

WHAT IF BEETHOVEN HAD NEVER BEEN PLAYED...Why Supporting New Composers Matters

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In the Fall 2015 issue of *Symphony* magazine, writer Molly Sheridan wastes no time addressing the longstanding debate over the value of new music:

"Hold two images in your mind for a moment," she says. "... your own orchestra and a living composer with a new piece of music. Did your heart rate just kick up a little? Was it out of excitement-- or terror?" (From "Change in the Air")

What Sheridan goes on to explore in depth is the fact that, according to League of American Orchestras data, in the 2009-10 season, only 8% of works performed were by a living composer. However, in the 2014-15 season, almost 12% were by a living composer. Performing new music by new composers is on the rise...change is in the air!

Furthermore, with the **World Premiere** of our first commissioned piece, the Illinois Philharmonic Orchestra joins the ranks of our larger and more well-known orchestra siblings who are premiering living composer works (many of them commissioned works) this season....siblings like **Carnegie Hall, National Symphony Orchestra, Detroit Symphony** and **San Antonio Symphony**.

Composer Aaron Jay Kernis, whose *Musica Celestis* was on IPO's May 2 program, shared with Sheridan that what is "most visible" in the new-music landscape right now is "the passion that many music directors have toward new music."

Which echoes Maestro Danzmayr's reasoning for programming a contemporary composer's work on each concert this year. In speaking to subscribers in the IPO's Season Preview event last April, Maestro wondered aloud what would have happened if the critics and conductors of the historically "great" orchestral composers had never given their peers' new music a chance back in their day?

Maestro went on to explain that he felt it was important to share some of his favorite up and coming living composers with the IPO audience to introduce them to future "greats."

Adds IPO board member and concerto commissioner Barbara Sturges, "Each concert is enjoyed by many people over several hours. Now we feel even more rewarded that a contribution we've made helped the creation of a piece of music which will be enjoyed by many people over many years."

For IPO patron and concerto commissioner Jerri Greer, the idea of new music was exciting(not terrifying!): "I was impressed by Joshua Roman's improvisation with Anne Deavere Smith at the Harris Theatre performance of "On Grace" (in 2014)...I am looking forward to hearing how this imaginative artist will create this new concerto for the solo cello repertoire and am honored to be a part of IPO's groundbreaking commission," Greer explains.

Truly, commissioning a piece takes faith. It takes a financial commitment. It takes a deep love and respect for music as a cultural entity that must survive.

We are so thankful at IPO that we have a music director, board members, patrons, donors and musicians who believe in all that and will celebrate together on Opening Night when Joshua Roman's cello concerto, Awakening, has its World Premiere on the IPO stage.

May the heartbeats of our audience race with excitement, not terror, as we collectively make history on October 17, 2015!

To purchase tickets, visit ipomusic.org or call 708.481.7774.



Composer and cellist, Joshua

Roman, shares the IPO stage on Opening Night weekend (October 17-18, 2015) for the World Premiere of his cello concerto, *Awakening*, the IPO's first commissioned piece. Photo credit: Hayley Young.