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Continental Harmony Premiere in Battle Creek, MI New Composition Celebrates Area's Cultural Diversity

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St. PAUL, Minn., February 8, 2007—Finding harmony in a multicultural world is the theme of a new work by Grammy®-nominated composer Peter Boyer of Altadena, California. *Dreaming a World* will be premiered by the Battle Creek Symphony Orchestra, a percussion ensemble, and six combined choruses on March 10, 2007 at 7:30 p.m. at the W. K. Kellogg Auditorium in Battle Creek.

Dreaming a World, a five-movement, 20-minute work, was commissioned for the orchestra by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation through the *Continental Harmony* program of the American Composers Forum, a non-profit composer service organization dedicated to promoting composers and their music. As part of the composition process, Dr. Boyer spent three weeks in residence in Battle Creek, a city of 50,000 midway between Chicago and Detroit, engaging in community meetings, visiting area schools, participating in “meet the composer” events, and interacting with performers.

Dreaming a World features spoken and sung texts assembled by Boyer, including a traditional Native American prayer; brief quotes concerning unity and change from leaders including Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., César Chávez, Maya Angelou, John F. Kennedy, and Mahatma Gandhi; and poems by Langston Hughes, Hartley Alexander, and Walt Whitman.

Joining the orchestra for the premiere performance will be the Echoes of Grace, Inc. Community Choir, Battle Creek Community Chorus, Battle Creek Girls' Chorus, Battle Creek Boychoir, Kellogg Community College Choral Union, the Sojourner Truth Youth Choir, and narrator. Other works on the program include Copland's *El Salón México* and *Lift Every Voice for Freedom* by Moses Hogan. For tickets to the premiere, priced \$5 to \$39, call 269.565.2199 or visit www.battlecreeksymphony.org for information.

“I was delighted to be chosen for the *Continental Harmony* project in Battle Creek,” said Boyer. “The great challenge in composing *Dreaming a World* was to take what I'd learned about the various constituencies in Battle Creek, and use that knowledge in an attempt to create a work that addresses the themes of multiculturalism and unity, not only in Battle Creek, but in the broader world as well. To have the opportunity to do so in a new work involving some 300 performers is both challenging and exciting.”

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The *Continental Harmony* program “offers communities the unique opportunity to be a part of new musical works which celebrate their history and culture,” says John Nuechterlein, President and C.E.O. of American Composers Forum. “These exceptional musical celebrations strengthen social bonds and renew the collective spirit.” Visit www.continentalharmony.org for more information.

Peter Boyer has emerged in recent years as one of the most frequently performed young American orchestral composers. His music has been widely acclaimed by audiences and critics alike for its dramatic strength and evocative power. His orchestral works have received over 150 public performances, by more than 50 orchestras. He has conducted recordings of his music with both the London Symphony Orchestra and the Philharmonia. His works have been broadcast on hundreds of radio stations throughout the U.S., Europe, and Australia. In 2001, at age 31, he became one of the youngest composers in the world to have an entire disc of his music recorded by a world-class orchestra and distributed by an international record label.

Boyer's major work *Ellis Island: The Dream of America*, which celebrates the American immigrant experience, has been his most successful composition to date. This work has been enjoying an extraordinary performance history, with over 75 performances by 35 orchestras, including the Battle Creek Symphony, from its debut in 2002 through the 2006-07 season, making it one of the most-performed large-scale American orchestral works of the last decade. Boyer's *Ellis Island* was recorded and released on the Naxos label, and was nominated for a Grammy® Award for Best Classical Contemporary Composition. In addition to his work for the concert hall, Boyer is active in the film and television industry. He recently composed scores for episodes of The History Channel original series *Engineering an Empire*. Boyer teaches at Claremont Graduate University in Claremont, California.

Since 1899 the Battle Creek Symphony, Michigan's oldest, has pleased audiences and critics with outstanding classical and pops performances. Led with elegance and flair by Music Director Anne Harrigan, the orchestra is breaking down barriers between the audience and the music with innovative multi-media performances.

Harrigan said, “We are thrilled to be part of this creative process, an example of the power of music to transcend superficial boundaries and unite us.” Harrigan added, “Peter Boyer has given voice to the issues and feelings of living in a diverse society, not just in Battle Creek, but everywhere. We have gained an important and inspiring work of art.”

Harrigan joined the orchestra in 2003, following 20 years as conductor of the Baltimore Chamber Orchestra. The Battle Creek Symphony is a program of the Music Center of South Central Michigan, which also encompasses seven choruses and a community music school. Visit www.musiccenterscmi.com for more information.

Continental Harmony has been recognized as a model of local community artistic initiative. The initiative has been launched by the American Composers Forum in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts as a way of bringing composers and communities together each for the creation of original musical works reflecting the unique history, culture and spirit of community. Each host site identifies a theme, an occasion, and local performers for a musical work that will be meaningful to its citizens. With the assistance of American Composers Forum, the community group then selects the composer best able to write the music and carry out the residency.

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. For more information, visit www.continentalharmony.org

The Continental Harmony: Battle Creek project is generously funded by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation.

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