

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Meet The Composer announces the
NAACP CENTENNIAL COMMISSIONING PROJECT
Arts patrons led by educator and arts activist Dr. Rae Alexander-Minter
come together with Meet The Composer to commission two new works
for the centennial of the NAACP**

**A new anthem with lyrics by Elizabeth Alexander (President Obama's inaugural poet)
and music by musicologist and pianist Guthrie P. Ramsey, Jr.**

&

**A live remix of music, voices, and imagery by Paul D. Miller a.k.a. DJ Spooky: That
Subliminal Kid**

**The two works premiere at the opening of the NAACP Centennial Convention
July 12 at 6PM at New York's Hilton Hotel Ballroom**

Mayor Bloomberg, Senator Schumer, and NAACP chairman Julian Bond to speak

Meet The Composer (MTC)—America's preeminent commissioning organization—has revolutionized the practice of music commissioning by reviving the role of the individual patron. An entire body of new musical work has been created, thanks to dozens of private citizens and music lovers across the country, who are often motivated by a desire to mark an occasion or honor a person.

MTC's latest such venture is the **NAACP Centennial Commissioning Project**, which culminates with the world premieres of two newly commissioned works at the one hundredth anniversary convention of the NAACP. The works will be performed at the opening session of the NAACP's Centennial Convention on **July 12, 6:00 pm** at New York's **Hilton Hotel Ballroom**.

This project is driven by an extraordinary individual: **Dr. Rae Alexander-Minter**. Dr. Alexander-Minter is a board member of **MTC**, educator, anthropologist, and music enthusiast who has a rich personal and family history of connections with NAACP and the arts. She saw an opportunity for new music and envisioned bringing together a “commissioning club” of committed individuals to commission an African American composer and a poet, honoring the occasion of the NAACP anniversary.

Dr. Alexander-Minter was particularly inspired by the resonance a vocal work might have, and true to her desires, one work will be an anthem with text by **Elizabeth Alexander**, the poet who read her poem “Praise Song for the Day” at President Obama’s inauguration. Alexander’s text will be set to music developed from traditional melodies by **Guthrie P. Ramsey Jr.**, one of the leading musicologists of African-American music. The second piece will be a multi-media remix of recorded music, voices, and images by **Paul D. Miller, a.k.a. DJ Spooky: That Subliminal Kid**, composer, multi-media artist, and writer, whose works have appeared in leading publications, museums, and performance venues around the world. DJ Spooky will create a hip-hop-inflected version of “Go Down Moses” which will combine a live performance with recorded voices and images from the civil rights movement.

Scheduled speakers at the convention include Princeton professor **Cornel West**, Attorney General **Eric Holder**, NAACP Chairman and civil rights icon **Julian Bond**, and other luminaries.

Meet The Composer has throughout its history counted among its supported composers some of the great African American musical creators of recent times, including George Walker, Adolphus Hailstork, Billy Taylor, Alvin Singleton, Tania Leon, Max Roach and Anthony Davis, to name just a few.

Besides supporting the creation and performance of new works, **Meet The Composer’s** individual patronage initiatives have provided new insight into ways of involving donors directly with new music and composers. In the coming years, under the direction of **MTC** president **Ed Harsh**, MTC plans to deepen the connections between music lovers and composers’ work through a combination of interactive tools. **MTC** will soon launch a new “Project Gallery,” an online showcase that will highlight composers and projects that MTC supports, allowing individuals to follow and support these projects online. Also planned are live events to supplement the online gallery, including a Composer Tasting event in New York in fall 2009.

DR. RAE ALEXANDER-MINTER

Dr. Rae Alexander-Minter’s career in higher education has included positions as Director of the Paul Robeson Cultural Center, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey and Vice President for Governmental and Public Affairs, Metropolitan College of New York (formerly Audrey Cohen College). At Rutgers, Dr. Alexander-Minter secured \$1.5 million in federal, state and foundation grants that supported the celebration of the centennial of Paul Robeson (1898-1998) with a five-year interpretive exhibition, catalogue and series of public programs. At Metropolitan College of New York, Dr. Alexander-Minter widened support for the College’s programs and initiatives,

and was instrumental in obtaining a Federal appropriation of \$475,000 for the Welfare Careers Program that provides education and meaningful work for persons who are leaving the welfare rolls, significantly contributing to the national conversation on welfare.

Dr. Alexander-Minter's earlier career was in art administration at The New-York Historical Society and the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Independently, her research on Henry Ossawa Tanner – an important African-American artist of the 19th century and her granduncle – resulted in a highly acclaimed exhibition of the artist's works and an important book on the Tanner's life. Her efforts culminated in the 1996 acquisition by The White House permanent art collection of a Tanner landscape, that is now installed in The Green Room. With this acquisition, Tanner became the first African American so honored by the White House.

Dr. Alexander-Minter led the effort to create the Raymond Pace and Sadie Tanner Mossell Alexander Professorship at the University of Pennsylvania Law School in honor of her parents' formidable achievements in civil rights law. Her mother, Sadie Tanner Mossell Alexander was the first African American in the U.S. to earn a Ph.D. in economics and, in 1927, the first African American woman to graduate from Penn Law School. In 1946, President Harry Truman appointed her to the President's Committee on Civil Rights, and she was later instrumental in the creation of the Philadelphia Commission on Human Rights, serving as its first commissioner. In 1959, Raymond Pace Alexander, Dr. Alexander-Minter's father, was appointed the first African American judge on the Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas. One of his decisions led to the establishment of Community Legal Services. He and his wife played key roles in Pennsylvania's 1935 Equal Rights Law, making it illegal to deny African Americans access to public schools, restaurants and hotels.

Dr. Alexander-Minter holds the Ed.D. in anthropology and education from the University of Pennsylvania; the M.S. in early childhood education and child development from Bank Street College of Education; and the B.S. in journalism and political theory from Boston University. She is a fellow of the American Anthropology Association and the Institute for Education Leadership at George Washington University.

MEET THE COMPOSER

Meet The Composer is a national organization founded in 1974 that has revolutionized the environment for composers in this country. Its mission is to increase opportunities for composers of every style of music by fostering the creation, performance, dissemination, and appreciation of their work. In so doing, **Meet The Composer** has radically expanded the repertoire of the late 20th and early 21st centuries, creating a legacy for the music of our time—over 1,300 new works have been added since MTC's first commissioning program was launched in 1988. Meet The Composer's core programs include *Commissioning Music/USA*; *Cary New Music Performance Fund*; *Global Connections*; *Music Alive*; *New Music, New Donors*; and *MetLife Creative Connections* (formerly the *Meet The Composer Fund*). The impact of these programs is felt in all 50 states and involves approximately 300 composers annually, representing the full spectrum of contemporary American culture and such idioms as classical, opera, jazz, folk, ethnic, electronic, and more.

ELIZABETH ALEXANDER

Elizabeth Alexander is one of the most vital poets of her generation. She has published five books of poems: *The Venus Hottentot* (1990), *Body of Life* (1996), *Antebellum Dream Book* (2001), *American Sublime* (2005), which was one of three finalists for the Pulitzer Prize and was one of the American Library Association's "Notable Books of the Year;" and, most recently, her first young adult collection *Miss Crandall's School for Young Ladies and Little Misses of Color* (2008 Connecticut Book Award). Her two collections of essays are *The Black Interior* (2004) and *Power and Possibility* (2007), and her play "Diva Studies" was produced at the Yale School of Drama. Her poems are included in dozens of collections and have been translated into Spanish, German, Italian, Arabic and Bengali. Professor Alexander is the first recipient of the Alphonse Fletcher, Sr. Fellowship for work that "contributes to improving race relations in American society and furthers the broad social goals of the U.S. Supreme Court's Brown v. Board of Education decision of 1954." She is the 2007 winner of the first Jackson Prize for Poetry, awarded by Poets and Writers. Other awards include a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship, two Pushcart Prizes, the George Kent Award, given by Gwendolyn Brooks, and a Guggenheim fellowship. For over twenty years, Elizabeth Alexander has taught and mentored her students at some of the nation's most well-respected colleges and universities including Haverford College, Northwestern University, University of Chicago, University of Pennsylvania,

and Smith College. At the University of Chicago, she received the Quantrell Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching, the oldest and most prestigious teaching award that the university presents. In addition to her work at colleges and universities, Elizabeth Alexander has taught numerous poetry workshops. Most significantly, serving as both faculty and honorary director, Alexander has been an integral member of Cave Canem, an organization dedicated to the development and endurance of African American poetic voices. Her current institutional home is Yale University, where she is a professor of African American Studies. In July 2009 she assumes the chairship of Yale's Department of African American Studies. On January 20, 2009 at the presidential inauguration of Barack Obama, Alexander recited the poem "Praise Song for the Day," which she composed for the occasion. She became only the fourth poet to read at an American presidential inauguration.

GUTHRIE P. RAMSEY, JR.

Musicologist and pianist Guthrie P. Ramsey, Jr., received his Ph.D. from the University of Michigan. A specialist in African-American and American music, jazz, cultural studies, popular music, film studies and historiography, he is professor of music and Africana Studies at the University of Pennsylvania. Ramsey is the author of "Race Music: Black Cultures from Bebop to Hip-Hop" (2003), which was named outstanding book of the year by the International Association for the Study of Popular Music. He is completing a book on jazz pianist Bud Powell titled "In Walked Bud: Earl Bud Powell and the Modern Jazz Challenge." He has published and lectured widely and has taught at Tufts University, Harvard University and Princeton University. Ramsey is currently guest curator for the exhibition "Jazz, Jump, and Jive: The Apollo Theater and American Entertainment" for the National Museum of African American History and Culture, Smithsonian Institution, which will open in 2010. His band Dr. Guy's MusiQology has performed for audiences in the United States and abroad. Ramsey composes and arranges all of MusiQology's music, which moves beyond the traditional jazz idiom, experimenting with R&B, Latin and hip hop fusions. Their first CD, *Y the Q?*, was released in 2007.

DJ SPOOKY

DJ Spooky (Paul D Miller, born 1970, Washington DC) is a composer, multimedia artist and writer. His written work has appeared in *The Village*

Voice, The Source, Artforum and Raygun amongst other publications. Miller's work as a media artist has appeared in a wide variety of contexts such as the Whitney Biennial; The Venice Biennial for Architecture (2000); the Ludwig Museum in Cologne, Germany; Kunsthalle, Vienna; The Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh and many other museums and galleries. His work "New York Is Now" has been exhibited in the Africa Pavilion of the 52 Venice Biennial 2007, and the Miami/Art Basel fair of 2007. Miller's first collection of essays, entitled "Rhythm Science" came out on MIT Press 2004, followed by "Sound Unbound," an anthology of writings on electronic music and digital media, published in 2008. Miller's deep interest in reggae and dub has resulted in a series of compilations, remixes and collections of material from the vaults of the legendary Jamaican label, Trojan Records. Other releases include Optometry (2002), a jazz project featuring some of the best players in the downtown NYC jazz scene, and Dubtometry (2003) featuring Lee 'Scratch' Perry and Mad Professor. Miller's latest collaborative release, Drums of Death, features Dave Lombardo of Slayer and Chuck D of Public Enemy among others. He also produced material on Yoko Ono's most recent album "Yes, I'm a Witch." Miller's large scale, multimedia performance pieces include "Rebirth of a Nation" (now on DVD), and "Terra Nova: Sinfonia Antarctica," which will be presented by the Brooklyn Academy of Music at the Next Wave Festival in December 2009.

Meet The Composer: www.meetthecomposer.org

NAACP Centennial Convention: www.naacp.org/events/convention/100th/index.htm

For further information, photos, and to arrange interviews,

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