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William Bolcom Guest Composer at IWU's 2001 Symposium of Contemporary Music

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.--William Bolcom, recipient of the 1988 Pulitzer Prize for music, will be the featured composer at Illinois Wesleyan University's Symposium of Contemporary Music Feb. 28 and March 1. Bolcom's wife, mezzo-soprano Joan Morris, also is a participant.

The symposium is free and open to the public. All events will be held in Presser Hall's Westbrook Auditorium, 303 E. University Ave., Bloomington.

Established in 1954, the symposium promotes and encourages the performance of contemporary music and recognizes contemporary composers. Last year's featured composer was the acclaimed contemporary artist Libby Larsen. Other past guests have included John Corigliano, Arvo Part, Joseph Schwanter and David Diamond.

The two-day event will include a panel discussion on Wednesday, Feb. 28 at

7:30 p.m. entitled, "Words and Music: The Composer's Approach to Text Setting." Following the panel discussion, members of the audience are invited to a reception in the Presser Hall reception room, sponsored by Delta Omicron, a national professional music fraternity for men and women.

On Thursday, March 1, Morris will lead a voice master class at 4 p.m. Music from "Flower Drum Song" by Rogers and Hammerstein, "He Loves Me" by Bock and Harnick, "Harlem on my Mind" by Irvin Berlin, "Camelot" by Lerner and Loewe and "More than you Know" by Vincent Youmans will be performed by Julia Morrison, freshman music theatre major from Arlington Heights, Ill., Penny Hansen, junior music major from St. Charles, Ill., Kristin Stewart, junior music theatre major from Martelle, Iowa, Scott Moreau, senior music theatre major from Litchfield, Maine and Julie Peterson, senior music major from Pontiac, Ill.

At 8 p.m. on Thursday, March 1, a variety of Bolcom's compositions will be performed. Following the concert, the audience is invited to a reception in the Presser Hall reception room.

The concert will feature works such as "Raggin' Rudy," from "Cabaret Songs At the Last Moments of Love," and "Miracle Song," from Book VI of 12 New Etudes for Piano "Ver le silence," "Hi-jinks," and works for wind ensemble and percussion ensemble.

Performers will include members of the IWU faculty and students as well as the IWU Wind Ensemble conducted by Steve Eggleston, IWU professor of music.

Also in performance will be the winner of IWU's first annual High School Composers' Contest, pianist Franklin Gross of Boca Raton, Fla. He will perform his winning compositions "Pastorale and Fantasy" and "Nocturnes of Youth."

Gross is a senior at Alexander Dreyfoos, Jr., School of the Arts in West Palm Beach, Fla.

With his music instructor Harold Brown, Gross has traveled to New York and Europe for private instruction with Josef Raieff of Juilliard, Vlado Perlemuter (the early 20th century French composer Maurice Ravel's last living pupil) and Eidiht Pitcht-Axenfeld, an expert on J.S. Bach. Gross conducted a private performance for Ivonne Loriod-Messiaen, the wife of composer and organist Olivier Messiaen, and recently performed at the Miami Festival of Discovery Exceptional Student Recital and the Greater Miami Youth Symphony Orchestra.

Gross' other first place awards in composition include the Florida Federation of Music Clubs and the Florida State Music Teacher Association.

About William Bolcom

Composer-pianist William Bolcom is the 1988 recipient of the Pulitzer Prize for music for his composition "12 New Etudes for Piano." Originally from Seattle, Wash., Bolcom entered the University of Washington at the age of 11, to study piano and composition. He received his bachelor's degree in 1958 from Washington.

Bolcom continued his musical studies at Mills College, Oakland, Calif., and later at the Conservatoire de Musique in Paris. In 1964, Bolcom received his doctorate in composition at Stanford University. The following year, Bolcom returned to the Paris Conservatoire where he won the (French) 2e Prix in composition.

During his stay in Europe, Bolcom began to write stage scores for theaters in West Germany. When he returned to Stanford University, he continued composing for the Lincoln Center in New York and the Yale Repertory Theatre among others.

Bolcom is the Ross Lee Finney Distinguished University Professor of Music at the University of Michigan. He has taught at the university since 1973 and has been a full professor since 1983.

According to Serra Hwang, visiting professor of composition at IWU and co-director of this year's symposium, Bolcom "is not only one of the most distinguished composers of our time, he is a performer and intellectual as well. Along with his wife, he is known for his concertizing, featuring the works of early American popular composers."

Bolcom has earned many honors and awards including a BMI award (1953), two Guggenheim fellowships (1965, 1968), seven Rockefeller Foundation awards, two Koussevitzky Foundation Awards (1976, 1993) and the Marc Blitzstein Award from the Academy of Arts and Letters for an opera he co-wrote with Arnold Weinstein (1966).

With his wife, Bolcom has produced concerts and recordings of American parlour and vaudeville music, most notably ragtime music. As a piano soloist, accompanist (primarily to Morris), and composer, Bolcom and Morris have recorded 20 albums for record labels such as Nonesuch, Deutsche, Gramophone, RCA, CBS, MHS, Arabesque, Phillips and others. He has received numerous commissions from orchestras in Saarbrücken, Germany; the Vienna Philharmonic;

Philadelphia; New York, Baltimore; San Francisco; Seattle, St. Louis; the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center and Carnegie Hall.

Bolcom has premiered two of his works at the Chicago Lyric Opera. In 1992 Bolcom's McTeague was the Chicago Lyric Opera's first commission by an American composer. And, in 1999 A View from the Bridge, which Bolcom wrote in collaboration with Arnold Weinstein and Arthur Miller (based on Miller's famous play), opened to rave reviews. The Metropolitan opera is slated to present the opera in December 2002.

An article by Chicago Tribune reporter John von Rhein stated, "The Pulitzer Prize-winning Bolcom is a shrewd composer for the theater, and his eclectic style...is an accurate reflection of the state of American art music in the final year of the 20th century."

According to program notes for Bolcom's upcoming concert, "[his] most important work to date is his monumental setting of the 46 poems in William Blake's "Song of Innocence and Experience," which took Bolcom 25 years to write and has been performed in the United States and Europe.

Bolcom, a recipient of numerous fellowships and grants, has written for several music magazines and has authored The New Grove Dictionary of Music, a book by Viking Press about composer and showman Eubie Blake, and an edition of essays by musician-composer George Rochberg, entitled The Aesthetics of Survival: A Composer's View of 20th Century Music by the University of Michigan Press.

About Joan Morris

Originally from Portland, Ore., mezzo-soprano Joan Morris attended Gonzaga University in Spokane, Wash., prior to studying at the American Academy of Dramatic Arts in New York. At the academy, she studied under the direction of Clifford Jackson and Federica Schmitz-Svevo and appeared in off-Broadway and road productions.

Morris also performed with harpist Jay Miller at the Café Carlyle and the Waldorf-Astoria's Peacock Alley, among other places. She has performed with her husband and piano accompanist William Bolcom since 1972.

Morris and Bolcom appeared in concert at Roberts College in Istanbul in honor of the Consuls-General in 1988 and at the American University in Cairo. The following year, the couple performed in a concert in Florence, Italy, and at the invitation of the

U. S. State Department, in 1991 Morris and Bolcom performed concerts in Moscow and in 1993, two appearances in London.

The duo has recorded 20 albums and "After the Ball&endash;-A Treasury of turn-of-the-Century Popular Songs," received a Grammy nomination for Morris' for best vocal soloist performance on a classical album.

Morris, who has appeared as a guest soloist with the Boston Pops Orchestra, the Dick Cavett Show, and taped programs for CBS Cablevision, also was been a featured guest with Bolcom on Charles Kuralt's "Sunday Morning" in May of 1993.

Recent appearances for Morris and Bolcom include performances at Alice Tully (Lincoln Center), the Terrace Theater (Kennedy Center), Jordan Hall in Boston, Philadelphia's Chamber Music Society concerts and Grace Rainey Rodgers Hall (Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York).

Currently working on a book about her performing years, Morris teaches in the musical theater program at the University of Michigan.