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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**GRAND RAPIDS SYMPHONY PART OF CONSORTIUM HIGHLIGHTING  
COMPOSERS OF COLOR**

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich., Jan. 30, 2008—The Grand Rapids Symphony is part of a new national initiative to bring more Black and Latino composers to the concert hall. One of 13 orchestras across the country, the Grand Rapids Symphony is part of the Sphinx Commissioning Consortium (SCC), spearheaded by the Sphinx Organization, a national non-profit organization dedicated to building diversity in classical music.

Currently, compositions by Black and Latino composers account for less than one percent of classical music performed each year. As a group, the SCC will commission a new orchestral work from a Black or Latino composer annually. Each member orchestra will perform the commissioned piece during the concert season following its completion. Through their joint financial commitments, the SCC will have resources exceeding \$70,000 each year to cover commissioning fees along with other costs associated with each new work.

Along with the Grand Rapids Symphony, the other members of the Consortium are: the Alabama Symphony Orchestra, Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, Chicago Sinfonietta, Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, New Jersey Symphony Orchestra, Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, Philadelphia Orchestra, Richmond Symphony, Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra, Virginia Symphony Orchestra, and New World Symphony, America's Orchestral Academy.

The Sphinx Organization, based in Detroit, was established in 1996 with a mission to increase Black and Latino participation in music schools, as professional musicians, as classical music audiences, and to administer youth development initiatives in underserved communities through music education. In addition to the annual Sphinx Competition for young Black and Latino string players, the organization's educational programs reach over 35,000 students across the country annually.

The Grand Rapids Symphony has been a partner with the Sphinx Organization since 1996, featuring Sphinx Competition winners as guest artists with the orchestra. In addition, Grand Rapids Symphony Principal Bass Joseph Conyers is a Sphinx Competition winner after taking second prize in 2004. Later, he was named principal of the Sphinx Chamber Symphony, which gave its debut performance in Carnegie Hall in December of 2004.

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