

“Dream of America,” the theme of the 2007-2008 Hilton Head Symphony Orchestra season, will also be the featured work of the final subscription performance of the year. The orchestra, under the direction of Music Director and Conductor Mary Woodmansee Green, will perform Peter Boyer’s moving piece about Ellis Island; it tells the story of immigrants from seven different countries who came to America between 1908-1940, with dramatic music, actors, and visual projections. Also on the program will be American classics by Adolphus Hailstork, Charles Ives, and George Gershwin. The performance will take place on Monday, May 5, at 8 pm at Hilton Head’s First Presbyterian Church.

“Our melting pot society has been enriched immeasurably by the contributions of immigrants from all over the world who have come to our shores for a better life,” said Green in announcing the concert. “Through their music, we honor them and celebrate their success. Their rich musical heritage will come to life as we perform this electrifying music celebrating our vast and beautiful country.”

The highlight of the concert will be Peter Boyer’s *Ellis Island: The Dream of America*. Born in 1970 and currently based in Los Angeles, Boyer is typical of the new American composer—well trained, facile with many styles of music, and moving easily from the concert stage to popular and film music. In 2001, he was commissioned to write a piece for the opening of Connecticut’s Bushnell Center for the Performing Arts. He decided to create a multi-media work on the American immigrant experience, centering on the role of Ellis Island. He describes the genesis of the work: “In the history of American immigration, Ellis Island was an icon of immense significance. In the years of its operation, more than 12 million immigrants passed through the processing station that was ‘the gateway to America’. Today, more than 40% of the U.S. population can trace roots to an ancestor who came through Ellis Island. The stories of these immigrants are in many ways our family stories.

“The orchestral music in *Ellis Island*...is continuous, framing, commenting on, and amplifying the spoken words. I attempted to compose music that was appropriate for the nature and character of each of the stories.”

Actors from The Seahawk Theatre Guild, directed by Michael Pilgreen, will join the orchestra in parts spoken by the seven immigrants. The theatre group, which includes students from all Hilton Head area schools, has become a true community theatre for the Island and a model for academic theatre nationally.

The program will open with Adolphus Hailstork’s *Celebration!*, described by the composer as “tonal, straightforward, energetic and positive—all of the things I consider necessary to project the spirit of a festive occasion.”

Charles Ives’ *Variations on America* will follow. At the age of 17 he wrote a set of variations for organ on the song *America*. He puts the tune through a number of styles; the final variation has a tempo marking of “as fast as the pedals will go,” and Ives said that playing it was “almost as much fun as playing baseball.”

Concluding the first half of the concert will be George Gershwin’s *An American in Paris*. The son of Russian-Jewish immigrants, Gershwin was a true prodigy—essentially self-taught as a pianist and composer, nurtured by Tin Pan Alley and Vaudeville, flourished on Broadway and Hollywood, and matured in the concert and opera house. His rhapsodic ballet, *An American in Paris*, conveys in terms of sound the successive emotional reactions experienced by a Yankee tourist in the City of Light.

Concert tickets are \$20, \$30, and \$40. Call the Hilton Head Orchestra Box Office at (843) 842-2055 to purchase tickets, or log on to the orchestra website at www.hhso.org. American

Express, Master Card and Visa are accepted. Program Notes for each concert in the season have been posted on the website.