

The Magazine of the Mizzou Alumni Association

MIZZOU

New Money for New Music

Donors aim to make MU a mecca for composition.



At the Missouri Theatre March 11, Jeanne Sinquefield and her husband, Rex (not shown), donated \$1.4 million to help MU's School of Music expand its composition program. On stage with her are, from left, Michael O'Brien, dean of Arts and Science; Robert Shay, School of Music director; and Brady Deaton, MU chancellor.

Story by Dale Smith

Photos by Rob Hill

Published March 12, 2013

Jeanne and Rex Sinuefield of Westphalia, Mo., have given \$1.4 million to School of Music at MU. The three-year gift, announced March 11 at the Missouri Theatre in Columbia during the Chancellor's Concert, will expand the Mizzou New Music Initiative and the Creating Original Music Project. The evening also featured the premier of "Missouri," a new music composition by David Witter, BM '10, MM '12.

The Sinuefields have worked with MU for eight years to foster new music composition. Since 2005, they have supported various competitions and summer camps open to kindergarteners through college students. These include the Creating Original Music Project, a statewide competition with cash prizes, in which Missouri K-12 students compose original works in a variety of musical styles. In 2009, the Sinuefields gave \$1 million to MU for scholarships, ensembles, faculty support, and to create an annual international festival of new music composers in Columbia.



David Witter, BM '10, MM '12, performs during the premiere of his new music composition, "Missouri," during the Chancellor's Concert at the Missouri Theatre in Columbia. Witter won the 2013 Sinuefield prize.

Jeanne Sinuefield, herself a musician, told the crowd she is pleased with the progress so far. "In the last eight years, we've had over 300 pieces composed, performed and recorded by Missouri composers. They range from second graders whose feet didn't hit the pedals on the piano," she says, to Stephanie Berg, BM

'08, MM '12, who has written a composition that the Saint Louis Symphony will perform in January 2014. "So, we've been having fun, and I feel that we have to continue because I have a goal that we're going to make Missouri a mecca for composition."

This week's gift will expand the existing programs and provide funds for professional recordings of new music premiered at MU, says Robert Shay, director of the School of Music. "The gift also will commission more great composers and have their works performed for the first time here by Missouri students. It will bring in more guest composers and guest performers to interact with students, and create a laboratory where students can work on film scoring, which is an important career avenue."

The concert included the premiere of Witter's "Missouri," which was inspired by Thomas Hart Benton's mural "A Social History of the State of Missouri," located in the House Lounge at the Missouri Capitol. Witter is a native of Holt's Summit, Mo., just five miles from the Capitol. Growing up, he loved popular music and played trombone in school bands. When he discovered musicians John Zorn and the band Mr. Bungle, he also discovered a path to composing 20th-century modernist music.

Witter is earning a certificate to teach music in elementary school. "I like kids and feel like I can have the most positive impact at that early age," he says. "Kids usually just hear what's on the radio. But I want to engender in them an appreciation for music they

are not exposed to generally,” such as new music,
world music and classical music.

Topics: [Academics](#), [Arts and Humanities](#), [News](#), [Web Exclusives](#)

Tags: [Economic Development](#), [Giving](#)

Published by MIZZOU magazine, 109 Reynolds Alumni Center, Columbia, MO 65211 | Phone:
573-882-5916 | Email: mizzou@missouri.edu

*Opinions expressed in this site do not necessarily reflect the official position of MU or the
Mizzou Alumni Association.*

© 2019 — Curators of the [University of Missouri](#). All rights reserved. [DMCA](#) and [other
copyright information](#).

An [equal opportunity/access/affirmative action/pro-disabled and veteran employer](#).