



Alissa Shuster

Theory Faculty, Sato Center for Suzuki Studies

Theory Faculty, Preparatory

Composition Faculty, Preparatory

After graduating from St. Olaf College with a degree in music in 1984, Shuster accepted an internship as an assistant annotator and editor of the programs for The Cleveland Orchestra, under the tutelage of Klaus G. Roy. Shuster did her graduate work at Kent State University and received her MA in theory and composition in 1991. The Graduate Student Senate granted her an Excellence in Teaching Award in 1994 for her work as a graduate assistant.

In December of 1992, Shuster's *Dialogue of Self and Soul* was performed as part of a Cleveland Chamber Symphony Concert for Young and Emerging Composers. In May of 1993, she collaborated with award winning playwright Jim Kuth by composing incidental music for his 1992 play *The Kitten Man*. In the summer of 1994, Shuster's brass trio *Scandinista!* received its first performance by faculty members at the Interlochen Center for the Arts. *Songs from Sappho* were performed in the summer of 1995 at the Dvořák Museum in Prague and in Cleveland in 1996. In the spring of 1995, *Vanishing Carnival* was performed by the Fort Wayne Philharmonic (IN) for over 8,000 children. Her three-day residency included five talks to school children, two main-stage concerts and four outreach concerts to other communities.

During the summers of 1992 and 1993, Shuster was a teaching fellow at the Aspen Music Festival, where she taught beginning and intermediate music theory and orchestration. While at Aspen, she studied composition with Donald Erb. During the summer of 1994 she participated in two composer forums, May in Miami and June in Buffalo, where *Kokopelli's Dream* was performed. Shuster received first prize in the International League of Women Composers 1994 composition contest for *Kokopelli's Dream*.

In 1995 Shuster joined the faculty of Hiram College, where she taught flute and composition, and Cuyahoga Community College, where she taught music theory and aural skills. She was evaluated at Tri-C in 1996 as "having the makings of a master teacher." In the summer of 1995, Shuster studied with Betsy Jolas at L'écoles d'art américaines in Fontainebleau, France, and with Ladislav Kubik, at the Czech-American Summer Music Institute in Prague. In 1996, she completed her tenure as a university fellow at Kent State University, where she taught composition and directed the composition seminar.

Shuster accepted a position of Visiting Lecturer in Music Theory at the Conservatory of Music of the University of the Pacific in Stockton, California, during the 1996-97 academic year. During that time she completed a commissioned work for the Ohio Chamber Orchestra for their 25th Gala Anniversary concert in May 1997.

She was a faculty member of theory, composition and music literature at the Interlochen Arts Camp during the summer months for seven years. For the 2007-08 academic year, Shuster was contracted as a Visiting Assistant Professor of Music at Hiram College, where her duties included first year music theory classes, Introduction to Music, Seminar in American Music, World Music, instruction of seven students in the flute studio, supervising a senior project in composition and

designing and teaching a writing-intensive seminar for first year students titled Capturing Creativity.

Shuster completed her PhD at Kent State University in theory and composition in 2002. Her paper examined the use of a Bartók work as the basis of an architectural project (Stretto House in Dallas, Texas) by Steven Holl, AIA. Her composition did the opposite, and used the plans and proportions of an existing Holl structure (The Chapel of St. Ignatius in Seattle, Washington) to create a new piece, *A Gathering of Different Lights*, for 10 voices, percussion, celesta, harp and piano. Similar to her work in interpreting architecture into sound, Shuster recently completed a commission for the Creative Field Studies Program at Hiram College where she based her composition *Viriditas* on the topography and unique elevation events of the nature trail at the Hiram Field Station. Her next commission *everything is different in the dark...* is her response to the war in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the instrumentation is the same as Stravinsky's *L'histoire de soldat*. She also is writing a song cycle for soprano and percussion (in Swedish) for Andrew Pongracz and his wife, soprano Brenda Wepfer Pongracz.

After completing training in the foundations and methods of Suzuki theory pedagogy with Dr. Jennifer Conner at CIM, Shuster began teaching at CIM in the Suzuki theory program in 2003. She also teaches theory, arranging and composition for the Preparatory division at CIM. Nine of her private theory students have received the coveted grade of 5 on their music theory advanced placement exams. Shuster holds a yearly recital for her CIM composition students, recently showcasing pieces for harp, string orchestra, percussion and other diverse and original ensembles. Shuster also teaches theory and piano group class at Kent State University and recently at the College of Wooster. In the last three years she has performed flute in six faculty recitals at Kent State University. Along with her colleague Dr. Sebastian Birch, she has spoken at two College Music Society regional conferences (Mid-Atlantic and Great Lakes) about their combined efforts to integrate very talented, yet music-illiterate students into a collegiate music school situation. Within one academic year of pre-courses, they have succeeded in bringing the students up to what is considered today as conservatory entrance level.

Shuster just completed an academic year at Ashland University as a one-year visiting professor. She taught four levels of music theory and aural skills, a class in music style, arranging and composition and assisted in the woodwind ensemble. She is excited to return to her home base of CIM as a teacher that can help all the applied teachers meet their goals with their individual students.