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**COMPOSER STEPHEN NEWBY SELECTED FOR SAINT PAUL, Minn.  
CONTINENTAL HARMONY PROJECT**

**Composer Will Collaborate with the Walker-West Music Academy to  
Create Music Celebrating Rondo Neighborhood**

St. PAUL, Minn., July 7, 2004— The American Composers Forum, St. Paul, Minn, announced today the next phase of the Walker-West Music Academy's participation in the Forum's nationwide *Continental Harmony* program. Representatives of the Rondo community in Saint Paul have selected composer Stephen Michael Newby, Bothell, Wash., to serve a residency culminating in an original musical work to be performed by the community chorus, jazz, and drum ensembles from the music academy. Newby will begin his residency in Saint Paul by getting to know people, researching local history and culture, working with students, and making presentations to community groups of all sorts. His first visit will be July 25, 26, and 27. The new music will premiere Fall 2005.

In the 1950's and 1960's the vigorous Rondo Avenue neighborhood of St. Paul, an integrated but largely African-American business, religious, and educational center on the city's near west side, was disrupted when the I-94 freeway was built. The neighborhood was centered around its churches, schools, and many locally-owned businesses. Through this Continental Harmony project, community residents will celebrate the history of this neighborhood. Together with the composer, they will work to recover the sense of community that was lost when the freeway was built.

Today, although the former Rondo neighborhood is split by the freeway, there are substantial community building efforts underway and interest in keeping alive the spark which made the

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neighborhood live. Thus, this musical presentation is meant to celebrate the past and assist in developing a vision for the future.

Newby will have wide access to the community, including a set of oral history interviews with people who lived and grew up in Rondo. This material, in addition to providing background information about the community, may provide text for the choral portions of the composition. In addition, the musical staff of Walker-West Music Academy will assist the composer in identifying and selecting the performers from the rich musical resources of the community. The music Newby composes will provide the core of the musical presentation, supplemented by interludes provided by the musicians and ensembles of the music academy and by narration.

Walker West Music Academy is a nonprofit music school known for its artistic excellence in all styles of music ranging from classical to its particular specialties of gospel and jazz. The school is dedicated to instruction and performance inspired by and reflected in the African-American experience and language of music. In addition to being a quality, well-rounded community school of music, it is also an outreach institution whose artistic purpose is committed to the recognition and celebration of diverse cultures through the study of their unique expression and contributions to the language of music.

Newby, composer, conductor, gospel/jazz vocalist and pianist, is a native of Detroit, Michigan. His compositions have earned him awards such as The National Endowment of the Arts Grant-Continental Harmony 2000 for Newport, Rhode Island; the King County Arts Commission of Washington Grant, 1995-1996; The Distinguished Dissertation of the Year Award at the University of Michigan in 1995 for his symphony: *Let Thy Mercy Be Upon Us: A Tribute to Martin Luther King, Jr.*, as well as the Rackham School composition Award for *A Significant Change* for orchestra (1993); The Rackham School fellowship for Ethnomusicological Research in Dakar, Senegal, West Africa 1988-1990; The John Wesley Work III National Composer's Competition in 1988 for his work *Be Still and Know*, a gospel/jazz oratorio. He is an ASCAP composer/publisher of many different musical styles and traditions including West African, Western European, Jazz, and Gospel.

Newby recently completed a recording project entitled "Delight to Do God's Will" released on Maranatha. His new piece for Baritone and voice entitled "Gospel Songs for Baritone and String

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Orchestra” was on Albany Records in 2001. His first CD project entitled “Share The News”, a contemporary sacred musical montage of genres within the gospel, blues, Latin, and jazz performing practices, is still selling strong on the West Coast. He serves on the ministry staff at Seattle Pacific University and Pastor of Worship Arts at Antioch Bible Church in Redmond, Washington, a recording Artist on Maranatha! Music, Worship Leader for Promise Keepers and Family Life Ministries and Artistic Director of The Antioch Symphony Orchestra.

*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. Walker-West Music Academy and its community partners, which include the Hand in Hand Productions as well as a community advisory board, were selected through a competitive process to be one of Minnesota’s representatives in the *Continental Harmony* program.

*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.*

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