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# **"A Scholar Under Siege" demonstrates the genius of American composer Michael Braz**

*APRIL 3, 2007*

For many, 'opera' conjures up the work of great European composers of past centuries. You may be surprised to find there is a strong American opera movement that regularly produces new work, often based on well-known stories or actual events of the past. When *A Scholar Under Siege* makes its world-premiere debut Friday, April 20, at Georgia Southern University, American audiences will welcome a new opera that tells one of the nation's " and Georgia's " most colorful 20th century political stories.

'Composer Michael Braz uses *A Scholar Under Siege* to explore two strong personalities with conflicting views of power," said Delma Presley, author of *The Second Century: Georgia Southern 1906-2006*. 'Eugene Talmadge, Georgia's governor of the 1930s and early 1940s achieved power through populist and segregationist rhetoric, but Marvin Pittman, the scholar who led Georgia Southern University with his mind and his heart, saw things differently. This opera explores their differences."

Michael Braz is highly respected both at Georgia Southern University and among his musical colleagues around the world. He has taught composition, analytical techniques, orchestration, and a variety of special topics at Georgia Southern for 20 years. Inspired by a visit to the Dachau concentration camp site, Braz wrote and premiered his first opera, *Memoirs from the Holocaust*, in 1975. He has written orchestral/choral commissions for professional, collegiate, and school/community ensembles across the country and internationally, and was a recipient of an American Composers Forum/Rockefeller Brothers Fund 'Faith Partners' grant. A keyboard soloist in England 's Haslemere Festival of Early Music, he has also collaborated with numerous orchestras, music festivals, and ensembles ranging from chamber music to jazz and rock.

Although music is his first love, Braz has always had a fascination with both philosophy and comparative religions. In 1996, as an extension of these interests, Braz first began trekking in the Nepal Himalaya. In addition to the Kathmandu Valley, he has traveled in the Annapurna/Pokhara area and, more recently, in the Mustang region bordering Tibet. Much of *A Scholar Under Siege* was conceived during his travels in this region.

Although the conflict that unfolds in *A Scholar Under Siege* was sometimes overshadowed by America's entrance into World War II, Talmadge's effort to squelch academic freedom in Georgia eventually became national news. Urged on by a handful of supporters who believed in the sovereignty of 'southern tradition,'" Talmadge charged Georgia Southern President Marvin

Pittman with using college staff and equipment to improve his farm near the college not mentioning that Pittman had assigned the profits of his farm to the college. He also criticized Pittman for entertaining faculty from the all-black Tuskegee Institute and circulating books in the library that advocated interracial cooperation.

The debut of *A Scholar Under Siege* takes place Friday, April 20, at 7:30 p.m. at Georgia Southern University's Performing Arts Center in Statesboro, Ga. Additional performances are Saturday, April 21, at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday, April 21 at 3 p.m.

Tickets for *A Scholar Under Siege* are on sale at the Performing Arts Center Box Office at Georgia Southern. Adult tickets are \$10, Georgia Southern students and children under 18, \$5. To purchase tickets, call the 1-800-PAC-ARTS or go to <http://ceps.georgiasouthern.edu/pac/pactickets.html>.

## **Regents appoint Georgia Southern professor to Capitol Art Standards Commission**

*APRIL 3, 2007*

At its last meeting, the University System of Georgia Board of Regents appointed Jonathan M. Bryant, associate professor of history at Georgia Southern University, to the Capitol Art Standards Commission. This new commission, established last year by Gov. Sonny Perdue, is responsible for developing policies and procedures for the acquisition, installation, preservation, maintenance, display, and storage of all museum-quality visual artwork owned by the State of Georgia, including portraits, paintings, sculptures, and plaques. The Commission is also responsible for acquiring new artwork, judging the relevance of the subject, the historical significance to the State of Georgia, and the quality of the artwork produced.

Bryant teaches U.S. Constitutional history, Georgia history, and the Destruction of Slavery. His research focuses on the second half of the 19th century, particularly in Georgia, constitutional history, and the American South. His first book, *How Curious a Land: Conflict and Change in Greene County, Georgia, 1850-1885*, followed the interaction of law with social and economic change in a plantation community. He is currently working on a new book, *Old City, New South: Savannah after the Civil War*, which will follow the changes that reshaped a southern city in the late nineteenth century. Bryant holds a doctorate from the University of Georgia and a J.D. from Mercer University.

Other members of the Capitol Art Standards Commission are:

Appointed by the Governor: Tommy Hills (Chairman); Steve Penley; Steve Smith

Appointed by the Georgia House Speaker: Tommy Benton; Earl Ehrhart; Calvin Hill

Appointed by the Georgia Senate: Seth Harp; Dan Weber; David Adelman

Appointed by the Georgia Capitol Museum: Dorothy Olson

## **Georgia Southern opens larger office in Alpharetta to serve Atlanta area**

*APRIL 3, 2007*

With more than one-third of its students coming from the Greater Atlanta area and with more than one-fourth of its alumni living there, Georgia Southern University has solid connections to the city.

In fact, those connections have expanded to the point that the University's Atlanta Regional Development Office has outgrown its former space in Lenox Pointe. The office has moved to a new location at 3775 Mansell Road in Alpharetta, Ga.

'With nearly 15,000 alumni in Atlanta and the surrounding 21-county area, there's a definite need for us to have a presence there,' said Michelle Pittman, director of planned giving and major gifts at Georgia Southern. 'As our alumni in the Atlanta area continue to become more active and engaged, this larger office will be our hub for individual meetings and group gatherings. In addition to meeting development needs and events planning for the Atlanta area, it will also serve as a center for students seeking Georgia Southern admissions information.'

The previous location was staffed by alumni and development representatives. At the new Mansell Road location, a representative from Georgia Southern University's admissions staff will be added.

'One-third of our student enrollment more than 5,600 students comes from the 21 counties of the Atlanta area, and that number goes up each year,' said Pittman. 'With an Admissions representative in Alpharetta, we can respond in a more timely way to inquiries from interested students and parents.'

Georgia Southern University personnel serving in the Alpharetta office will be George Freeman, director of Atlanta Regional Development; and Angelia Huggins, associate director of Atlanta Regional Development. The admissions representative has not yet been appointed.

Freeman joined Georgia Southern University earlier this year. A graduate of Harding University, he has served as director of development for non-profits in Arkansas, Texas, and Oregon. He also served as director of development at Auburn University, spearheading the university's \$169 million campaign. Freeman's new telephone number is (678)-387-1729, and his e-mail address is [gfreeman@georgiasouthern.edu](mailto:gfreeman@georgiasouthern.edu).

Huggins has served Georgia Southern constituents in the Atlanta area for more than a year. Her new telephone number is (678) 387-1728 and her e-mail is [aahuggins@georgiasouthern.edu](mailto:aahuggins@georgiasouthern.edu).