding Teen Pageant System and is sponsored by the Johnson County Peach Festival Association. The chairpersons of the pageant are Doris Velte and Nancy Hamma.

The winner of the pageant will represent the Peach Festival Association at the Miss Arkansas' Outstanding Teen Pageant in July 2009 in Hot Springs.

Contestants competing in the Miss Arkansas Valley's Outstanding Teen Pageant must be no younger than 13 and no older than 17 at the time of July 2009 Miss Arkansas' Outstanding Teen Pageant.

The application deadline is June 6. for more information, call Velte at (479) 754-8952 or Hamma at (479) 854-3065 or write the Johnson County Peach Festival, P.O. Box 517, Clarksville, AR 72830.

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#### **River Valley Business Expo Aug. 6**

The fifth annual River Valley Business Expo will be Aug. 6 at Tucker Coliseum on the Arkansas Tech University campus. The event will feature a sports theme, "Let The Games Begin."

Sponsorship opportunities are available to those interested in more visibility or to help support one of the River Valley's largest community events. For more information on sponsorship levels, call the Russellville Area Chamber of Commerce at 968-2530.

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