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Continental Harmony Premiere in Akron, Ohio New Composition Celebrates Art from the Akron Art Museum

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St. PAUL, Minn., February 27, 2004—Composer Randall Woolf's original composition for the Akron Symphony Orchestra, entitled "Women at an Exhibition," will be premiered March 27, 2004 at 8:00 p.m. at E.J. Thomas Hall in Akron with a *Preview from the Podium* presentation by the composer at 7:00 p.m. The piece was commissioned by the Akron Art Museum and will be premiered by their community partner, the Akron Symphony Orchestra, as part of *Continental Harmony*, the national community-based composer residency program of American Composers Forum, St. Paul, Minn. Inspired by Mussorgsky's "Pictures at an Exhibition," this new piece celebrates the collection of art at the museum. Tickets for the performance range from \$14 to \$35. To purchase, contact the symphony box office at 330-535-8131. There is a special discount for Akron Art Museum members.

The 20-minute work will be accompanied by a specially commissioned video by filmmakers Mary Harron and John C. Walsh. Images of paintings, sculptures and photographs will dance above the stage, complementing the music and revealing its source of inspiration: artworks in the Akron Art Museum's collection. "Women at an Exhibition" blends traditional symphonic orchestration with electronically sampled sounds.

Woolf, of Brooklyn, New York, has spent almost a month in residence in Akron meeting with various community, school, and musical groups, and getting to know the museum and the city of Akron. Woolf's compositions are richly varied, bending and fusing genres of ancient and futuristic elements, combining traditional orchestral instruments, digital processing, electric guitar, electronic and acoustic drum sets, and text. He scored the American Repertory Ballet's realization of Maurice Sendak's "Where the Wild Things Are" and collaborated with rock legend John Cale to orchestrate and arrange the scores for two film projects, "American Psycho" and "St. Cyr."

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Award-winning husband and wife filmmakers Harron and Walsh also live in Brooklyn. Harron wrote and directed two feature films: *I Shot Andy Warhol* (1996) and *American Psycho* (2000). Walsh also has two features to his credit, *Ed's Next Move* (1996) and *Pipe Dream* (2002).

Founded in 1922, the Akron Art Museum, then the Akron Art Institute, opened up in the basement of the Akron Public Library. The institute provided a variety of art exhibitions, gallery space for university and public school students and offered art classes. In 1981, the institute moved into the facility in which it is currently housed—the old Akron Post office. Along with the move came a change in name and mission. The institute became the Akron Art Museum and focused its collection and exhibitions on artwork from 1850 to the present. Open 52 weeks a year free of charge, the Akron Art Museum is dedicated to its mission of enriching lives through modern art.

Currently celebrating its 52nd year, the Greater Akron Musical Association (GAMA) is committed to providing quality symphonic and choral music through performances and educational programs, to the largest number of people possible in the greater Akron area. This mission is realized by operating the Akron Symphony Orchestra, Akron Youth Symphony, Akron Symphony Chorus, and numerous special outreach and education programs. During the 2002-2003 season over 200,000 people experienced the work of GAMA through concerts, educational programs and radio broadcasts.

Following the March 27 world premiere of “Women at an Exhibition” will be the New York premiere February 23, 2005 by the American Composers Orchestra at Carnegie Hall. Also on the program will be Steven Stucky’s “Pinturas de Tamayo,” Morton Feldman’s “Optic Light,” Tan Dun’s “Death and Fire: Dialogue with Paul Klee” (excerpt), and Stephen Sondheim’s “Sunday in the Park with George” (selections).

Continental Harmony has been recognized as a model of local community artistic initiative. A partnership between the American Composers Forum and the National Endowment for the Arts, the initiative is designed to bring 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.

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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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