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UWF music professor honored as commissioned composer by statewide association

Pensacola, Fla. – Dec. 1, 2016 – The Florida State Music Teachers Association, FSMTA, selected University of West Florida faculty member Dr. Joseph T. Spaniola as its commissioned composer for 2016.

Spaniola, associate professor and director of jazz studies and music theory in the UWF Department of Music, was nominated for the honor by former UWF colleague Dr. Lynne Lauderdale. He then submitted a portfolio to the FSMTA, which has named a commissioned composer annually since 1969. Upon learning he had been selected, Spaniola wrote

“Tenacious,” <<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B7bdWEY7ToygTk9XZkdIZXRlcHlmVnJtRmFTSmZkWGFiZUJZ/view?usp=sharing>> a work for flute, violin, clarinet, bassoon and piano. A quintet comprised of UWF faculty and alumni performed his piece at the FSMTA State Conference in Altamonte Springs in October.

“I am honored to be a part of the commissioned composer tradition and make new music for educators,” Spaniola said. “It is always an honor to be held up by performers and music educators.

“‘Tenacious’ is dedicated to and inspired by music teachers and musicians everywhere, and their passionate, focused and relentless spirit,” he said. “We could not do what we do without being tenacious.”

The commissioned composer program combines the need in the United States to perpetuate the art of new American music and provides states with an opportunity to highlight live performances of new music, according to the Music Teachers National Association.

Dr. Sheila Dunn, chair of the music department at UWF, said, “It is a tremendous honor for Dr. Spaniola and our department to have this kind of visibility at the state and regional level. Joe is a world-class composer and we are privileged to have him on faculty at UWF.”

Dunn also said “Tenacious” has helped build community among UWF’s full-time and adjunct faculty, alumni and local professional musicians who have collaborated to perform the piece at events on campus.

“The level of performance is top notch, professional and riveting,” she said. “‘Tenacious’ is a powerful message about what it takes to be effective and still passionate about music education. We are all in this together, keeping this art alive.”

As Florida’s commissioned composition for 2016, “Tenacious” will be given consideration for recognition at the national level, as well. A panel of recognized composers will evaluate states’ commissioned compositions in order to select the MTNA Distinguished Composer of the Year.

Spaniola has spent 37 years composing and arranging music for band, orchestra, chamber ensembles, solo instruments, voice, choir and electronic tape. Prior to teaching at UWF, he was the chief composer and arranger for the United States Air Force Academy Band in Colorado Springs, Colorado, and the non-commissioned officer in charge of music production and recording.

The UWF Department of Music is accredited by the National Association of Schools of Music and provides students with a high quality, personalized, undergraduate education for careers in the fields of music performance and music education. For more information, visit

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