

Composer lends hand to family center's anniversary celebration

By [Bob Karlovits](#)

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Nancy Galbraith is quick to admit that her decision to compose a piece of music for a local social service agency is "just one of those things that don't make sense."

Her work will be premiered Saturday at the 10th anniversary celebration of the North Side's Providence Family Support Center. But days after she's completed the work, Galbraith recounts the project and admits she has no idea what kind of money she will get.

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Sister Maria Fest, executive director of Providence Connections Inc., which runs the center, says she wanted to do something different for the anniversary. She was convinced about the work of Galbraith, a professor at Carnegie Mellon University.

Galbraith is an award-winning composer who has worked all over the world for a large variety of ensembles.

The result of that decision is "God of Justice," a 40-minute work that uses a 26-piece orchestra, two choruses, two soloists and a narrator, all of which adds up to more than 100 performers.

The work is the centerpiece of two events celebrating the anniversary of the North Side group that provides child care and parental counseling to low-income families.

Photo Gallery



[Nancy Galbraith](#)

Heidi Murrin/Tribune-Review

Details

'God of Justice'

What: A concert to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Providence Family Support Center

When: 7 p.m. Saturday at Sisters of Divine Providence Motherhouse Chapel, McCandless; 7:30 p.m. Monday, St Anne's Roman Catholic Church, Castle Shannon

Tickets: \$25 at the premiere; \$10 in Castle Shannon

Details: (412) 766-3811

Tom Octave, who will be conducting the work, had suggested Galbraith as the composer. He says he wanted to "challenge all of us to go the extra mile" in commissioning the piece.

He is working on his master's at Carnegie Mellon University. He knows of Fest and her work through teaching at La Roche College, which is run by the Sisters of Divine Providence, the order that operates the support center.

Galbraith says the vocal nature of the work was a challenge. She has used words in many works, but most times they were part of text that already had been written.

"I'm not a librettist," she says. "This was very different from doing, say, a requiem, where all the words are laid out in front of you."

She says she didn't simply "want to string together random texts," or to make the work necessarily of one faith. She decided to use the Beatitudes, which she calls "not necessarily Christian" in their message, along with sections of the Hebrew Gates of Prayer.

The Hebrew section was given to her by Mimi Lerner, who will perform as soprano soloist and is the cantor at Rodef Shalom synagogue in Oakland. "She is an inspiration," Galbraith says.

The work trades statements from choruses singing the Beatitudes with soloists singing from the Gates of Prayer and observations by the narrator.

"It is a statement of interfaith ecumenism," Octave says.

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