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Composer EDGAR GIRTAIN Wins Arapahoe Philharmonic's Inaugural Vincent C. LaGuardia, Jr. Composition Competition

Girtain named Composer-in-Residence for 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 seasons

Denver – The Arapahoe Philharmonic (AP) recently completed its first composition competition for composers under the age of 35. Named for the Arapahoe Philharmonic's former music director, the late Vincent C. LaGuardia, Jr., the competition brought in 41 applications from young composers across the country. The scores from Girtain and two other finalists were selected through an anonymous evaluation process, and their music was performed by the AP in an open rehearsal. The orchestra and audience in attendance were asked to weigh in on their favorite work. Girtain's score, *Isolation: Day 253* for soprano and orchestra, was chosen as the winning composition.

As winner, Girtain has been named Composer-in-Residence with the Arapahoe Philharmonic for the next two seasons, with performances, premieres, talks and appearances in the planning stages. *Isolation: Day 253* will be performed on the AP's November 7, 2014, concert at Mission Hills Church, 620 SouthPark Drive, Littleton.

The Vincent C. LaGuardia, Jr. Composition Competition was started as an opportunity to memorialize the AP's second long-time music director in a public and meaningful way; foster music education and a love of classical music in youth and young adults, a large part of the AP's mission; and actively introduce new orchestral music to our community.

"This is the only competition of its kind in the area – especially with a community orchestra," says Devin Patrick Hughes, the AP's Music Director and Conductor. "We were overwhelmed by the response from applicants. We never expected to receive over 40 scores. It shows that there is a real need for occasions for young composers to work with and write for orchestras of all levels. Music schools are creating exceptionally talented composers and then sending them out into a world where opportunities are few

and far between. It's an honor to be able to offer this competition, highlight some young talent and be a part of creating new music for the entire field."

The Arapahoe Philharmonic hosts two other competitions in addition to this one: the annual T. Gordon Parks Collegiate Concerto Competition and the Vincent C. LaGuardia, Jr. Conducting Competition, which alternates annually with the composition competition.

About Edgar Girtain

Edgar Girtain (b. 1988), a former sign maker from New Jersey, earned a B.M. with high honors in music education from Rutgers University and is currently finishing a M.A. in composition. His compositional output is varied and includes a number of pieces for orchestra, voice, chamber ensembles, film music, educational music and rarities like the glass harmonica. His music is frequently performed abroad as well as in the New York area, where he has been awarded numerous commissions and grants. His composition mentors have included Charles Fussell and Tarik O'Regan, the latter being his current teacher. Previously he studied with Steve Mackey, Paul Lansky, Jennifer Higdon and Dana Wilson, among others. A trombonist by trade, he frequently performs with opera orchestras and chamber ensembles in the New York area in addition to his teaching responsibilities at Rutgers.

About *Isolation: Day 253*

Girtain describes the piece as "a scene from an - as of yet - unwritten opera about a woman held in solitary captivity in some dismal prison cell, telling herself a story to pass time. The story being told is of a court magician who stumbles upon a book, and upon reading an unfamiliar spell, transforms from woman into bird. Reflecting the character's desire to be free, she elaborates on the magician's enjoyment of freedom in her new-found flight, elaborating for so long that she remembers fewer details and speaks increasingly in fragments. In isolation for nearly a year, her mind is decaying and she is losing her grip on reality."

The libretto for *Isolation: Day 253* is written by Will Goldberg, a colleague of Girtain's at Rutgers University in New Jersey. Girtain hails Goldberg as "a phenomenal and accomplished playwright." They worked together for a project that involved the musical setting of a newly created dramatic scene. "I wanted to work with him because his style, usually dark with short sentences, is perfect for setting to music. The text he created for this scene is what eventually became *Isolation: Day 253*. When Will initially showed me the text, I was skeptical that such a pronounced mental decline could occur in 253 days; but interestingly, in the past he had corresponded with Guantanamo Bay detainees as part of another project and had seen this same thing happen in real life."

About the Arapahoe Philharmonic

Founded in 1953, the Arapahoe Philharmonic is among the longest established, continuously operating musical resources in Colorado. After thriving under just two conductors between 1953 and 2012, T. Gordon Parks and Vincent C. LaGuardia, Jr., we celebrated our 60th anniversary in 2013-2014 with an exciting new conductor, Devin Patrick Hughes. The orchestra's musicians are primarily volunteers playing for the love of music, with a core of compensated section principals who provide technical leadership and support the excellence of performance.

Concerts in our home of Mission Hills Church in Littleton feature repertoire spanning the centuries, from the great masters to composers of the current day. The Philharmonic is invested in future generations, presenting annual children's concerts, sponsoring masterclasses and outreach to schools, as well as our three collegiate-level competitions.

About the Music Director

Devin Patrick Hughes was appointed Music Director and Conductor of the Arapahoe Philharmonic in the summer of 2013. He had previously held conducting posts with the Santa Fe Youth Symphony Association, Denver Contemporary Chamber Players, Denver Philharmonic Orchestra, Denver Young Artists Orchestra and Lamont Symphony Orchestra. He is also currently Music Director of the Boulder Symphony. Hughes was the only American selected with eleven other finalists in the Arturo Toscanini International Conducting Competition in Parma, Italy. More information may be found at www.devinpatrickhughes.com.

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