

Park Tower Profile

Christopher Goldston - Energetic, Versatile Musician

by Bob Shamo



Artists often live multi-faceted lives. By nature, they are curious and creative, but it is also true that they need to make a living! Just how that plays out with musician Christopher Goldston (pronounced "GOLDstun") became clear during our discussion one recent summer morning.

If you ask Chris where he works, he'll say Columbia College Chicago. Columbia is an independent, non-profit liberal arts college specializing in arts and media disciplines. Chris teaches class piano and music theory there, as well as private lessons at Sherwood Community Music School, a division of Columbia in the South Loop.

Chris has long been active in the Music Teachers National Association, serving as national coordinator of its composition competitions since 2010. He has held other MTNA positions, too, and is just now beginning a three-year presidency of

Illinois State Music Teachers Association, an MTNA affiliate. As a result of his work with that organization, and a growing reputation as a teacher/composer, he often appears as a guest artist and clinician.

Perhaps the most distinctive aspect of Chris's career is his commitment to composition. Let's step back a bit, to when he was growing up in North Carolina. His mother taught piano and often composed original pieces for her young students. Later in life, Margaret Goldston found an interested publisher and proceeded to compose a wealth of pieces, popular still today for beginning and intermediate level piano students.

Christopher's career to date has been remarkably parallel to his mother's. He was one of her early students and went on to study piano in college, first in North Carolina, then here in Chicago. His masters degree, from Northwestern University, is in piano performance and pedagogy (best practices in teaching piano). After working briefly in undergraduate admissions at Northwestern, he settled into his current teaching job at Columbia College.

Chris wrote his first piece, *Night Train*, in 1991. His website, www.chrisgoldston.com, lists dozens of other fun titles like *Circus Tumblers*, *Fiesta Cha-Cha*, and *Midnight Chase*. These, in addition to many collections, obviously are intended for children. But Chris is quick to point out that his ambitions run deeper. He has also composed for voice and combinations of instruments -- for instance, his

prize-winning *Thesis for Wind Quintet* -- and his creative juices are moving him to write more such pieces.

Herein lies a challenge for Chris. With fewer brick and mortar stores nowadays, and much classical music downloadable from the Internet, publishers have fallen on hard times. Goldston music sells very well to its unique market -- think of Dr. Seuss and J. K. Rowling, the writers of children's books -- but publishers are reluctant to take a chance on much else.

This summer, Chris is seriously considering his options, with self-publishing an attractive possibility. He composes at home, after all, and today's notational software eliminates the need for professional type-setting. But the up-front costs of self-publishing are significant, and he would be without the promotional clout of his current publishers.

However he decides, Chris believes he is well-situated both in Chicago and at Park Tower. He moved here in 2010, having noticed the building while visiting friends nearby. Among the amenities he appreciates are the view from his 04 tier unit; a sense of order, quiet and security throughout the building; and on nice days being able to bike the Lakefront Trail to work.

Chris concluded our interview with the words, "I work to live, not the other way around." This strikes me as a wise and optimistic point of view, especially for someone still assembling and prioritizing the components of his career. We wish him success and a long tenure at Park Tower. **TT**

Bob chairs the Newsletter Committee and edits *TowerTalk*.

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