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IWU Alumnus Wins Concerto Competition at the University of Kentucky

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – Illinois Wesleyan University alum Michael Lawton, a graduate of the class of 2008, was recently declared one of two winners in the University of Kentucky Symphony Orchestra's Concerto Competition.

Last year, Lawton, currently a graduate student at the University of Kentucky (UK), was encouraged by his clarinet professor to memorize a concerto piece over the summer.

Lawton chose to perform "Premiere Rhapsodie" by composer Claude Debussy. Initially, Lawton said the piece did not captivate him, but as he began to practice and listen to recordings, he found he truly enjoyed it. "At times it is ethereal while at other times it requires great technical facility, moving seamlessly from one palette of color to the next. It's really quite beautiful," said Lawton.

Lawton, who was one of the winners of Illinois Wesleyan University's annual Henry Charles Memorial Concerto/Aria Competition during the 2006-2007 school year, is currently in his second year of earning a master's in clarinet performance at UK. He will graduate in May of 2010 and hopes to return to Illinois and begin his career as a full-time music educator.

"My training at Illinois Wesleyan prepared me to be both a strong musician and academic," said Lawton, who noted his admiration of Illinois Wesleyan professors such as Assistant Professor of Music Roger Garrett. "I attribute a significant portion of my success at the University of Kentucky to having studied with him."