

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 9, 2012

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**ATLANTA SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA MEMBERS TO PERFORM
“SLAVE SONGS OF THE GEORGIA SEA ISLANDS”
SATURDAY, AUGUST 18, 2012**

**FREE PERFORMANCE PART OF SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION’S TRAVELING EXHIBITION
NEW HARMONIES: CELEBRATING AMERICAN ROOTS MUSIC**

Concert To Celebrate Georgia’s Rich Coastal Musical Traditions

**Program To Feature Atlanta Symphony Musicians
And The Geechee Gullah Ring Shouters**

As part of the traveling exhibition, *New Harmonies: Celebrating American Roots Music*, members of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra will join the Geechee Gullah Ring Shouters to perform “Songs of the Georgia Sea Islands” — a collaborative program of African-American spirituals and slave songs native to the Georgia Low Country — on Saturday, August 18, 2012, at 7:00 p.m. in the Archie B. Myers Sr. Fine Arts Center at the McIntosh Academy in Darien, GA. This concert is free and open to the public.

The unique pairing of the Orchestra’s classical instrumentation with the folk-style singers will be brought to life through arrangements and original compositions by Atlanta Symphony violinist Juan Ramirez and bassist Michael Kurth. Participating Atlanta Symphony musicians include violinists Kenn Wagner and Juan Ramirez, violist Jessica Oudin, cellist Jennifer Humphreys, bassists Brian Rehm and Michael Kurth, and trumpet Karin Bliznik.

This concert is part of the Smithsonian Institution’s traveling national exhibit of *New Harmonies: Celebrating American Roots Music*, which is made possible in Georgia by the Georgia Humanities Council in partnership with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, Center for Public History at the University of West Georgia, Georgia Council for the Arts, and Georgia Department of Economic Development. Georgia is the only state included in this national tour which is partnering with an Orchestra. The 12-city touring exhibit will include visual displays, lectures, and performances. Over the next 16 months the New Harmonies exhibit will continue through: Perry, Moultrie, Toccoa, Bremen, Thomson, Nashville, Americus, Waycross, and LaGrange, GA.

“The Atlanta Symphony Orchestra embraces its responsibility to enrich lives through the power of music,” Atlanta Symphony Orchestra President Stanley E. Romanstein, Ph.D., has said. “Music comes

in many forms which impact us in different ways — none more significant than how it shapes our history and defines who we are. It is important for people to have the opportunity to experience music in ways that are meaningful to them. This is why *New Harmonies* is such a great project in which to take part. It allows us to further our mission by sharing music with people all around the state.”

As a presenting partner for the *New Harmonies* tour, the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra will extend access to its education, community, and concert programming to a broader geographic reach throughout the state of Georgia, while boosting local music participation, education, appreciation, and advocacy in each of the communities it reaches. Through this partnership, the Orchestra will present a series of community and education events to accompany the exhibition in each of the 12 cities.

About the Geechee Gullah Ring Shouters

The Geechee Gullah Ring Shouters, a group of individuals from the heart of the Gullah Geechee community, are of one-hundred percent Geechee Gullah ancestry. The group was organized in 1992 with the overall goal of preserving and protecting the priceless Gullah Geechee heritage. The Shouters are committed to embracing, preserving, and protecting the historical and cultural heritage of the Gullah Geechee legacy through history, song and dance for the benefit of present and future generations. The Shouters’ cultural goal is to keep the original “shout” from 1800 authentic in its performance.

The Ring Shout is probably the oldest surviving African-American performance tradition on the North American continent. This compelling fusion of counterclockwise dance like movement, the call-and-response singing, the percussion of hand clapping and, the stick beating of a drum-like rhythm on a wooden floor is clearly African in its origins. The ring shout, originally and presently, affirms oneness with the Spirit and ancestors, as well as community cohesiveness. The ring shout practice continued into the twentieth century with its influence resonating in other musical forms from spirituals, to jubilee, to gospel, to jazz. By the last quarter of the twentieth century, the ring shout tradition appeared to have died out, but the ring shout began to reemerge with groups like the Geechee Gullah Ring Shouters and others, and still lives on today... ([more](#))

About *New Harmonies*

New Harmonies in Georgia is led by Honorary Chair Sandra Deal, First Lady of Georgia, and Chair Rose Lane Leavell. *New Harmonies: Celebrating American Roots Music* has been made possible in Georgia by the Georgia Humanities Council in partnership with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, Center for Public History at the University of West Georgia, Georgia Council for the Arts, and Georgia Department of Economic Development.

New Harmonies: Celebrating American Roots Music is part of Museum on Main Street, a collaboration between the Smithsonian Institution and state humanities councils nationwide. Support for Museum on Main Street has been provided by the U.S. Congress.

More information about the *New Harmonies: Celebrating American Roots Music* exhibit is available at georgiahumanities.org/newharmonies.

About the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra

The **Atlanta Symphony Orchestra** consistently affirms its position as one of America’s leading Orchestras by performing great music, presenting great artists, nurturing young talent, and engaging with its community... ([more](#))

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“SLAVE SONGS OF THE GEORGIA SEA ISLANDS”

Archie B. Myers Sr. Fine Arts Center, McIntosh Academy, Darien, GA

Saturday, August 18, 2012, 7:00 p.m.

Geechee Gullah Ring Shouters
Darien community members
Atlanta Symphony Orchestra musicians
Kenn Wagner, violin
Juan Ramirez, violin
Jessica Oudin, viola
Jennifer Humphreys, cello
Brian Rehm, bass
Michael Kurth, bass
Karin Bliznik, trumpet

This concert is free and open to the public.

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