

# COMPOSERS IN THE SCHOOLS

## An Overview

The UMKC Conservatory of Music has been a pioneer in the development of extended arts-education programs, which aim to deepen their impact on individual students by making a long-term commitment to a school. In 1993, the Conservatory spearheaded a pilot program called Composers In The Schools (CITS) under the leadership of James Mobberley. CITS, originally developed in cooperation with the Kansas City Symphony, the Kansas City Kansas Public School District and the Arts Partners Research and Development fund of the Kansas City Chapter of Young Audiences, placed qualified graduate student composers from the Conservatory in targeted schools within the Kansas City, Kansas Public School District.

In 1997, the project shifted to the Kansas City Missouri Public School District, with the Paseo Academy for the Fine and Performing Arts as the partner school. The Conservatory became the primary partner, and provided, either through its own funds or through grants, the majority of support for the program. The year 2013-14 marks the 20<sup>th</sup>-year of the CITS program, and the eleventh year of our expansion of the program beyond the Paseo into six three school districts including Kansas City, Missouri, Hickman Mills and Kansas City, Kansas. Funding for this year is provided in part by the generous support of the Kauffman Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts and the Francis Family Foundation in addition to contributions from the school districts.

### ***Primary goals of CITS:***

- Identify public school students interested in composition and provide mentorship through class and/or individual instruction;
- Provide on-site assistance to music teachers in the standard curriculum and in special projects relating to new music and symphonic music;
- Create original compositions for student ensembles and performers that introduce new compositional ideas and techniques;
- Prepare student groups for visits by professional composers in residence with the Conservatory;
- Assist in the development and implementation of electronic and music technology curricula.

### ***Mechanism:***

Resident Composers are selected via a recruitment and evaluation process from among qualified current and prospective graduate students in the composition programs at the Conservatory. Dr. Mara Gibson serves as CITS Director and meets regularly with Resident Composers and periodically with School administrators and faculty regarding planning and organization of the project for each year. A Composition doctoral student serves as Project Coordinator and facilitates all visits by residents.

Resident Composers spend a number of hours on-site working with students and faculty to accomplish a variety of projects, which vary from year to year depending on the needs of the faculty and students, and the expertise and interests of the Residents. Typically, one or two Residents will spend a combined ten hours per week at the school providing instruction for composition classes, mentorship and assistance for individual students in the preparation of their own compositions, preparing ensembles for performances of their own works, giving workshops

in creativity to music classes, and assisting music faculty in instructional, technical, and artistic aspects of other projects. In addition to on-site work, some residents spend additional time composing and preparing performance materials for student performers, assisting student composers in their own preparations, coordinating visits by professional composers, and other activities. In certain years, students from the schools have been brought to the Conservatory for tours, or to utilize the score preparation facilities in the IMPACT Center.

***Results:***

Though the one-on-one interaction between Residents and students is the heart of the project, there have been some other important results.

- Students have been taken on field trips to Symphony rehearsals and to workshops on creativity at UMKC.
- Student performers in a variety of ensembles have worked with Resident Composers on many new works, including pieces for guitar ensemble, chorus, string orchestra, wind ensemble, and jazz groups. For many students, this is their only exposure to bringing brand new music to life, and to interacting with composers in performances of their works.
- Guest composers at the Conservatory are frequent visitors to school classes and also give private and small-group lessons to the composition class members. The Residents provide preparation before the visits, so that students will be familiar with the visitor's music. Some of the most poignant moments in the project have come when the guests talk about their inspiration and the reasons why they write their music.

For additional details about the CITS Project, please contact:

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