

**PRESS RELEASE**

**Nebraska Music Teacher Association**

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**Nebraska Music Teachers Association Receives a Grant**

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**The Nebraska Music Teachers Association** announced today that it has been awarded a grant of \$2,416 by the Nebraska Arts Council. This grant will support the *2013 NMTA State Commissioned Composition Project* that includes a world premiere performance of Grammy Award winning composer Libby Larsen's *Ghosts of Old Pianos*. The four movement work for two pianos will be performed by UNK piano faculty members Nathan Buckner and Valerie Cisler at the 2013 Nebraska Music Teachers Association State Conference on October 18, 9:00 a.m. at Nebraska Wesleyan University, Lincoln (O'Donnell Auditorium) and at the University of Nebraska Kearney's *New Music Festival XIII*, to be held on the UNK campus, in Kearney, February 10-11, 2014. Both concerts are free and open to the public.

Composer Libby Larsen (b. 1950) has created a catalogue of over 500 works, spanning virtually every genre from intimate vocal and chamber music to massive orchestral works and over fifteen operas. She is constantly sought after for commissions and premieres by major artists, ensembles, and orchestras around the world, and has established a permanent place for her work in the concert repertory. In addition to joining the performers in a presentation of *Ghosts of Old Pianos*, where she will provide program notes and background inspiration for the work, Larsen will also present a workshop session entitled "The Art of Composing Music," immediately following the premiere.

Nebraska Arts Council's Executive Director, Suzanne Wise, commended *NMTA* for its programs, noting that "*the Nebraska Music Teachers Association* does an outstanding job of providing arts activities throughout the state of Nebraska. It is through fine organizations like this that Nebraska's children receive a better education in the arts, and the quality of life is improved for all Nebraskans."

*Ghosts of Old Pianos* is a four-movement work for two pianos that is intended to evoke the images and sounds of a variety of old, dusty pianos from various parts of the country. Composer Libby Larsen has communicated some thoughts behind the inspiration for the pieces, portions of which are provided here. The first movement, "The Haunting of May Yohe," is based on Giacomo Puccini's "Musetta's Waltz" as played on a Steinway Grand at the Bethlehem Hotel, PA,

1897. It is said that May (former owner of the Hope Diamond) still sings in the lounge of hotel. The second movement is entitled “. . . in the Jenny Lind Theater” evokes the sounds of an Emerson square grand piano, San Francisco, CA, 1851. The Jenny Lind Theater was named for the Swedish soprano, who became an overnight celebrity during her American tour in 1850. The Emerson square grand was lost to a fire in 1851. Larsen describes the piece as “an arrangement of Anton Wallerstein’s ‘Jenny Lind Polka,’ set in fire.” The third movement is based on an old church hymn “He’s Got the Whole World in His Hands” as played on a 1907/08 Cable upright piano with various “keys missing, some keys barely working, still playing the old song long after the church has closed its doors.” In movement number four, “Forgotten” is a work that imitates the sound of an old BH Janssen upright piano, incorporating portions of Eugene Cowles’s popular song at the Last Chance Saloon of Frontier Town, North Hudson, NY, 1915. “Frontier Town no longer exists, and the whereabouts of the BH Janssen is unknown. But it is not forgotten.”

The Nebraska Music Teachers Association, as a state-affiliate with the Music Teachers National Association, has a long-standing commitment to the creation and performance of new works of art. The original score and a recording of this work will be submitted to the MTNA Composer Commissioning Project office at MTNA headquarters in Cincinnati. One work, from among 51 MTNA state-affiliates, will be selected for the *MTNA Distinguished Composer of the Year Award* (to be presented in Chicago, March, 2014).

For more information about this project and performances of the NMTA State Commissioned work, please contact Dr. Valerie Cisler, NMTA President-elect at the University of Nebraska Kearney Department of Music & Performing Arts; 308.865.8118 or [cislerv@unk.edu](mailto:cislerv@unk.edu).

The Nebraska Arts Council grants monetary resources to Nebraska’s nonprofit organizations for arts projects and programs in communities throughout the state. This financial support is made possible by funds appropriated by the Nebraska Legislature, through competitive grants from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), a federal agency, and funds from the Nebraska Cultural Endowment (NCE). Nebraskans wishing to learn more about NEA grants or the NCE should visit the NAC website at [www.nebraskaartscouncil.org](http://www.nebraskaartscouncil.org).



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