



AMERICAN COMPOSERS FORUM

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**CLAY CENTER WELCOMES *CONTINENTAL HARMONY*  
WORLD PREMIERE PERFORMANCE  
New Composition Celebrates Performing Arts Center's Mission**

**(Charleston, WV)**—Composer Paul Halley's original composition for choir and instrumental accompaniment entitled, "In Sideribus Domi: At Home in the Stars" will premiere October 4, at 8 pm in the Clay Center's Maier Foundation Performance Hall. Tickets for the performance are \$22 for Area A seating and \$12 for Area B. Halley will also present a pre-concert talk at 7 pm.

The piece was commissioned by the Clay Center for the Arts & Sciences—West Virginia in partnership with West Virginia University at Parkersburg, and the communities of Charleston, Parkersburg, Lewisburg, and Morgantown as part of *Continental Harmony*, the national community-based composer residency program of American Composers Forum of St. Paul, Minnesota.

The premiere celebrates the Clay Center's new performing arts, science, and visual arts facility and West Virginia's long tradition of choral singing. The creation of this new work will support the Clay Center's efforts to nurture creativity, exploration, discovery, and celebration. The performance will be part of the Clay Center's first season in its new facility, which opened to the public in July 2003.

A choir, comprised primarily of Charleston, Parkersburg, Lewisburg, and Morgantown residents, will premiere the choral work with instrumental accompaniment. Halley's son Nicholas will join the performance to play percussion. In addition, the concert will feature West Virginia University's African Drumming and Dance Ensemble and Marshall University's *12 O'clock* jazz ensemble in a performance prior to the premiere.

Halley, a native of Norfolk, Connecticut, gained inspiration for the piece when he visited the

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Clay Center in March of this year. Although the building was still under construction, he saw the exciting possibilities in combining an arts center with a science center, in such an elegant structure. Even though Halley has always been interested in the natural sciences, he has been particularly drawn to astronomy. The Planetarium in the Avampato Discovery Museum's Electric Sky™ Theater was testing one of its shows when Halley was visiting the Clay Center. From that moment, he knew the piece had to be about the stars and the people who "discover" them. However, finding appropriate texts was not easy. "Most poets, especially contemporary ones, aren't great fans of Science," Halley said. "They feel Science has taken over and stolen their thunder, as if Science is intent on proving all Merlin's tricks were done with mirrors. All the mysteries of life have been carefully analyzed, dissected and discarded. Of course, nothing could be further from the truth. The universe continues to become more fascinating, beautiful, terrifying and wondrous with each new discovery. There's enough mystery here to last us at least another 15 billion years!"

A good friend of Halley's wrote the poem that became the central movement of the work. Its opening line is "*Discovery belongs to those who are willing to be lost.*" And the poem ends with the repeated phrase, "*The goal of the arts and sciences?- to make us better dancers.*" This movement is set using a traditional Brazilian dance form. The outer movements utilize texts by 19<sup>th</sup> century American poets Anne Lynch and H.W. Longfellow, the 18<sup>th</sup> century poet Joseph Addison, one contemporary poem by an astronomer, and the ancient text of the Sanctus. The five-movement piece is truly a celebration of creativity, discovery, and the arts and sciences.

The Clay Center's educational mission is to deliver and coordinate arts and science education programs throughout the state. The new facility will allow that mission to be extended and enriched through both virtual and hands-on experiences for West Virginians of all ages.

*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.

*Continental Harmony is a leadership initiative of the American Composers Forum and the National*

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