

## McCutchen's "Jazz Vespers" Premier in Brazil

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An ASU faculty member's original composition that blends elements of the Roman Catholic Vespers service with modern-day jazz Vespers will be premiered Nov. 29 in Curitiba, Brazil. "Jazz Vespers for Chorus, Soloist, Orchestra and Jazz Quintet," composed by Keith McCutchen from Appalachian State University's Hayes School of Music, uses the specific text and many aspects of the formal structures modeled from the Roman Catholic Vespers service and integrates classical and jazz musical styles.

McCutchen and saxophonist Todd Wright, also a member of the Hayes School of Music, will travel to Brazil to perform the composition with the Camerata Antiqua de Curitiba, a professional choir and string orchestra comprised of musicians from Brazil, other South American countries and Europe.

The piece is comprised of three movements that incorporate Vespers text, Psalms settings and a setting of the Magnificat, based on the Gospel of Luke.

The composition evolved from McCutchen's work toward a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in choral and orchestral conducting at Indiana University. The works of Monteverdi and Ellington as well as his own religious upbringing inspired the piece.

"My academic pursuits at Indiana University have included the integration of classical and jazz music in different forms and models, both for study and creative productivity," McCutchen said. "Much of the choral music, past and present, is written around religious texts. One specific text in service that has historical reference and significance is the Vespers text, which is an evening service within the Roman Catholic Church."

Monteverdi was one of the first composers to incorporate the text into a new musical style at the beginning of the Baroque period in his Vespers of 1610.

"In more modern times, jazz music has become service music within churches and part of services at 5 p.m. but without the use of the actual text and context of the formal Roman rite and liturgy or compositions by others who have used the chant/text form and settings of specific Psalms," McCutchen said.

In recent years, it has become common for jazz Vespers services to integrate the music of Duke Ellington, George Gershwin and John Coltrane, among others. Ellington composed three sacred concerts during the mid-1960s to early 1970s that combined jazz and Biblical text.

"That (practice) has its own beauty and significance, but because of my academic pursuits and the fact that I live within both of those worlds, my interest was how I could effectively integrate these two forms in a way that could be performed on the concert stage, within the liturgical service as well as any performance venue," he said.

While in Brazil, McCutchen also will teach conducting students at the Universidade Federal Tecnológica do Paraná and coach the Collegium Cantorum, a woman's choir based in Curitiba.

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McCutchen and Wright will rehearse with the Camerata for one week and perform two concerts. Last year, McCutchen had a week-long residency at Escola De Musica Artes Do Parana, where he lectured on various choral genres, including gospel spirituals by American composers of African descent. The visit was sponsored by a Federal Assistance Award issued by the U.S. Consulate in Sao Paulo, Brazil.