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March 30, 1999

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Amsterdam Premiere, April 7, for Work by IWU Composer

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.—The world premiere of a new musical composition by an Illinois Wesleyan University professor will take center stage next month in an Amsterdam concert hall.

David Vayo, associate professor of music composition and theory, will be on hand when the popular Dutch ensemble, Orkest de Volharding (Perseverance Orchestra), debuts his work, *Signals*, April 7, at an evening concert at the Melkweg (Milky Way) auditorium before an audience of perhaps 500-600.

Vayo received a \$15,000 commission to write *Signals* from the Sergei Koussevitzky Music Foundations, based in New York City and the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. The foundations—named for the artist who conducted the Boston Symphony Orchestra for a quarter-century—are dedicated to encouraging contemporary composers. Works commissioned by Koussevitzky and the two foundations before he died in 1951 include masterpieces such as Benjamin Britten's opera, *Peter Grimes*, and Bela Bartok's, *Concerto for Orchestra*. *Signals* is dedicated to the memory of Koussevitzky and his wife. A *Signals*' manuscript will be housed in the Music Division of the Library of Congress.

"The Koussevitzky commission," Vayo said, "is one of the largest I have received. The foundations award only about 10 or 12 commissions each year. It was a wonderful shot in the arm."

Vayo dubbed the piece, *Signals*, because, he said, "When I was composing it, I was in a state of mind that felt like a radio receiving signals." A recurring note or chord featured in the piece, Vayo added, reminds him of a repeated Morse code signal, making the title even more appropriate.

Signals is a 12-minute piece Vayo began composing in the summer of 1997. Its

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instrumentation includes a flute, three trumpets, three saxophones, three trombones, a French horn, piano, and bass.

Signals was composed for performance by the 13-member Perseverance Orchestra, presenting Vayo with a specific challenge involving the size of the ensemble.

"They call themselves an orchestra," Vayo explained, "but they are a bit too small to be an orchestra in the sense that that word is generally understood. An orchestra usually has at least three dozen members. On the other hand, they are very large for a chamber music ensemble. They are somewhere in between, which means that in composing for them I couldn't write orchestral or chamber music per se. I had to find another approach."

However, Vayo admiringly comments, "They can play anything I write."

The Perseverance Orchestra was founded in 1972 by noted Dutch composer Louis Andriessen. It specializes in contemporary music, often with a strong jazz flavor.

Vayo considers Amsterdam a second musical home. In 1996, his string quartet composition, *Five Small Packages*, was performed at De IJsbreker, a world-famous concert space for new music.

While he is in The Netherlands for Signals' premiere, he plans to meet with a prominent Dutch harpsichordist, Annelie de Man, who is preparing for a concert where she will perform Vayo's piece, *Play of Hands*. They will conduct rehearsals together for the April performance. He also plans to meet with members of the Feininger Trio, an Amsterdam-based piano ensemble. Vayo is writing a piece for the group, *Awakening of the Heart*, which will have its premiere performance next fall.

In May, Vayo has been invited to the International Forum of Contemporary Music in Mexico City, where his *Wind Quintet* will be performed by the Mexico City Woodwind Quintet.

Vayo—who has won 11 consecutive American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers (ASCAP) composition awards—joined the IWU faculty as an assistant

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professor of composition and theory in 1991 after teaching at Connecticut College, the National University of Costa Rica, and the National Symphony Youth Program of Costa Rica.

Vayo also has received awards from the American Music Center, American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, and serves as membership chair for the Society of Composers.

His compositions have been performed live or broadcast about 200 times worldwide.

At Illinois Wesleyan, Vayo teaches courses dealing with music composition, 20th century music, and Latin American music.

A native of New Haven, Conn., Vayo received a doctor of musical arts in composition degree in 1990 from the University of Michigan. He earned bachelor's and master's degrees in music composition from Indiana University.

IWU, founded in 1850, enrolls about 2,000 students in a College of Liberal Arts, and individual schools of Music, Theatre Arts, Art, and Nursing. Since 1994, these facilities have been added to the IWU campus: a \$15 million athletics and recreation center, a \$25 million science center, a \$6.8 million residence hall, and a \$5.1 million Center for Liberal Arts.