

A World Premiere To Honor A Legacy

The Orlando Philharmonic Orchestra, the Zora Neale Hurston Festival for the Arts & Humanities, the Association to Preserve the Eatonville Community, the "Negro Spiritual" Scholarship Foundation Master Singers and the Florida Opera Theatre Chorus join forces on Saturday, November 12 at 8:00 p.m. to present "American Voices", a night of authentically American music, poetry and song honoring the legacy of au-

and collaboration, "American Voices" is supported by a \$25,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Arts and a \$45,000 grant from the Pabst Charitable Foundation for the Arts—an organization that values collaboration, diversification, and innovation in the arts. With such a momentous project, Wilkins says great care was taken to choose the best composer and librettist.

"Hailstork is probably the best known of African American composers, with a track record of writing symphonic music," said Wilkins. "He has written numerous award-winning choral and instrumental works, all performed by major symphony orchestras. He is perhaps best

around the world as Zora Neale Hurston, Van Dyke was also the obvious choice to narrate the Hailstork work on November 12, accompanied by the "Negro Spiritual" Scholarship Foundation Master Singers under the direction of Edward Washington II and the Florida Opera Theatre chorus, directed by Robin Stamper.

All the works on the concert are what Orlando Philharmonic Music Director Christopher Wilkins calls "from the soil"—music conceived and written in North America, with a distinctly American folk melody, voice and language. Included on the program are Hailstork's best-known work, "Celebration," Aaron Copland's "Appalachian Spring," based on the American Shaker melody "Simple Gifts," and "Appalachia"—a work drafted in Florida by British composer Frederick Delius, based on a song of farewell from a mother to a child. This particular performance will end with a full statement of the folk song by both choruses, and



Orlando Philharmonic Orchestra

Adolphus Hailstork



thor Zora Neale Hurston. The program features music of Adolphus Hailstork, Frederick Delius and Aaron Copland, and culminates in the premiere of Hailstork's new work, "Zora! We're Calling You," with libretto by Elizabeth Van Dyke.



Elizabeth Van Dyke

"Zora! We're Calling You," is a combination of music and spoken word adapted from the writings of Zora Neale Hurston, one of the pre-eminent writers of twentieth-century African-American literature and a former resident of Eatonville, FL. The premiere of the work is scheduled just two months before the 125th anniversary celebration of Eatonville's incorporation as the first African American municipality in North America, founded in 1887.

"This will be a performance filled with beauty, inspiration and local appeal," says Wilkins. "People will come away learning something important about Florida, about Eatonville, about Zora Neale Hurston and our community. If they thought they knew Zora, or if they've never read her before, they'll go back and explore her work again, and know the true master and poet she was."

The culmination of over two years of planning



Negro Spiritual Master Singers

known as a writer of songs and composer for chorus, and for this reason, I knew he would be the perfect choice for the project."

The libretto for "Zora! We're Calling You" is written by director and actress Elizabeth Van Dyke, who won an Audelco for Best Actress for her role as Zora Neale Hurston in Laurence Holder's 1990 Off-Broadway hit. Having toured

a solo by baritone James Brown III.

Wilkins says projects like "American Voices" are essential in fulfilling the orchestra's mission. "There's a beautiful synergy created in a community when you step outside of your little foxhole, and get out and join with others," says Wilkins. "It stretches each organization, always creating a sum that is greater than its parts." ■

The sole performance of "American Voices" will take place at the Bob Carr Performing Arts Centre, 401 W. Livingston Street, Orlando. For ticket information please call 407-770-0071.