



A M E R I C A N C O M P O S E R S F O R U M

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Black History Month Celebrations in Tallahassee to Feature World Premiere of New Music by Noted Composer Oliver Lake

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St. PAUL, Minn., January 29, 2003—Noted jazz composer Oliver Lake's original composition "Breathe in the Colors You See" for Florida A&M University music ensembles will be premiered as part of the Black History Month observances in the Tallahassee area. The Florida A&M Choir and Symphonic Wind Orchestra will perform the piece Sunday, February 23 at 3:00 pm at Monticello Opera House and Tuesday, February 25 at 7:30 pm in the Lee Hall Auditorium on the Florida A&M campus. The work for Tallahassee was commissioned as part of *Continental Harmony*, the nation-wide community-based composer residency program of American Composers Forum, St. Paul, Minn.

Lake notes that his research into the history of the state gave him the inspiration for the work. During his first visit to Tallahassee, he visited Wakulla Springs and learned that the first riverboat captains on the Wakulla River were African American. He also researched the history of Seminoles in Florida. Lake stated, "As I continued research about Florida these two elements became very strong and as a result, I incorporated musical elements into the composition which refer to the Native American and African American influences. It was also interesting to create lyrics for this piece based on history, culture and beauty of Florida. I'm looking forward to hearing the final piece. It's been rewarding and inspiring to spend time on the Florida A & M campus."

This composition addresses the multi-genre music curriculum of Florida A&M in which students are trained in classical, jazz, and ethnic traditions. The piece pays homage to diversity not only in Florida but also all over the world. Site host Longineu Parsons stated, "Oliver has

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such a wide range of musical experience that his music has no boundaries. This gives him the unusual ability to relate to students from all kinds of backgrounds, giving these students the possibility of being exposed to music that is new to them.”

Composer, saxophonist, and poet Oliver Lake has toured throughout the world, including stops in Africa, Japan, Australia, and Europe. He has also worked with artists as diverse as pop singer Bjork, rocker Lou Reed, jazz vocalist Abbey Lincoln, and the rap group Tribe Called Quest. Lake is a founding member of the World Saxophone Quartet and more recently the Oliver Lake Steel Quartet. His works have been performed by the likes of the Arditti String Quartet, World Sax Quartet, Amherst Sax Quartet, Regina Carter, Brooklyn Philharmonic, Wheeling Symphony, San Francisco Contemporary Players, New York New Music Ensemble, and the Pulse Percussion Ensemble of New York.

In 1998, the Lila Wallace Arts Presenters Program provided a grant to the Unity Concerts in Montclair, N.J., allowing Lake to develop the multimedia work “Broken in Parts.” This community-oriented project brought several community organizations into the collaborative fold, and Lake held more than 20 public workshops as part of the project. Residents of Montclair, Orange, and Newark, N.J., wrote poems for piece. The finished performance premiered in December 1998 and featured 10 musicians, a dancer, six actors, and a rapper.

The Florida A&M Department of Music, fully accredited by the National Association of Schools of Music, provides many opportunities for student performance, guest lectures by artists of international reputation, master classes, clinics, and faculty recitals. Approximately 180 music majors pursue BS and BA degrees in education, performance and composition.

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 for the creation of original musical works reflecting the unique history, culture and spirit of each 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

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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.

To learn more about *Continental Harmony*, visit www.continentalharmony.org. To contact the composer, write him at olla@aol.com or visit his website at www.oliverlake.net. For an electronic photo of the composer, contact Pat Shifferd at pshifferd@composersforum.org or 651-251-2818.

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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