

Music festival showcases student's opera

BY ANJUM NAYYAR

When his opera, *Hamlet*, is given a public reading Aug. 16 at the Stratford Summer Music Festival, composer Mark Richards will be able to take pride in a piece that has been 16 months in the making.

Richards, a PhD student in music at U of T, said after writing many smaller-scale vocal and instrumental works, he felt he needed something more; something that would be a long-term project. He decided to compose a full-length opera based on Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, adapting the text for the libretto himself.

"In 2004, I decided to write an opera because I'd done a lot of writing for the voice and I thought an opera was the next logical thing to write," said the 30-year-old Toronto-born composer. "*Hamlet* has been a play that I've always been very passionate about."

After finishing half the opera and performing several excerpts, Richards sent recordings of them to Stratford Summer Music's artistic producer, John Miller. The result was an invitation to workshop the opera as part of the music festival this summer.

"Ever since, I've been preparing for the festival like crazy and have finally finished the opera!"

It took Richards 16 months to compose the entire opera, all the while juggling master's and doctoral degree obligations at U of T, but the end result is an opera for a chamber orchestra that spans four acts and runs two-and-a-half hours.

Richards will present a public workshop reading of *Hamlet* in Stratford on Saturday, Aug. 16. In preparation, he'll spend a week in intensive rehearsals with conductor Wesley Ferreira.

The young composer said he had three main goals in mind in pursuing this project. He aimed to set the text to music that would express a wide range of emotions in a universally comprehensible way, to retain as much of the original text as possible and to include enough ensemble numbers to give it textural variety.

"This is something I really wanted to do on my own and I talked to other composers and opera singers and bounced it off them."

He said the experience of composing the opera was life-altering.

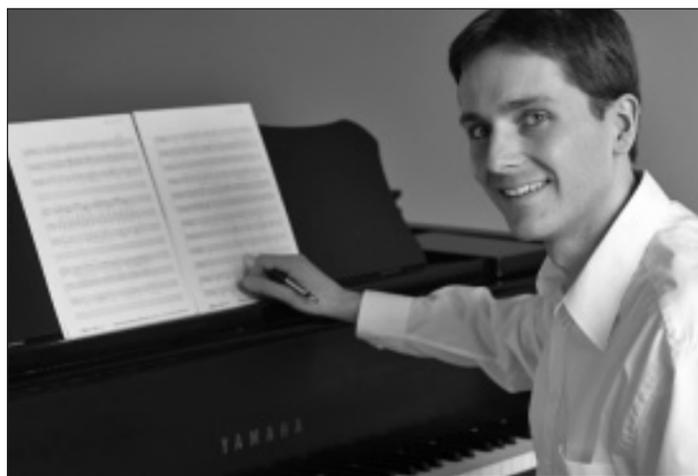
"I had a lot of difficulties going through school trying to find my compositional voice and this is something that helped me identify my voice and discover who I am," Richards said.

However, he credits his student experience at U of T for preparing him for this success.

"U of T had a tremendous impact on me. As I learned about the past masters and techniques they were using I thought I understood the music pretty well. I came to U of T and suddenly there was a whole new world of ideas that opened up to me about the same music I'd been listening to for years."

In addition to his activities as a composer and graduate student, Richards is entering his fourth year as music director of the Inga Jarrett Memorial Concert in Toronto and is employed by the Royal Conservatory of Music Examinations as an editor, setter and examiner of their senior theory exams. He also continues to be active as an instructor of piano and music theory at his private studio.

Visit www.stratfordsummermusic.ca/artists08.html for more information about the opera *Hamlet*.



Music student and composer Mark Richards is preparing for a workshop reading of his first opera.

PHOTO COURTESY OF MARK RICHARDS



PASCAL PAQUETTE

Vivienne Poy added some of her own plants to the chancellor's garden, dedicated in her honour.

New garden dedicated to Poy

BY TAMMY THORNE

Chancellor Emerita

Vivienne Poy was recognized June 23 for her years of service to the University of Toronto with a garden dedicated in her name, along with a plaque at the chancellor's entrance to Convocation Hall. Poy served as chancellor for three years beginning in 2003, right after receiving her PhD in history from the University of Toronto.

"This beautiful spot is the institution's way of saying thank you for the remarkable contribution that you made to the entire fabric of our university," said President **David Naylor**.

"I want to acknowledge that we have in Vivienne an individual who is a scholar, a senator, a fashion designer, an entrepreneur — a woman of many talents.

But, she is also clearly a landscape engineer," Naylor said. Poy, an avid gardener, not only supervised the design but brought slips of foliage from her own home garden to add to the greenery.

Naylor commended Poy for her efforts during a time of tremendous growth at the university.

"It was a hectic, frenzied period, and Vivienne brought grace ... to that whole period," he said. "It seemed only appropriate, that as a way to recognize her service we would add an oasis of tranquillity and beauty here, right in this very special spot."

Current chancellor **David Peterson** said, "What a delightful choice to honour her. I can think of nothing more fitting."

Naylor noted that many families were already taking advantage of the beautified

spot for convocation photos. "It is already working exactly as we would have hoped," he said.

Surrounded by family and friends, including Y.C. Chan and Stephen Sui from the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office of Canada and Chancellor Emerita **Rose Wolfe**, Poy expressed her gratitude and her delight at the improvements to the landscape.

"When I was chancellor we always came through this lane and I refused to look over there," she said. "As David Naylor said, now a lot of students and their families take pictures here and that is just as I envisioned it. That is also why we have a path through it, so they can be right in the middle of the garden..."

UTM internship focuses on heritage

BY ANJUM NAYYAR

U of T Mississauga students specializing in historical studies are getting a sneak peek at what it might be like to work in the Canadian history and heritage field.

It's all part of a unique new internship program that launched at UTM last fall. The program provides students who meet enrolment requirements (a combination of previous history credits and a significant grade point average) with an internship in historical studies that counts as one full course credit. The students choose from various projects developed in conjunction with local archivists and historical societies. In addition to a number of meetings on campus, a final essay and an oral presentation, the

students spend 150 hours researching a specific project under the direction of a local historian, curator or archivist. Along with a chance to work at a museum or heritage site with experts in their fields, they may be contributing to an upcoming exhibition or publication. Students work closely with a faculty member on their internship projects.

Professor **Jan Noel** was instrumental in starting the internship program through the Department of Historical Studies. Noel, a historian of pre-Confederation Canada, said the goal of the internship is to integrate students into the local historical community, provide an opportunity to make career contacts and develop their skills. The result? An enhanced student experience.

"This internship is designed for really good fourth-year students who are either history specialists or majors. The idea is that they will go out into the community and do some local history research with an archives or historical society and use those skills they've been building up during their undergraduate program," Noel said. "Another purpose is to give them an opportunity to meet people who might hire them to do historical research." Of the five students placed last year, three received job offers shortly after their placements ended.

The internship sites have included Heritage Mississauga, Museums of Mississauga and Montgomery's Inn.

At present, the program is only open to UTM students.