

Composer, Professor, Mentor and Marksman

by Jill Sever, Class of 2006

Some may call it an unusual combination but Dr. Walden Hughes, NNU's piano virtuoso, says his hobby as a gun enthusiast and his profession in music have remarkable similarities.

A highly regarded man of many talents, Hughes has impacted NNU, the music community, the marksman community and scores of students throughout his life. He was recently surprised during Homecoming 2006 when many former students returned

to perform in the annual Thanksgiving concert as a special tribute to him. At that event he was also honored by being presented with a scholarship established in his honor to provide assistance for students pursuing their love of music.

Dr. Hughes has a positive influence in the community surrounding NNU as well. A result of his 25-year relationship with Dunkley Music has benefited the university's piano students by providing 18 new Kawais pianos (valued at \$200,000) each year. Hughes then arranges details to sell the one-year-old pianos. Having such top-quality instruments provides NNU's music students with the opportunity to learn from the best—a brilliant professor like Dr. Hughes and the finest of instruments at their fingertips.

Dr. Hughes has quietly built an amazing national reputation as a teacher and composer/arranger. But more than that, he is a dedicated professor who constantly reworks and improves his classes, and gives encouragement and inspiration to his students. In addition, over the past 30 years, he has produced an incredible group of successful piano performers and teachers. "He is a great credit to NNU, both as an alumnus and faculty member," states Dr. Barry Swanson, chair, Department of Music.

Hughes explains that his talent and love for music was passed down from his mother and the love for shooting was instilled in him by his father. This love for music and marksmanship has set him apart from fellow enthusiasts since his incredible hand-eye coordination has made him an expert in both fields—even after he overcame six eye surgeries in 1998 that left him with double vision.

Currently a member of Front Sight, a firearms training facility, Hughes recently won a handgun competition and has been invited to become an instructor. Although L.A. SWAT, ex-FBI,

CIA, Marines and other marksmen enter these contests, many underestimate this 50-year-old accomplished musician. He is in the process of becoming a combat handgun master, which requires mastering speed, accuracy, and the ability to discern between threatening and non-threatening targets.

Dr. Hughes graduated from NNU with a Bachelor of Arts in Applied Piano and Music Theory in 1977 and began his college

teaching career two days after his 23rd birthday—a sudden transition from student to professor. He earned a Master of Music in Piano Performance from the University of Idaho in 1979, and a Doctor of Arts in Music History and Literature and Piano Pedagogy from the University of Northern Colorado in 1992, all while teaching at NNU. In 1995, Hughes was awarded the coveted Master Teacher Certificate by the Music Teachers National



Association (MTNA), presented each year to only three music teachers in the United States.

Hughes' publications include 30 articles in professional journals in the U.S. and Europe, *Clavier*, *Piano Quarterly*, *American Music Teacher*, *Piano and Keyboard*, *Piano Guild Notes*, and *Music Review*; 18 CD reviews for *American Record Guide*; 12 book reviews of new piano pedagogy and repertoire books; and, 13 CD reviews for *Clavier*. He has composed 88 piano ensemble scores and was commissioned to write works specifically for performance by Hvaler School of the Arts, Norway; Katholische Universitaet Eichstaett, Germany; Kipnis/Kushner Duo, New York; Santa Fe Guitar Quartet, Argentina; and the Louisiana Music Teacher's Association 2004 state convention.

His piano ensemble works have been performed in 49 countries and 45 states; he has recorded *Bach and the Romantics* and *Bach and the Romantics 2* on CDs for MP3.com 2000; and is an MP3 Artist with 40 internet recordings.

Although some may think Dr. Hughes' hobby as quite unusual, he takes great joy in everything he does—teaching music, selling pianos, or shooting sporting clays. After all, someone had to show up at the Boise Cabela's grand opening!

Dr. Hughes and his wife Monica (Hoyle) have two children, Camden, age 24, and Kendra, age 20.