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[A-Z Index](#)

Incoming USC School of Music professor awarded Rome Prize

By Frenche Brewer, brewer4@mailbox.sc.edu, 803-777-3691

The American Academy of Rome awarded the prestigious 2012-13 Rome Prize to incoming School of Music assistant professor Jesse Jones. Jones will be in residence at the academy for 2012-13, and will join the University of South Carolina faculty in August 2013.

The Rome Prize is awarded each year to 30 emerging artists and scholars in the early or middle stages of their careers and who represent the highest standards of excellence in the arts and humanities. Fellows are chosen from 11 disciplines, including musical composition. Founded in 1894, the academy's mission is to foster advanced research and independent study in the fine arts and humanities.

Jones called the prize a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for him.

"I am thrilled, humbled and extremely honored to have received this prize. It is a rare and special opportunity for a composer to have so much uninterrupted time to pursue his or her artistic goals, especially in such an inspiring environment as Rome. I feel very blessed," Jones said.

Jones, a composer, conductor and mandolinist, is a doctoral candidate at Cornell University, studying both composition and piano. He earned his master's degree in composition from the University of Oregon in 2007.

He will use his time at the academy to create a composition set to poetry.

"While in Rome, I plan to compose a large-scale orchestral work entitled, 'Of the Soul.' I plan to use a soprano soloist and electronically manipulated sounds to create a deeper sonic image than can be achieved by a conventional, strictly acoustic orchestra. In the composition, I plan to set texts of Alphonse de Lamartine, a 19th century French poet, to music, exploring how sounds and text can depict literal and mystic spirituality. I think Lamartine's poetry will be the perfect source for inspiration. Also, while in residence, I will be composing an octet for the Scharoun Ensemble, which is a chamber music subset of the Berlin Philharmonic."

School of Music Dean Tayloe Harding said the school looks forward to Jones' arrival on faculty, and is thrilled for his recent success.

"I speak for the entire faculty, staff, student body, alumni and friends of the University of South Carolina School of Music when I say we are ecstatic over the Rome Prize awarded Jesse Jones," Harding said. "For many years composers have considered the Rome Prize among the pinnacles of achievement in international recognition of a composer's work, reputation and significance. Very few composers earn the

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recognition, and it is indeed a distinguished honor for this distinct compositional talent. We look forward to Jesse's achievements while at the academy in Rome, and anticipate many great years of productive work from Jesse as composer and teacher at Carolina to follow as well."

Jones' music has been performed across North America, Europe and Asia, receiving honors that include a Barlow Commission, the Susan and Ford Schumann Fellowship from the Aspen Music Festival and School and the Charles Ives Scholarship from the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

Jones was a featured performer on the national broadcast, "A Prairie Home Companion" with Garrison Keillor and has also performed at the Oregon Bach Festival and on public television.

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