

# CLASSICAL COLLABO



# Music RATIONS

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Illustration by Cal Long

**TWO WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY FACULTY MEMBERS ARE MAKING THEIR MARK ON THE CLASSICAL MUSIC SCENE WITH RECENTLY RELEASED COMPACT DISCS. DR. MICHELE FIALA'S *THE LIGHT WRAPS YOU: NEW MUSIC FOR OBOE* AND DR. HEIDI PINTNER'S *FLUTE CHAMBER MUSIC BY MICHAEL KALLSTROM* ARE THE LATEST CREATIVE ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO EMERGE FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC. THE CDs CONTRIBUTE RELEVANT RECORDINGS TO THE CLASSICAL MUSIC GENRE AND ADD TO THE REPERTOIRE OF MUSIC FOR OBOE AND FLUTE. AND THOUGH THE FEATURED INSTRUMENTS, AND THE ARTISTS WHO PLAY THEM, ARE VERY DIFFERENT, THE TWO CDs HAVE QUITE A BIT IN COMMON.**

As debut releases for both Fiala and Pintner, the CDs feature new music recorded for the first time. All pieces are original works written by living composers — some of whom actually perform on the tracks — and both discs were recorded on WKU's campus. For several months, the artists endured the rigorous process of securing funding, figuring out which pieces to record, constructing the musical arrangements, and, of course, practicing. And though performing, engineering, and producing a full-length CD can certainly take its toll on a musician, Fiala and Pintner achieved their final products with a little help from their friends . . . and each other. Released on nationally distributed labels, Fiala's and Pintner's compilations feature guest performances by a number of their colleagues, exposing a broad audience to the diverse range of talented musicians among WKU's faculty.



"The music department at WKU is a very closely-knit community," said Pinter, whose first track, *It Had to Be*, features Fiala on oboe. "We know this kind of collaboration doesn't happen in every department or at every university." On Fiala's CD, Pinter plays flute on the whimsical *Cats in the Kitchen*, a work they commissioned from composer Phillip Bimstein featuring the two players accompanied by cat noises and domestic breakfast sounds. Both musicians agree that mutual respect and admiration is the foundation for their collaborations. "We feel fortunate to work in such a supportive environment," said Fiala. "We share in each other's accomplishments and enjoy working together."

Fiala's CD features premiere recordings of seven musical pieces

written specifically for oboe. The recordings on the disc were written by six composers — Phillip Bimstein, Fulvio Caldini, Andrea Clearfield, Bill Douglas, James MacMillan, and Rodney Rodgers — and the works were performed by musicians from New York, Arizona, Canada, Colorado, and, of course, Kentucky. In addition to Pinter's guest performance on Fiala's *The Light Wraps You*, WKU's Dr. John Cipolla, who teaches clarinet and saxophone, and Dr. Donald Speer, professor of piano, perform on her CD.

Since its release on the MSR Classics label in 2007, the CD has drawn positive attention from several music critics. *The Double Reed* describes her compilation as "a classy affair from start to finish" and her playing as "light, mellow, and flexible." *The American Record*

*Guide* calls the compositions "light and nonchalant," and finds that Fiala "seems to enjoy herself in this style." Carla Rees of *MusicWeb International* declares the CD is "well worth listening to [and] any performer who makes the effort to disseminate new repertoire, such as Michele Fiala has done here, is to be applauded. The standard of playing is consistently high."

Playing the oboe is certainly Michele Fiala's passion, but it is also her life's work. She is an assistant professor of double reeds, and as a performer, has played throughout the United States, Italy, and Canada. Her career highlights include performing with the Banff Summer Music Festival, Louisville Orchestra, and Phoenix Symphony. She holds a master's and doctorate in music from Arizona State University and



Michele Fiala

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a bachelor's of music from the University of Kentucky.

Heidi Pintner, a dedicated flutist, shares Fiala's passion for music. The foundation for her CD, *Flute Chamber Music by Michael Kallstrom* (Centaur Records 2007), began nearly eight years ago when Pintner joined the faculty at WKU. "Michael Kallstrom [a WKU professor] wrote a piece of music for me when I joined the music department, and since then, he's written several other pieces," she said. "I thought putting together a CD that featured his compositions was a nice way to recognize him."

Dr. Kallstrom is a Kentucky composer and distinguished university professor of music. The compositions recorded on Pintner's CD are all original chamber works written for flute by Kallstrom. Pintner describes his compositions as "enjoyable, audience-accessible pieces of high-quality music," and said she enjoys playing the pieces because they were written for instrumental combinations that are not normally written together, such as flute, percussion, and bass voice.

Kallstrom not only composed each piece of music for Pintner's CD, but performs on the disc as well. Several of the tracks feature lyrics extracted from poems written by Kallstrom, and as an operatic bass singer, it was a natural fit for him to perform on his colleague's CD. "We think of ourselves as a community of supporters, and we work together very well," he said. "I enjoy the way Heidi plays, and when I compose a piece of music I think not only about the personality of the instrument, but of the person I'm writing it for. She is very friendly and outgoing, and I wanted to write pieces that embody her personality."

In addition to Kallstrom's bass voice and Fiala's oboe accompaniments, the CD features guest performances by WKU's



Cipolla (clarinet), Speer (piano), and Mark Berry, assistant professor of percussion. "The entire CD was a group effort and everyone put a lot of time and effort into it," said Pintner. "I'm proud of the CD and hope it furthers the reputations of WKU's faculty members as high-quality performers."

Pintner, who is an associate professor of flute and music theory, has performed throughout the United States and in Mexico. She plays second flute in Orchestra Kentucky of Bowling Green and is the treasurer for the Flute Society of Kentucky. She earned her master's and doctorate in music from Florida State University and holds a bachelor's in flute performance from Oberlin Conservatory of Music.

Through distribution of their CDs, Pintner and Fiala hope WKU and the music department will gain recognition for their creative efforts. The CDs serve as student recruitment tools and also further WKU's mission to be a "leading American university with international reach." Fiala explained, "Many of the faculty members who play on our CDs perform recitals throughout the world. Our CDs will be distributed to our international musical colleagues and will make WKU more visible to a wider audience."

The production of the CDs also allowed Fiala and Pintner to engage more with their students. One of the many positive experiences Fiala



and Pintner said they gained from their recordings was working closely with their colleagues, and they hope the collaboration among the music department's faculty is a positive influence on their students. "Our students know we work and perform together, and I think it's positive for them to see us collaborate," Pintner said. "In our department, student engagement happens on a daily basis," Fiala added. "Through this project, several students got to watch us perform as we recorded the tracks, and some worked with the recording engineer on preparing the recordings," she said. "We also brought in several nationally known musicians to perform on the CD, so the students were exposed to different musicians from all across the country."

Having gone through the process of producing their own CDs, Fiala and Pintner feel it has improved their ability to relate to students. Many of their students aspire to be part of the recording process and having first-hand knowledge of CD production allows the professors to teach through experience. "We guide them better because we've gone through it ourselves," said Fiala. Pintner agreed, adding, "We learned so much from the process, it's made it easier for us to tell our students what to expect in their own career aspirations. We've chosen this profession because we love it, and these CDs are the outcomes of that passion." ■