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Monte Sereno composer wins prestigious international contest

By **Judy Peterson**
Los Gatos Weekly-Times

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A Monte Sereno composer has won the prestigious International Horn Society Composition Contest, beating out composers from 16 countries who entered 74 compositions.

Lee Actor's composition, "Concerto for Horn and Orchestra," was commissioned by the Silicon Valley Symphony, which performs at the Presbyterian Church of Los Gatos.

Actor has been a full-time composer since 2001. "I used to be a software guy," he said. "For a large portion of my career I was in the video game industry." He designed video games for Entertainment Arts, Sega and Atari.

Now, Actor says, "My day job is being a composer. I wouldn't say I'm making a living at it, but it's my full-time activity."

He went on to say, "The main way composers get paid is through performance royalties. It's very, very difficult to make a living performing concert music."

Actor is the composer-in-residence and assistant conductor of the Palo Alto Philharmonic, which is a volunteer community orchestra. His most recent work, Celebration Overture, premiered last October at the philharmonic's 2007 opening concert.

"Concerto for Horn and Orchestra" was also written in 2007, and although the International Horn Society's award is for 2007, Actor just got the news a few weeks ago. It is good news, indeed. With 3,500 members worldwide, the award means more exposure for Actor's work.

Actor says the society holds a symposium every year, and he expects his concerto will be played at the next conference.

"The plan is they're going to play the concerto in Denver in late July," he said.

Concerto for Horn and Orchestra consists of three movements totaling approximately 13 minutes. Actor describes the orchestra accompanying the solo horn as "modest," comprised of two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, timpani and strings.

To hear excerpts from the concerto, visit www.leeactor.com/works.

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Monte Sereno composer Lee Actor has won the International Horn Society Composition Contest.

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