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## For Immediate Release : Roger Oyster

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February 19, 1996

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Locals**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.--Chicago Lyric Opera principal trombonist Roger Oyster will perform a work written for him by an Illinois Wesleyan University composer in an on-campus recital, Thursday, Feb. 22.

*Eight Poems of William Carlos Williams* was composed by David Vayo, associate professor of music. Oyster premiered the work last year in St. Louis, when he was principal trombonist with the St. Louis Symphony. A *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* review termed it "high-class performance art."

Oyster's recital will be at 7:30 p.m. in Westbrook Auditorium, Presser Hall, 303 E. University St., Bloomington. The recital is open to the public, free of charge.

The theatrical work requires a versatile performer who can recite Williams' poetry, and act, according to Vayo. The piece also requires several props and elaborate lighting changes.

Following the performance, Vayo and Oyster will discuss the composition and their collaboration.

"I enjoyed writing the piece," Vayo said in an interview last year before the St. Louis premiere, "since I am fascinated by connections among various art forms."

Vayo, who first read Williams' poetry in high school, composed the work with financial support from a grant awarded to IWU by the Chicago-based Joyce Foundation.

Vayo and Oyster met more than three years ago, when the famed trombonist performed at IWU. They met again when maestro Leonard Slatkin picked up his baton Jan. 29, 1993, to lead the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra in a concert featuring Vayo's *Symphony: Blossoms and Awakenings*, a composition orchestrated for about 80 instruments.

"When Roger asked me to write a piece for him we were talking over lunch," Vayo recalled in last year's interview. "He wanted something that was theatrical. I'm fond of Williams' poetry and wanted to amplify it in a way that combined music and theater, but wasn't operatic or a Broadway musical."

The wide-ranging composition requires Oyster to play the trombone, vibraphone, base drum, hi-hat, and other instruments.

One of Williams' poems, *Sketch for a Portrait of Henry Ford*, focuses on nuts and bolts and other small factory parts, requiring Oyster to play on pots, pans, and an auto brake drum to simulate the sounds of an auto factory.

Vayo studied 30-40 Williams' poems before settling on eight for the composition.

"I culled through the poems," he explained, "to see which ones worked well together. I wanted a progression of moods. I also wanted the piece to be performed straight through without breaks between movements."

The Williams' poems incorporated into the composition are: *The Shadow*, *Brief Lief*, *The Lonely Street*, *Sketch of a Portrait of Henry Ford*, *Late for Summer Weather*, *To Mark Anthony in Heaven*, *The Sea-Elephant*, and *View*.

"*Late for Summer Weather*," Vayo explained, involves two down and out and spunky people, walking around having fun. "Roger plays a jazzy kind of style," Vayo said, and wears a fedora like one of the poem's characters.

The Mark Anthony poem, Vayo said, is more meditative and features Oyster playing wind chimes and the vibraphone, as well as chanting to add to the effect.

*The Sea-Elephant* is the longest piece and the dramatic center of the composition, according to Vayo. "Roger's trombone," Vayo explained, "is really the elephant and it makes guttural sounds like the animal would make. This is the most theatrical of the pieces and Roger moves around the stage using various props."

Since Vayo began work on the piece, he discovered that the music world contained several bodies of work for trombonists who perform musical/theatrical interpretations.

"I didn't realize the extent to which there is literature for trombonists," Vayo said. "Outside of voice performance, trombonists have the biggest body of theatrical literature for any musical instrument."

Vayo explained that trombone players, as a stereotype, "tend to be gregarious people who aren't afraid to do different kinds of things." These qualities make them naturals for this type of performance art, Vayo said.

He added that the trombone is close to the human voice, in tone and register.

"Trombones make a good stage prop, too," Vayo said. "They're big, but they're portable."

Williams' (1883-1963) body of work--poems, novels, short stories, prose-verse hybrids, criticism, plays--is part of Anglo-American modernism.

Oyster received his musical education at the University of Michigan and Catholic University. From 1981-87, he was a member of the U.S. Marine Corps Band, "the president's own," where he played the euphonium. Oyster joined the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra in 1988 and recently joined Chicago's Lyric Opera.

Vayo, born in 1957, teaches composition, theory, and Latin American music at Illinois Wesleyan. He also coordinates the annual Symposium of Contemporary Music and the New Music Cafe concert series.

Among Vayo's compositions are *Five Small Packages* for string quartet; *Study in Carmine and Coral* for the piano; *Poem*, a chamber music piece for flute, violin, clarinet, cello, and piano, and *Wings*, a piano and cello piece paying homage to Vayo's interests in Brazilian pop music and jazz.

Vayo's works have been performed in San Francisco, Moscow, Sao Paulo, Seoul, Hong Kong, Mexico City, and elsewhere.

Vayo joined the IWU faculty as an assistant 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.

A native of New Haven, Conn., Vayo earned bachelor's and master's degrees in music composition at Indiana University. He was awarded a Doctor of Musical Arts in Composition degree in 1990 from the University of Michigan.

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