

UNCG Wind Ensemble, Professor Make Grammy Entry List

GREENSBORO, N.C. – The UNCG Wind Ensemble, long recognized as one of the premiere performance groups at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, has gotten the attention of someone at the National Academy of Recording and Arts and Sciences.

Yes, the people who ultimately give out Grammy Awards.

The ensemble has been entered into consideration for music's highest honor by a member of the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences for its most recent recording, "fireworks!" The Wind Ensemble is on the Grammy Entry List in the Best Classical Album and Best Orchestral Performance categories.

"There were 61 UNCG student performers on this recording and they represented the very finest wind and percussion students in the School of Music, Theatre and Dance," said Dr. John Locke, UNCG's director of bands. "This year, there are some 300 entries for Best Classical Album, so we're realistic about our chances. Nonetheless, to be placed on a worldwide ballot with the greatest classical ensembles is very rewarding."

At least one of those competitors will be very familiar. Also making the list are Dr. Michael Burns, an associate professor of bassoon, and Dr. Inara Zandman, staff accompanist for the music departments, for their CD "Primavera: Music for Bassoon and Piano by Bassoonists." The recording is listed in Best Classical Album and Best Chamber Music Performance categories.

Members of the recording academy will whittle down the entry list in the coming weeks as they select their top five choices in a variety of musical categories in a round of voting. Those five projects will be considered Grammy nominees. Another ballot will determine the Grammy winner in each category.

"fireworks!" is the ensemble's 16th studio recording and the first to be distributed through a commercial recording label. The album was released in March 2010 and is available at Amazon.com, through many online distributors, directly from Equilibrium Records and for download through the Apple iTunes Store.

Though the recording process is arduous for both faculty and students, the experience is well worth it, said Dr. Kevin Gerald, UNCG's associate director of

bands. “For the students in the group, the experience of recording gets them to refine their playing to the highest level of detail,” he said.

The ensemble will often rehearse pieces for six to seven weeks in preparation for a recording. A recording session can take 90 minutes to three hours per song and include 40 to 100 takes of various measures of music. Then add in six to eight hours of editing per piece, plus time for touchups and sound engineering.

“We do it until we do it right,” Geraldi said.

Burns project has a personal genesis – his interest in music for the bassoon written by bassoonists. His passion for the topic led to his doctoral dissertation, and later, “Primavera.”

“On this CD, I chose to present all works for bassoon and piano as that is a very common performing group,” he said. “I traveled to meet with each composer and take a lesson on how best to perform their piece as well interview them with questions pertaining to their bassoon and composition training and backgrounds.”

“Primavera” is available on Amazon.com, cdbaby.com and through other online retailers.

Several students who participated in the recording of “fireworks!” are still on campus, including graduate Brad McMillian, who now works in the UNCG Bands Office. He was thrilled when he learned of the project’s Grammy attention.

“It’s a huge honor to be in a category with some of the world’s most famous ensembles,” he said.

Zandman, the pianist for “Primavera,” had a similar response.

“I am very happy that the CD is selected to be on the level suited for a Grammy,” she said. “It is a very big achievement.”

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