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For Immediate Release,

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COMPOSER LISA DeSPAIN SELECTED FOR NEVADA CONTINENTAL HARMONY PROJECT

New Piece will celebrate the Cultural Heritage of Five Nevada Communities

St. PAUL, Minn., January 16, 2004— The American Composers Forum, St. Paul, Minn, announced today the next phase of the Mile High Jazz Band's participation as Nevada's representative in the Forum's nationwide *Continental Harmony* program. Representatives of a coalition of community groups in Carson City, Reno, Fallon, Yerington, and Virginia City have selected composer Lisa DeSpain, New York, NY, to serve a residency culminating in an original musical work to be performed by the Mile High Jazz Band and Bella Voce, a women's vocal ensemble. DeSpain will begin her residency in the five northern Nevada cities 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 in a series of concerts in each of the towns from June to December 2005. Performances will celebrate the architectural and cultural heritage of five northern Nevada communities where historic buildings have been or are being revitalized for use as theaters.

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. Mile High Jazz Band and its community partners, which include Bella Voce, Brewery Arts Center, the Theater Coalition, Churchill Arts Council, Jeanne Dini Cultural Center, and Piper's Opera House, were selected through a competitive process to be Nevada's representative in the *Continental Harmony* program.

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Lisa DeSpain is an award-winning conductor-composer from New York City. Her commissions include works for the Buglisi/Foreman Dance Company and the Cassatt String Quartet. The New York Times heralded her collaboration with the Buglisi/Foreman Dance Company as “rousing” and “intoxicating.”

She is the recipient of a Barlow Commission, the Aaron Copland Award, the 1999 ASCAP/IAJE Commission Honoring Duke Ellington, a Julius Hemphill Jazz Composers Award, and a Jazz Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts. DeSpain also received a commission to compose a fanfare for the United States Air Force Wind Ensemble in celebration of the Wright Brothers centennial.

She received her bachelor’s degree in composition from the University of North Texas and master’s in jazz piano performance from Manhattan School of Music. She studied jazz piano with Ellis Marsalis, Eliane Elias, and Kenny Werner and jazz composition with Manny Album. In addition to composing in the jazz idiom, her works include string-piano quartets and other chamber pieces, choral, solo vocal, harp, piano, and commercial music.

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.

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.