

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

DSO PERFORMS WORLD PREMIERE BY ONE OF ITS OWN

**Rick Robinson's *Essay No. 1, After Sibelius* Receives World Premiere
at "Classical Roots" Concerts Featuring Kathleen Battle**

DETROIT, (March 3, 2006) – Each year, the Detroit Symphony Orchestra performs hundreds of works, classical and popular, old and new, baroque and modern. Of the many compositions performed this season, however, there is one that is likely to receive very special attention from the musicians, as it was written by one of their own. Bassist Rick Robinson, a 17-year veteran of the DSO, will join audiences for the World Premiere of his work, *Essay No. 1, After Sibelius*, at the DSO's "Classical Roots" concerts celebrating African American musicians and composers. Robinson's composition will be performed on a program that also features works by Ulysses Simpson Kay, John Welsey Work and Duke Ellington, as well as André Previn's "Honey and Rue" with world-renowned soprano Kathleen Battle as soloist singing texts by Toni Morrison.

The concerts, led by Resident Conductor Thomas Wilkins, take place on Friday, March 10 at 8 p.m. and Saturday, March 11 at 8:30 p.m. at Orchestra Hall at the Max M. Fisher Music Center. The Saturday night concert is part of the annual *Classical Roots Celebration Gala*, an annual fundraiser that includes a cocktail reception, dinner and a dessert-and-dancing afterglow. Ticket proceeds from the Gala support the DSO's African American programs including the African American Fellowship Program, the African American Composer Program and recordings of works by African American composers.

Rick Robinson's *Essay No. 1, After Sibelius* was originally chosen as one of four compositions to be featured in the DSO's 2002-2003 African American Composer Readings. This program, which is supported by funds raised at the Classical Roots Gala, was created to help identify significant orchestral works by African American composers and provide the opportunity for the composers and the public to hear those works performed by a professional symphony orchestra in free reading-rehearsal sessions. Robinson's piece was selected by Resident Conductor Thomas Wilkins and former DSO Resident Composer Adolphus Hailstork from dozens of submissions. Since then, Wilkins has been waiting for the ideal program to premiere the work and found that the 2006 "Classical Roots" concert offered the perfect opportunity, as it focuses on works by African American composers.

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A native Detroit, **Rick Robinson** grew up in Highland Park and began playing the cello and the double bass at Barber Middle School. After attending the Allstate program at Interlochen Center for the Arts for two summers, he attended the Interlochen Arts Academy for three years and then earned his Bachelor of Music degree from the Cleveland Institute of Music. He pursued graduate studies at the New England Conservatory in Boston and joined the DSO in 1989 after enjoying principal positions with the Portland, Maine, Canton, Ohio, and Akron, Ohio symphony orchestras.

In addition to his activities with the DSO, Robinson manages, directs and arranges music for the successful ensemble of eight DSO musicians called the CutTime Players. He also operates a music printing and arranging service called CutTime Productions, which publishes most of his work. Rick added composing and conducting to his resumé in 2003, having conducted the successful premiere of his *Symphony Of Brotherhood: I HAVE A DREAM* for a CutTime Players tribute program for Martin Luther King Day.

“I am what you’d call an ‘accidental’ composer,” said Robinson. “I have been transcribing classical music for the CutTime Players since 1995, using computer software. Consequently it’s become second nature for me to ‘play’ with music and virtual orchestration. So when I had a waking dream in 1999, accompanied by two excerpts of music I’d never heard before, I flew to the computer. At the halfway point I realized how ideal the opening quote from Sibelius’ Third Symphony would work both as an introduction and as a recurring theme. The result is “Essay No. 1, After Sibelius.”

“Rick’s music is well crafted, quite clever, and a pleasure to perform and hear,” said Thomas Wilkins. “I am delighted to have this opportunity to encourage composers from within our own DSO family.”

This World Premiere of a work by an African American composer continues the DSO’s long history of promoting black composers and musicians. Dating back to 1974, the DSO was an early champion of music by African-American composers and was featured on the nine-volume *CBS Records’ Black Composers Series*, the first comprehensive series of recordings of its kind. The DSO self-released their contributions to this series on a 2002 double CD and have released two other recordings of music by African American composers. In 1989 the DSO hosted an African-American Composer’s Forum & Symposium and launched an annual African American Composer Program, designed to identify, perform and commission works by contemporary African American composers. Beginning in 1978, the DSO performed their first “Classical Roots” concert and in 1981 the DSO became the first orchestra in the country to make such a program part of its Classical Subscription Series.

The *Classical Roots Celebration Gala*, now in its sixth year, has become one of the DSO’s most high profile fundraising events. The Gala attracts many of the Detroit area’s most ardent supporters of classical

music and advocates for increasing recognition of African American classical composers and musicians. The evening begins with a cocktail reception at 6 p.m. in The Max's four-story atrium lobby. Dinner is served at 7 p.m. in The Music Box, the building's second performance space, transformed into a lavishly decorated banquet hall for the evening. Epoch Restaurant Group, the house caterer for The Max and the owners of such esteemed restaurants as Tribute and Forté, will cater the gourmet meal. A special pre-concert "Young Friends Reception" will simultaneously take place on the third floor atrium, where patrons ages 25 to 45 can meet and mingle. The concert takes place in Orchestra Hall at 8:30 p.m. and a dessert-and-dancing afterglow, also in The Music Box, immediately follows. *Classical Roots Celebration 2006* is generously underwritten by Bank One.

TICKETS for *Classical Roots Celebration 2006* are on sale now by calling (313) 576-5596. Ticket packages that include cocktail reception, dinner, concert and afterglow begin at \$260. Gala tickets for "Young Friends" (ages 21-35) that include cocktail reception, concert and afterglow are \$75 each. All tickets include valet parking. To purchase tickets for the performance only, call (313) 576-5111. Concert only tickets range from from \$24 to \$69. All tickets may be purchased at the Orchestra Hall box office or by calling the DSO at (313) 576-5111. Students and seniors (60 and over) can purchase 50% off **RUSH** tickets at the box office one hour prior to classical concerts, based upon availability. Concert only tickets can be purchased on line, 24-hours a day, via the DSO's Web site at www.detroitssymphony.com.

PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

Classical Roots

Orchestra Hall at the Max M. Fisher Music Center

Detroit Symphony Orchestra

Thomas Wilkins, *conductor*

Kathleen Battle, *soprano*

Brazeal Dennard Chorale

Friday, March 10 at 8 p.m.

Saturday, March 11 at 8:30 p.m. (Gala Dinner begins at 6 p.m. in The Music Box at The Max)

James Weldon Johnson &
John Rosamond Johnson

"Lift Every Voice and Sing"

arr. Alvin Parris

Ulysses Simpson Kay

Overture to *Theater Set*

Rick Robinson

Essay No. 1 (After Sibelius)

André Previn

Honey and Rue

John Wesley Work

The Singer

Arr, Hale Smith

"This Little Light of Mine;"

"Witness"

"Jesus Lay Your Head in the Window"

"Let us Break Bread Together"

Duke Ellington

Beige (Light) from Black, Brown and Beige Suite

Gala Sponsor:

Bank One

Friday evening series sponsor:

DaimlerChrysler Corporation Fund

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