



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

NATIONAL OFFICE:

332 Minnesota Street, Suite E-145 • Saint Paul, Minnesota 55101-1300 USA

Telephone: [651] 228-1407 • Fax: [651] 291-7978

E-mail: [mail@composersforum.org](mailto:mail@composersforum.org) • Web site: [www.composersforum.org](http://www.composersforum.org)

## *Continental Harmony* Premiere in South Orange and Maplewood, New Jersey New Composition Celebrates Community Arts Festival

June 20, 2005  
For Immediate Release

**For more information, contact:**

Dr. Patricia Shifferd, American Composers Forum, 651-251-2818, [pshifferd@composersforum.org](mailto:pshifferd@composersforum.org), or  
Barbara Heisler Williams, South Orange/Maplewood Community Coalition on Race, Inc.,  
973-761-6116 or [info@twotowns.org](mailto:info@twotowns.org)

St. PAUL, Minn., June 20, 2005—Composer Janet Albright's new *Continental Harmony* piece titled "An American Dilemma: Becoming a Place for All People" will premiere July 3 at 7:00 p.m. at Flood's Hill in Meadowland's Park, South Orange. The 12-part, 40-minute musical suite was commissioned by the South Orange/Maplewood Community Coalition on Race, Inc., and will be premiered by a consortium of local performers under the direction of Maplewood resident Vicki Carter, who has conducted musicals on Broadway and at the Paper Mill Playhouse in Millburn. 200 professional and amateur performers include members of local gospel choirs, church and synagogue choral groups, school orchestras, and local jazz ensembles as well as mezzo-soprano Lori Mirabal, retired New Jersey Symphony violinist Joe Gluck, and jazz legend John Lee.

"It's not your ordinary musical symphony score," said Albright. "My job was to write a piece in various styles, representing 15 or so nationalities." In her score, Ms. Albright taps themes of freedom and equality. A section entitled "Mosaic" seamlessly creates a musical quilt that weaves together religious traditions and melodies including a Muslim call to prayer, and the Jewish Oseh Shalom, sung by South Orange-based cantor Perry Fine.

Albright's suite celebrates the community's annual gathering on the eve of Independence Day. The concert will conclude the community-wide block party featuring art, food, games and music performed by local bands and ensembles. Over three thousand people are expected to join the celebration. July 4 is celebrated across the nation as the day of our country's independence. The communities of South Orange and Maplewood, New Jersey not only celebrate this day, but with the work of the South Orange/Maplewood Community Coalition on Race, the community also celebrates the vision of our founding fathers for a nation of people free from segregation annually July 3.

Albright began this *Continental Harmony* project by visiting the communities of South Orange and Maplewood and getting to know the people that comprise these areas. After understanding the richness of this region, she went to work writing a piece of music that weaves together the many cultures and faiths represented in this community: African, Haitian, Caribbean, Jewish, Russian, Irish, Italian, Asian,

(more)

Latin and African-American, to name a few. This premiere serves to heighten the awareness of the arts of the different cultures represented, thereby heightening the appreciation of the people and their cultures.

Locally, the project is sponsored by the South Orange/Maplewood Community Coalition, which sees the creation and performance of Ms. Albright's work as a vast community-building effort. According to Coalition Executive Director, Barbara Heisler-Williams, "We believe that adding the power of music and the arts to inspire our community to explore and connect with diverse cultures will further our work. It celebrates what brings us all together."

The musical events of the Two Towns in Harmony Festival will take place against a backdrop of an enormous art installation, consisting of dozens of colorful flags. The creation of local artist, B. John Kaufman, this massive temporary sculpture, applies the math of the Golden Rectangle to the sweeping landscape of Flood's Hill. The undulating installation, assembled by team of volunteers, will be made up of 50 flags and 400 yards of multi-colored fabric spread across the hill. In addition to lending a hand to build the art installation designed for the Two Towns project, scores of volunteers have been working for more than a year to rehearse, plan, and coordinate, this massive event. These residents are participating in what promises to be a once-in-a-lifetime event for South Orange and Maplewood.

"For me," Albright said, "being the composer for South Orange and Maplewood's Two Towns in Harmony project has been the opportunity to devote my life's energy for a year to a cause I hold dear to my heart -- that people come to know each other with understanding and appreciation, working together to insure that the freedom we cherish flourishes."

The local sponsors of Two Towns In Harmony are the Maplewood Rotary Club; Robert Northfield, Burgdorff ERA; Weichert Realtors, Maplewood; and Valley National Bank, South Orange. Foundation sponsors include The New Jersey Council on the Arts/Department of State, a partner agency of the National Endowment for the Arts and administered by the Essex County Division of Cultural Affairs; the American Composers Forum; the Puffin Foundation; and the Fraentzel Foundation.

*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](http://www.continentalharmony.org)

*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.*