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October 27, 2003

For Immediate Release,

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**COMPOSER WILLIAM BANFIELD SELECTED FOR  
ALEXANDRIA/PINEVILLE, La. CONTINENTAL HARMONY PROJECT**

Artist Will Collaborate with Arna Bontemps African American Museum to  
Explore Bontemps' Writings along with the  
Arts Council of Central Louisiana and the Rapides Symphony Orchestra

St. PAUL, Minn., October 27, 2003— The American Composers Forum, St. Paul, Minn, announced today the next phase of the Arna Bontemps African American Museum's participation as Louisiana's representative in the Forum's nationwide *Continental Harmony* program. Representatives of a coalition of community groups in Alexandria and Pineville have selected composer William C. Banfield, Saint Paul, Minn, to serve a residency culminating in an original musical work to be performed by the Rapides Symphony Orchestra. As Copland captured the words of Lincoln in his "Lincoln's Portrait," this piece will seize Arna Bontemps' writings, and those words will be woven into a new piece. Banfield will begin his residency in Alexandria and Pineville by getting to know people, researching local history and culture, working with students, and making presentations to community groups of all sorts. The new music will premiere October 2004 to celebrate the opening of a new Performing Arts Center.

*Continental Harmony* is an initiative of the American Composers Forum in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts as a way of bringing composers and communities across the country together for the creation of original musical works reflecting the unique history, culture and spirit of each community. Arna Bontemps Museum and its community partners, which include the Arts Council of Central Louisiana and the Rapides Symphony Orchestra, were selected through a competitive process to be Louisiana's representative in the *Continental Harmony* program.

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Born and raised in Detroit, Banfield says his house was filled with the sounds of Beethoven, Ellington, Pavarotti, and Al Green. Symphony concerts and a progressive church offering both classical greats as Beethoven and Bach and traditional gospel songs were part of his landscape growing up. He earned a Bachelor of Music from the New England Conservatory of Music in 1983, a Master of Theological Studies from Boston University in 1987, and Doctor of Musical Arts from the University of Michigan in 1992. His diverse blend of musical influences were shaped by his teachers and mentors including T.J. Anderson, George Russell, Leslie Bassett, William Bolcolm, and William Albright. In 2000, he served as a W.E.B. Dubois fellow at Harvard and was invited by Nobel Prize winning author Toni Morrison to be the Atlier Visting Artist at Princeton University last year.

Banfield holds the Endowed Chair in Humanities and Arts at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minn. He is director of the American Cultural Studies program, chairing Jazz, American Popular, World Music Studies, and an Associate Professor of Music. Banfield is the founder of the Bmagic Orchestra that has been playing contemporary hip arrangements of jazz, hip hop, soul, and popular music throughout the Twin Cities in club, malls and college venues. The Bmagic Orchestra has recorded or performed with such artists as Patrice Rushen, Bobby McFerrin, Billy Childs, Don Byron, the Philip Brunelle Ensemble Singers, Sounds of Blackness, Mark Ledford, and Nelson Rangell. Banfield has composed eight symphonies, six symphonic concertos, four operas, music for ballet, musicals, chorus, chamber ensembles, jazz ensembles, and song cycles for voice and keyboard.

Banfield's Landscapes in Color: Perspectives, Conversations and Visions of Black American Composers was published by University Press of American/Scarecrow Press. In connection with the release of his book, National Public Radio broadcast several two hour shows hosted by Banfield entitled “Landscapes in Color: Concerts and Conversations with Black American Composers.”

*Continental Harmony* has been recognized as a model of local community artistic initiative. Each host site identifies a theme, an occasion, and local performers for a musical work that will be meaningful to its citizens.

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During the inaugural round of the program in the year 2000, American Composers Forum discovered that *Continental Harmony* projects bring people together, heighten community feeling and sense of place, and encourage the formation of collaborations among groups. At the same time the artistic resources of the area are often strengthened and validated. As a result of this inaugural round, Twin Cities Public Television created an award-winning documentary and website.

*Continental Harmony is a leadership initiative of the American Composers Forum and the National Endowment for the Arts, with additional funding provided by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, The Rockefeller Foundation, and Marshall Field's Project Imagine with support from the Target Foundation.*

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