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The Monkees' Raleigh concert will cover songbook, tribute to Davy

Search for collaboration leads to new music festival

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By Michael J. Solender — Correspondent

Three years ago Elizabeth Kowalski set out to find a musical boot camp where she could spend part of her summer learning theory and composition from accomplished musical educators.

With limited funds and a desire to stay close to her home in Charlotte, she discovered her options were nonexistent. So she decided to create her own workshop and composers' festival. The first Charlotte New Music Festival was born.

On the heels of last year's success, Kowalski has expanded the program offerings this year and has included composing for dance as part of the programming.

The Charlotte New Music Festival is being held June 17-29 and will feature eight separate performances in open to the public.

Dream becomes a reality

Kowalski, 26, an emerging composer with a graduate degree in composition from UNC-Greensboro, wanted to workshop her own pieces in a venue where others would play her work. She also looked for a program that allowed her to put together unique arrangements and orchestration, see her work performed in front of an audience, learn from peers and contemporaries in similar situations and collaborate with other emerging and established composers and musicians.

"There just wasn't anything locally that would meet my expectations ...," said Kowalski. I simply started making calls and assembling talent and reaching out to others who share this kind of passion – it snowballed and before I really knew what I was getting into there was a group of us sharing a rental house on Lake Wylie for two weeks last summer," she said.

The dozen or so participants held five composer lectures, numerous student-led discussions, and performed three concerts for the public.

Lawrence Dillon, composer in residence for the past 26 years at UNC School for the Arts in Winston-Salem, was on the faculty last year and is returning this year.

"What Elizabeth has managed to do in such a short span of time is remarkable," said Dillon. "I'm highly impressed with the quality of talent she has attracted and the service she is doing for the arts community at large."

A new dance component

The festival this year has branched out to include composition for dance, and there will be additional opportunities for choreographers, dancers and composers to collaborate.

For details and a schedule: www.charlottewmusic.org/concerts

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