

Symphony will perform premiere of Rothman's 'Souvenir'

By **MELODY PARKER**

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CE DAR FALLS

Music lovers will have a new "Souvenir" in their programs at this weekend's Waterloo-Cedar Falls Symphony Orchestra concert pair.

A newly commissioned work by award-winning composer Philip Rothman will be premiered at the performances at 7:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday in the Great Hall at the Gallagher-Bluedorn Performing Arts Center. Pianist Sean Botkin, faculty visiting artist at the University of Northern Iowa School of Music, is the featured performer.

Jason Weinberger, WCFSO music director, and the orchestra commissioned Rothman to write a composition that would tie into the season's opening concert featuring Johann Brahms' music.

"Being asked to write some-

thing inspired by Brahms was pretty intimidating," the New York composer says. "I was inspired by several of Brahms' intermezzos — short piano pieces. Those always came in the middle of a program, so I thought since my piece comes between two Brahms works, it would be appropriate."

He will be in the audience for the debut performance.

Rothman, who received the commission in March and completed it in August, "lifted" melodies from two Brahms intermezzos and fitted them together to make a new melody as a foundation for his composition.

"It's a souvenir from Brahms, a memory or a dream remembered from his music. The piece evolves from a fairly realistic reading of Brahms into more modern, contemporary tangents," Rothman explains.

The composer will hear it per-

formed for the first time at tonight's dress rehearsal. He describes composing as both a solitary and collaborative endeavor. Writing the music requires concentration and the ability to "hear" instruments in his head, but the conductor and orchestra breathe life into the work.

"For me, sitting in the audience, it's always exciting to hear the players tune up, playing licks or excerpts from various pieces on the program, and to hear a random oboe playing a lick from your piece. That's a thrill," the composer says.

The composer's works have been performed by the Utah Symphony, Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra, United States Military Academy Band and numerous other ensembles.

His music has been heard at major venues including Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center, and it has been broadcast on more than 200 radio stations in America on NPR's "Performance Today" and the

McGraw Hill Companies' Young Artists Showcase.

Rothman has earned numerous honors including three ASCAP Foundation Morton Gould Young Composer Awards, a Renee B. Fisher Foundation Award, the Brian M. Israel Prize, a fellowship from the American Symphony Orchestra League, a Meet The Composer Fund grant, and annual ASCAP Special Awards since 1998.

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Foundation.

Rothman received his bachelor of music degree from Rice University and master's degree from The Juilliard School.

A free pre-concert talk, led by Weinberger and featuring Botkin and Rothman, takes place at 6:30 p.m. both evenings in Jebe Hall. Audience members are encouraged to attend to learn more about the music being performed that night.

Tickets for the concert may be purchased by calling 273-7469 or at www.wcfsymphony.org. Cost is \$17, \$21 and \$23 for adults; and \$8, \$11 and \$12 for students.



Philip Rothman
composer