Georgia College student writes lyrics for world-famous composer

For some, writing is a therapeutic form of communication—a way to release feelings and express ideas that may not fit into normal conversations. Senior Bri Neves views writing as a way of life. Writing passionately since she was in fifth grade, Neves enjoys the art form and respects its power. “I love writing anything, but poetry is my first love,” said the creative writing major, who is double minorng in creative music media and theatre. “The idea of others performing my writing also fascinates me, which is why I’m exploring the theatre and music side of writing.”

A chance experience with a fellow student has allowed her to write from class assignment and personal project, to lyricist for a world-famous composer. “I was having trouble in one of my music theory classes, and music major Cannon McClain offered to help me. In working together, he mentioned he was looking for poets to help him write a musical piece he was working on for a class project,” said Neves. “Since I could write and he had helped me, I offered to write the poetry he needed.”

Little did she know that experience would change her life. “After I wrote with Cannon, the piece was featured in a choral concert,” said Neves. “Then Dr. Jennifer Flory, director of choral activities, put me in touch with composer David Hamilton.”

“I have worked with David Hamilton on several occasions, which include the GC commissioned ‘Serenade’ and the outside world,” said Neves. “He had helped me, and I could not have made it to this point without his help.”

Hamilton is musician and composer from New Zealand, whose work focuses on choral arrangements with an orchestra. “I believe that for a creative writing major to have her poetry set to music is akin to having the poetry published,” said Flory. “A poem is read, either silently or aloud; music is performed, and poetry set to music is elevated to another level through a synergistic effect. For a poet, working with a composer to produce a new work is a creatively fulfilling experience. Collaborating with a composer of the renown and skill of David Hamilton is creatively fulfilling experience. Collaborating with a composer to produce a new work is a creatively fulfilling experience. Collaborating with a composer of the renown and skill of David Hamilton is definitely a place where faculty members go above and beyond to teach you more than just from a textbook,” said Neves. “I am very grateful to Dr. Flory for conducting previous pieces, singing the solo in this new piece and for getting and keeping me in touch with David for the first time. I’d like to also give a major thanks to David Hamilton for giving me incredible feedback and collaborating with me, and I could not have made it to this point without Cannon’s help in the first place.”

The Holiday Concert Extravaganza scholarship fundraiser will feature performances by Electronic Music, Jazz Band, Women’s Ensemble, the Men’s Quartet, Union Orchestra, Max Noah Singers, Men’s Quartet, University Choir and Wind Symphony. The seventh annual music department holiday concert gives music scholarship recipients the opportunity to share their gratitude to the GC and Midvallee communities by sharing their musical talents. Last year, this event raised the single largest portion of scholarship funding, and combined with endowed support, provided more than $20,000 in student scholarships.

Faculty member, student to begin NASA funded research

While most students will spend their summer working at a part-time job or in clubs, junior Keri Spetzer will be viewing glimpses of the galaxy never before seen. “You have not even seen that part of the sky,” said Dr. Arch Bedgood, professor of physics and astronomy. “Now Keri is the first person that will be able to see what we are seeing.”

Spetzer will be working alongside Bedgood, who secured $20,000 in funding from NASA for research. The research, in collaboration with Potsdam Observatory in Berlin and the California Institute of Technology, will explore the relationship between massive stars and their fuel sources of black holes and neutron stars.

“Research has been done on massive stars and research has been conducted on black holes and neutron stars,” said Bedgood. “But this will be the first research in the kind that aims to look at that relationship between the two.”

Spetzer will play a major role in the preliminary stages of the research. Her initial task will be to take the new data provided by the Hubble Space Telescope and create real, workable images. Bedgood will go on to analyze the images, write and send the results to Caltech for research sends the right signals.

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“After attending a conference with Dr. Bedgood I became really interested in the research being done,” said Spetzer. “I’m still not sure what I want to do after graduation, but if I do choose to continue with graduate school—saying to say I worked with Hubble is a one-of-a-kind experience.”

Both Bedgood and Spetzer also acknowledge the necessity of more women in STEM-related fields. Bedgood says Spetzer’s work with this research sends the right signals.

“There are too few women in STEM, and it’s simply not sustainable in the field,” said Bedgood. “What I hope is that Keri’s work encourages other women to get involved.”

Spetzer says giving Spetzer and other students an opportunity to have experiences like this is vital to the university. “Teaching can’t be done with just faculty,” said Bedgood. “It has to be more involved. Students can benefit as much with hands-on experiences from research opportunities like this. If Keri moves forward and decides to pursue astronomy, she now has that network and experience to help her.”

To learn more about the chemistry, physics and astronomy program, visit http://www.gcsu.edu/chemphys.