

In the Key of E[ducation]

Gusty inspires young composers and returns to Eugene in April

By Katy Vizdal, Education & Community Engagement Director

It's not every day we have the honor of hosting a world-class composer in our community, and this season, we get that opportunity not just once, but twice. **Composer-in-Residence Augusta Read Thomas** visited Eugene in September, sparking the beginning of several community collaborations that will take place over the course of the year.

On September 28, 2017, the Eugene Symphony dazzled audiences with Augusta Read Thomas's piece *Aureole*, a muscular, rhythmic, glistening piece of music that embodies the musical characteristics for which the composer is known. Thomas will return in April for the second part of her residency held jointly with the phenomenal Chicago-based Third Coast Percussion. The percussion ensemble will perform her work *Sonorous Earth*, a piece commissioned by the Eugene Symphony and The Chicago Philharmonic. This project is supported by New Music USA, National Endowment for the Arts and the Nils and Jewel Hult Endowment.

While here in September, Gusty (as she insists on being called) visited high school bands, met with young and aspiring composers, helped develop an art and music class for people with and without disabilities, and visited the instrument collections of the Museum of Natural and Cultural History in preparation for an event there in April 2018. Needless to say, we kept her busy!

Highlights from Gusty's September Artist Residency include:

- Visiting more than **70 students** at South Eugene High School and Willamette High School, two area high school bands that are rehearsing and performing Thomas' 2001 work *Magneticfireflies*.
- Giving a composition lecture to **10 high school composition students** at the Academy of Arts and Academics in Springfield.
- Viewing the **instrument collections** of the UO Museum of Natural and Cultural History, to select display items for a special exhibit leading up to an event with the composer in April 2018. The event will feature instruments from the Museum's collection, as well as instruments used in her piece *Sonorous Earth*.
- Speaking with **25+ composition students** at the Oregon Composers Forum at the UO School of Music and Dance, sharing her compositional process and discussing students' concepts for their future works.
- Welcoming **46 Willamette High School band students** to the Eugene Symphony Dress Rehearsal on September 27 to hear her piece *Aureole*.

What is an Artist- or Composer-In-Residence?

A guest artist or composer who builds connections within the community through events outside the concert hall (discussions, presentations, performances) during their extended stay, usually held in conjunction with a performance.

- Meeting with teachers at Oregon Supported Living Program, to develop a "**Music and Art**" class, engaging adults with and without developmental and cognitive disabilities. The project will culminate in a public exhibit of artwork created during two three-month classes at The Lincoln Gallery, as well as a display in the Hult Center lobby.
- Sharing her tone maps with 35 audience members at our **first Symphony Happy Hour with Francesco** event.

Augusta Read Thomas's impact in our region extends far beyond the concert hall, inspiring future generations of musicians and providing insights into the life as a professional composer. Through this Artist Residency, we are able to connect more people with the Eugene Symphony and build lasting connections that will extend beyond Gusty's time in town. We cannot wait for her return in April! We hope you will join us for some of the incredible activities we have planned. Stay up to date by visiting our website eugenesymphony.org 🎻



Augusta Read Thomas visits Willamette High School band students.

October 18, 2017

Dear Francesco, all the Musicians, Staff, Board Members, and Volunteers
of the Eugene Symphony,

Thank you all for the marvelous performance of AUREOLE for orchestra.

The concert was world-class. The individual and collective music making by all the artists was elegant, colorful, bold, vibrant, inspiring and centered. Francesco your conducting was graceful, sensitive, energized, nuanced, vivid, passionate, and effervescent. I loved (LOVED!!!!!!) the soul, expression and spirit in the all-around amazing music making which made the concert radiant. What a stellar way to start a season and a new position as Music Director.

You did such an exemplary, generous job of organizing all the activities of the residency. I loved all the events that connect to my next visit in April 2018, including meeting with the Oregon Supported Living Program Arts and Culture Program, the Museum of Natural and Cultural History, the two high schools who will be performing my piece *Magneticfireflies*, Willamette High School and South Eugene High School, and the young composers at the Academy of Arts and Academics.

I enjoyed my time with the young composers in Robert Kyr's UO Composition Seminars. They are talented and I look forward to following and supporting their progress as composers and people through the collaborative project we are doing that culminates in April.

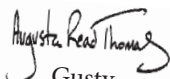
In addition, the community events: Symphony Happy Hour w/ Francesco, the Sponsor Lunch, Guild pre-concert lecture, on-stage remarks, post-concert reception with donors, etc. were all beautifully organized by you all.

Composers throughout history have needed the strong backing of great musicians, colleague composers, conductors, orchestras, music administrators, music scholars music lovers and music supporters who are of the depth, soul, excellence, vision, and care as you all are. Without such support, it is impossible for culture-at-large to improve at musical composition.

As such, I feel fortunate for your personal belief in my life's work. Our art form at large greatly needs visionary leaders, such as you all, so that all can work together to further music's flexible, diverse capacity and innate power.

It meant so much to me to be with you all, to work together, and to share our love of and passion for music and life. Here is my heartfelt appreciation! -And I eagerly await our SONOROUS EARTH premiere.

Warmly,


Gusty



"I want to take a moment to thank you (and the Eugene Symphony) for arranging to have Augusta Read Thomas visit A3. I know that I speak for all of our composers when I say how meaningful it was to hear her talk; it gave everyone a sense of the dedication and focus that is needed in order to create meaningful music. Hearing her articulate her compositional process was especially important, because it reinforced the concepts that we attempt to teach on a daily basis. It was also a great experience for those composers to hear the Symphony play that night; many of them had never been to an orchestra concert before, and were pleasantly surprised at how much they enjoyed the music."

—Jim Olsen
Music Instructor at Academy of Arts and Academics

"I've never had the chance to talk to a composer before. It was amazing to hear what went into writing her music, and the processes she goes through to create it."

—Anna Flores
Trombone, Junior at Willamette High School

"I liked the visit from Gusty because of how open, honest, and humble she was with us. You could tell she really cared about answering our questions. After her visit, I have a greater appreciation for composers. She showed me how much dedication it takes to be a composer and musician."

—Emma Cherry
Clarinet, Junior at Willamette High School