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Continental Harmony Premiere in Georgetown, S.C., Indigo Choral Society Celebrates Annual Concert with New Music

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St. PAUL, Minn., June 3, 2003— The Indigo Choral Society in Georgetown, South Carolina, has a new dimension at their annual Fourth of July concert this year—a new musical work written especially for the choir will be premiered. “The Tidelands of Georgetown,” composed by Jim Clemens of Downers Grove, IL, is the product of Clemens residency in Georgetown, made possible by the American Composers Forum’s *Continental Harmony* program. The piece celebrates the natural history and heritage of the tideland region around Georgetown. The concert will be held outdoors on the lawn of the Kaminski House Museum overlooking the Sampit River. This free concert is open to the entire community and starts at 7:30 pm. In case of rain, the concert will be moved to First Baptist located on the corner of Highmarket and Cleland Streets in Georgetown.

During his residency, Clemens visited several Georgetown County Schools introducing students to the concepts of musical imagery. He immersed himself in the sights, sounds, and history of the area as he toured the Rice Museum, the Kaminski House, Hobcaw Barony and the Bellefield Nature Center, Santee Coastal Reserve, Hampton Plantation, Brookgreen Gardens, Huntington Beach State Park, and the Dreamkeepers Center. He experienced a kayaking trip on the Black River, and ate at a number of local restaurants. “I’ve been all over the place which is great,” Clemens said. “My goal is to get saturated by everything.”

Clemens, who grew up in Goshen, Indiana, considers himself a self-taught composer. His compositions for choir, orchestra, piano, strings, brass, voice, and various ensembles have roots in folk song, jazz, music from the Renaissance and Baroque periods, and the works of Beethoven, Brahms, Copland, and Vaughan Williams. He particularly enjoys commissions that

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bring him into collaboration with the artists who will be performing his work, a process he describes as "exciting" and "gratifying." "To paraphrase Alice Parker," Clemens says, "it's easier to host a banquet when you know who your guests will be!"

The *Tidelands of Georgetown* is made up of three movements capturing many facets of the low country. The first movement, *River Lullaby*, utilizes poetry from Helen von Kolnitz Hyer's *Santee Lullaby*, and Eleanor Farjeon's *The Tide in the River*. Georgetown's early history comes alive as Clemens wraps the names of local Indian tribes in an unhurried cadence around these poems like a master basket-weaver. Gloria Barr Ford of Georgetown, winner of a poetry contest for the project, wrote the lyrics for the second movement, *Come On Let's We Go*. Using Gullah and jazzy rhythms, Clemens and Ford portray the image of slaves working on a rice plantation. An excerpt follows:

Put een dee sickle,
Lay down dee bundle,
Watch out dee bad snake,
Kill up dee skeet-a.
Work een dee hot fiel',
Come on let's we go.

The words to the third movement, *On Goes The River*, come from Robert Louis Stevenson's *A Child's Garden of Verses*. Clemens' flowing music allows the words to meander gently like a low country river. One soon imagines boating on a dark brown river with trees on either side, and with castles of foam as fresh water meets salt water. Listeners are left with a sense of peace and future prosperity for a community along a river, bringing to mind especially the Black, Pee Dee, Waccamaw, and Sampit rivers as they merge to form Winyah Bay.

Other selections to be performed at the concert include *Old Time Religion*, a traditional spiritual; *Hark I Hear the Harps Eternal*; and sing-alongs: *The Star Spangled Banner*, *Blue Tail Fly*, *Ol' Dan Tucker*, and *This Land is Your Land*. Two of the choir's favorites are the nostalgic arrangement of *Dixie* and Wilhousky's arrangement of the *Battle Hymn of the Republic*, famous for its eight-part harmony. Patriotic selections include *America the Beautiful* and *God Bless America*.

A project of such magnitude requires a community-wide committee with individuals from other

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organizations. Partners for the project are Katrina Lawrimore, Director of the Kaminski House Museum; Dwight McInvaill, Director of the Georgetown County Library System; Judy Ingle, Middle/Secondary Language Arts Coordinator for the Georgetown County School District; and Lee Brockington, Historian with the Belle W. Baruch Foundation. Indigo Choral Society personnel include Virginia Smith, Board Chair; Jean Askew, Production Director, Teeny Henson, Director-at-Large; and Chuck Gee, Choral Director.

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 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.

Funding for this concert provided in part by the South Carolina Arts Commission, which receives support from the National Endowment for the Arts, and by Santee Cooper.

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