

Please submit music for possible review in a future issue of **Bass World** to ISB, 13140 Coit Rd., Suite 320, LB 120, Dallas, TX 75240.

The 2004-2005 International Society of Bassists Composition Competition is now history. The four winning works were chosen from a very deep field of some sixty entries in three categories: *Solo Bass or Bass with Piano*, *Chamber Music with Bass*, and *Multimedia with Bass*. This year's judges were Robert Black, chair, Professor of Double Bass at the Hartt School of Music and member for the Bang On A Can All Stars; Quirijn Van Regteren Altena, Professor of Double Bass at the Royal Conservatory of Music in the Netherlands and member of the Schöenberg Ensemble; and myself. Scores and recordings were reviewed over a three-month period and the field was narrowed during two conference calls before the group came to a unanimous opinion on the winning works. Pieces that were deemed by at least one judge to have exceptional merit were designated Honorable Mentions. Six honorable mentions were given in addition to the four winning pieces. Many of these pieces will be performed at the 2005 ISB Convention in Kalamazoo, Michigan.

### The Winners

The jury felt very strongly about two of the scores submitted in the *Solo Bass or Bass with Piano* category. After much discussion we came to the conclusion that both works were worthy of winning and that we would like to award two first prizes. So this year we have two winning works: *Time Management* for solo double bass by Dorothy Hindman, Professor of Theory and Composition at Birmingham Southern College in Alabama, and *Vision Quest* for double bass and piano by Phoenix Symphony bassist and Grammy-nominated composer Glenn Stallcop.

*Time Management* is a concept piece, one might even say a programmatic work. Having much in common with Deak's *Failing*, the underlying idea is that at first musical events are spaced at a relaxed pace, but as the piece continues it becomes more and more hectic until it bursts at the seams and time is no longer manageable. Unlike the Deak however, the vocabulary of this work is filled with extended gestures such as artificial harmonic glissandi, bowing

behind the bridge, left hand hammer-ons, overly pressed scratchy tones, etc. The piece has all the attributes of a great story, beginning in a quirky fun manner and then becoming something unexpected, a virtuosic display with a wildly exciting ending. It is difficult to describe specific details, since the order of the gestures doesn't appear to be significant. It is the effect of the pacing that is the tour de force, a one-way downhill roller coaster ride. From a purely technical standpoint, the piece is not terribly difficult at first glance. That is to say that the work remains in the lower half of the instrument for the most part and only ventures into the very highest registers for effect. The extraordinary challenge is to execute the variety of extended gestures within the tempo over eleven minutes. To play this work successfully requires mastering the art of *Time Management*.

*Vision Quest* is a three-movement piece for bass and piano. The work was written as a project for Mr. Stallcop to re-introduce himself to the bass after not playing for many years. Developed out of a keyboard improvisation, the idea behind the piece and the title is derived from a concept associated with Shamanism given to a period of "solitary fasting and chanting in the wilderness in search of a 'defining' vision." Overall the piece is very well crafted, written within a tonal, albeit modal, style and driven by highly developed rhythmic motives. Technically, the work is not what one would call virtuosic; its charm comes from exploiting some of the strongest qualities of the bass, graceful melodic shapes and infective rhythmic grooves, in creating a compelling, mysterious and very effective combination. It is very accessible for both players and audiences and will be a popular work.

The first movement, *Ritual Incantation*, begins as a strutting rhythmic chant. Driving syncopated off beat octaves in a low register of the piano are punctuated by even lower sixteenth note triplet figures. The bass floats above the rhythmic groove with a snake-like melody spiced with short glissando gestures. This A section is contrasted by a B section that features fast harp-like arpeggios in the piano interrupted from time to time by strong accelerating bass gestures. The driving A section returns and the movement comes to close quietly, but rhythmically. The second movement, *Night of Despair*, begins with a quiet but har-

monically profound piano introduction. The bass enters introducing a counterpoint texture, beginning with alternating two bar arpeggiated lines. As the movement develops the piano retains the two-bar pattern while the bass part evolves into a longer expressive melodic line in mid-thumb position. Slowly the texture thins as the bass retreats into the lower register and another harmonically rich piano solo brings the movement to a close. The final movement is in several parts. Opening with a reprise of the chant from the first movement, the rhythm becomes more and more agitated until the bass begins slapping the fingerboard above the piano's syncopated sixteenths. A brief interlude entitled '*Hallelujah*' clears the air with triplet glissandi in the bass and the *Ritual Dance* ensues. From this point though the following sections, *Possession* and *Rapture*, the piece grows in rhythmic intensity. *Ritual Dance* features a driving bass groove with single note syncopations that become more angular above the melody in the right hand of the piano. *Possession* finds the bass and piano intertwined with broken triplets against sixteenths in a very angular percussive romp. A series of *sforzando* chords introduces *Rapture* and a new texture. Like shifting into a higher gear, the piano takes over a fast perpetual motion figure while the bass floats long two and three bar sustained pitches overhead. Eventually the piano makes a long crescendo into ascending sixteenth note arpeggios, punctuating the fourth of each group with a strong accent. Suddenly the bass begins rapid tapping on the body and sides of the bass and the brief coda, entitled *Vision*, begins. The piano merely plays long held octaves and sustained chords as the bass continues tapping, freely adding rests, accents, etc. Ever so slowly, the tapping becomes sparse as the piano holds the final chord, until there is silence.

*Three Fantasy Pieces* for Viola, Cello, and Double Bass by violist Kurt Rohde of the New Chamber Symphony and Berkley Symphony was virtually the immediate choice of the jury in the first round of the *Chamber Music with Bass* category. One of the most sophisticated compositions ever submitted to the competition, *Three Fantasy Pieces* impressed with the brilliantly demonstrated knowledge of the technical traits of all three instruments, the intricate virtuosity of the writing, and the equal weight given to each – indeed at times it appears that the three instruments were being