

# *vertex*

FACULTY ACCOMPLISHMENTS 2015-2016



FLORIDA  
SOUTHERN  
COLLEGE

## DR. KIRA OMELCHENKO RECOVERS AN ORIGINAL AMERICAN OPERA'S OVERTURE

Through her doctoral studies at the University of Iowa, Assistant Professor of Music Kira Omelchenko became interested in research on the first American composer to write an opera on an American theme. She discovered the composer George Frederick Bristow (1825–1898), one-time concertmaster of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra, who wrote an opera based on Washington Irving's short story "Rip Van Winkle."

As a result of musical scholarship and persistence, Dr. Omelchenko produced a critical edition of the opera's overture that has now been recorded by a professional ensemble.

A critical edition of a musical manuscript attempts to recover the artist's original score, which may have become altered over the years, adding appropriate footnotes and documentation. Dr. Omelchenko found Bristow's handwritten score of *Rip Van Winkle*, which premiered in 1855, in the archives of the New York Public Library.

"Bristow changed the story of "Rip Van Winkle" to make it about the American Revolution, and there's a romantic subplot about his daughter. It's a rather light, comic opera. Musically it evokes English parlor songs and ballads," she said.

After her dissertation was finished, Dr. Omelchenko was contacted by Rebecca Miller, conductor of the Royal Northern Sinfonia, a professional chamber orchestra in England. She was interested in Bristow's music and wanted to record the Overture to *Rip Van Winkle* using Dr. Omelchenko's critical edition. The 8-minute overture was released in 2015 as part of the Royal Northern Sinfonia's CD, *George Frederick Bristow: Symphony No. 2 ("Jullien")/Overtures*.

"I'm very pleased with it," Dr. Omelchenko said. "It's a magical experience to hear other musicians' interpretations of what you're trying to represent. I hope Bristow would be pleased."



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