

The COLUMBIA Orchestra

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ELLCOTT CITY (MD): The Columbia Orchestra has announced the winner of its fourth biennial “American Composer Competition.” The orchestra will perform the winning work, the third movement of Albert Hurwit’s Symphony No. 1 “Remembrance” in December.

Seven finalists were also selected. In alphabetic order, they were:

Brian Fennelly: *Reflections/Metamorphosis*
Anthony Iannaccone: *Dancing on Vesuvius*
Mark Lackey: *Convergence*
Elizabeth Lim: *Paranoia*
Justin Merritt: *River of Blood*
Philip Rothman: *Arc of Visibility*
David Schneider: *Automation*

“Every time we hold these competitions I’m amazed by the high quality, emotional expressivity and variety of styles of the submitted works,” said David Zajic, coordinator of the competition. “Our goal for these competitions is to show our support for the wonderful American orchestral music being written today. Our panel of three judges saw only anonymous scores and recordings, but no composer names or biographical details, so there wouldn’t be any bias based on the identities of the composers. We received 124 applications, almost 21 hours of music.”

“The work which won this time sounds very different from some of our past winners,” Music Director Jason Love remarked. “Hurwit’s work may be in what I think of as a more ‘traditional’ language than, say, the last couple of winners’, but it’s a very moving and well-constructed piece that I’m really looking forward to performing.”

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The winning work is a movement from a symphony inspired by the story of Hurwit's ancestors who migrated from Prague to Russia in the Jewish Diaspora, and eventually landed in America. The composer was a physician but retired more than a decade ago to concentrate on composition, and he studied composition largely on his own.

"The inspiration for the work was not surprising because the emotional content is so vivid, but Hurwit's personal story certainly was a bit of a surprise," said Love. "The Columbia Orchestra is filled with people who are marvelous players, but are not always full-time musicians by profession. We were amazed when we found out such a beautiful piece had been written by someone who had his principal career outside of music. It's very inspirational to think about."

The Columbia Orchestra will perform Hurwit's work on a concert Saturday, December 5, 2009, in the Jim Rouse Theatre. The program also includes Mendelssohn's *Hebrides Overture*, Ernest Bloch's *Three Pictures of Chassidic Life* with violinist Ronald Mutchnik, and Respighi's *Pines of Rome*.