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CREATING THE FUTURE: THE ROLE OF THE UNIVERSITY IN TRANSFORMING THE WORLD

For Immediate Release

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URI inauguration of David Dooley to feature premiere of musical composition, poem

KINGSTON, R.I. -- March 29, 2010 -- The artistic highlights of the inauguration of David M. Dooley as the 11th president of the University of Rhode Island will be an inauguration poem written and read by Peter Covino and a musical composition by Eliane Aberdam performed by the URI Inaugural Music Ensemble, under the direction of Ann Danis.

Both works were commissioned by Winifred Brownell, dean of the URI College of Arts and Sciences.

"I selected Peter Covino to write the poem and Eliane Aberdam to compose the music because they are exceptionally gifted artists, and we are fortunate to have them in residence at URI," said Brownell. "They were eager to participate and inspired by the occasion to create these new works."

The musical composition, *Around the World in Eight Minutes*, explores the musical differences between different continents through a unifying theme. It was written for brass ensemble, flutes, percussion and traditional instruments and inspired by musical traditions of every continent. It was funded in part by a grant from the Anton Family Foundation.

According to Aberdam, URI assistant professor of music and a resident of Westerly, the initial fanfare will transform and adapt to fit a wide variety of musical idioms from around the world, including jazz, Eastern European klezmer, Caribbean steel pans, Andean flutes, African drumming, and Australian didgeridoo.



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“The form of the piece is a theme and variations,” wrote Aberdam in the program notes, “where the variations depend on the musical idioms of each continent explored. While each variation exhibits musical transformation and difference with one another through varied rhythms, melodies, modes, and timbres, musical unity persists throughout the piece.”

Born in France, Aberdam received her early education in piano and music theory at the Conservatoire National de Region in Grenoble. She is a prolific and diverse composer whose compositions have been premiered in Hungary, France, Israel and throughout the United States. She has received commissions for chamber ensemble, symphony orchestra and theater productions in the U.S. and Europe.



The inauguration poem, entitled shepherd shaman wizard, incorporates references to Dooley’s past in Montana, icons of Rhode Island, and historic elements about URI while also acknowledging the challenges ahead.

“My poems tend to be deeply personal, but this poem needed to be more global and appeal to more people,” said Covino, URI assistant professor of English and creative writing. “I welcomed that challenge. But I also wanted it to be a collaborative process, a collaborative witnessing of this new era in the life of the University of Rhode Island, and how students and teachers and poetry are part of it.”

Covino said that several of his students are preparing a graphic representation of the poem that includes images of an eye and “a tree that becomes a cloud. When I was thinking about the poem, it wasn’t separate from these images.” Copies of this graphic version of the poem will be available for sale to support creative writing activities at URI.

Covino, a native of Italy who resides in Providence, is a prizewinning poet, translator and essayist who won the 2007 PEN America/Osterweil Award for emerging poets. He is the author of *Cut off the Ears of Winter* and the chapbook *Straight Boyfriend*, which won the Frank O’Hara Poetry Prize. His poems and essays have appeared or are forthcoming in *American Poetry Review*, *Colorado Review*, *The Paris Review* and *The Yale Review*. He directs the Ocean State Summer Writing Conference and the URI READ/WRITE series that features contemporary writers.

The poem and musical composition will premiere during inauguration ceremonies that begin at 2 p.m. on Thursday, April 8 in the Ryan Center on the URI Kingston campus. The event is free and open to the public.