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## Musical Performance Honors Poet Laureate

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## Musical Performance Honors Poet Laureate

Artist and ensemble performed original music, film score



Acclaimed classical composer, violinist and violist Maria Newman performed a free concert in the J.D. Williams Library on Sept. 20 at the University of Mississippi.



Sponsored by the university's Department of Archives and Special Collections, the event drew a crowd of about 60 to hear the performance, which took place in the Faulkner Room.

"Having Maria Newman include the University of Mississippi in her concert tour across Southern states was truly an honor," said Jennifer Ford, associate professor and head of special collections. "Her family ties to the state of Mississippi deeply influenced her music and resonated with the local audience."

Newman's performance was themed "Unlocking the Secrets of Louise Moss Montgomery," a musical tribute to her maternal grandmother who was the poet laureate of Mississippi from 1973 to 1978. UM Archives and Special Collections houses Montgomery's papers. For the performance, library specialist Lauren Rogers put together a display case of the materials.

"It felt appropriate that the performance should be here, where her grandmother's collection is housed," said Greg Johnson, blues curator and associate professor. "The concert was outstanding. The musicians brought Louise Moss Montgomery's poems to life."

Newman toured the South in September with esteemed members of the Malibu Coast Chamber Orchestra on a grant from the Malibu Friends of Music. Featured ensemble members for the tour were flutist Hal Ott, distinguished professor at Central Washington University; mezzo-soprano Diana Tash, professor of music/voice at Los Angeles City College; violinist-violist Scott Hosfeld, conductor and music director of the Malibu Coast Chamber Orchestra and the Malibu Coast Silent Film Orchestra; and the Montgomery Arts House Percussion Ensemble.

*Tom Sawyer*, a silent, short film released in 1917, was screened as a part of the ensemble's repertoire. The music, an original score by Newman, was performed live to the film.

Daughter of nine-time Academy Award-winning composer and conductor Alfred Newman, Maria Newman grew up amid the sounds of Hollywood. Her Southern-born and raised grandmother became her muse. Montgomery penned a newspaper column titled "Poems of Simple Things" and published numerous volumes of poetry.

Inspired by Montgomery's colorful verse, Newman's concert works include "A Breath of Mississippi," "Southern Town Duos," "Songs on Motherhood," "A Little Book of Southern Carols," "Sing We of Music," "Trail of Years" and "Appalachian Duets."

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