

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Dec. 8, 2006

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WHAT: GRAMMY Nomination for “Best Classical Crossover Album” for “Invention & Alchemy”

WHO: Deborah Henson-Conant & Producer Jonathan Wyner with the Grand Rapids Symphony – David Lockington, Conductor

INFO: www.InventionandAlchemy.com
www.HipHarp.com

HI-RES PHOTOS: Hi-res downloadable photos of the artist and album artwork available for download at:
www.HipHarp.com/publicity

AUDIO & VIDEO CLIPS, WHO’S WHO, etc.:
www.InventionAndAlchemy.com

filename: 061208_Grammy_PrsRls_Ntlv1.doc.doc

Grammy Nomination for “Best Classical Crossover Album”

Composer/Harpist Deborah Henson-Conant & Producer Jonathan Wyner for “Invention & Alchemy,” with the Grand Rapids Symphony - David Lockington, Conductor

Composer/Harpist Deborah Henson-Conant’s DVD & CD project, “Invention & Alchemy,” has received a GRAMMY Award Nomination for Best Classical Crossover Album. The DVD & CD, both produced by Jonathan Wyner, feature music, stories and orchestrations by Deborah Henson-Conant performed live in concert by Henson-Conant with conductor David Lockington and the Grand Rapids Symphony.

About the Grammy-Nominated Project, "Invention & Alchemy"

“Invention & Alchemy” features Deborah Henson-Conant’s original music and stories with the 80-piece Grand Rapids Symphony and conductor David Lockington. The DVD, a multi-camera, surround-sound disc, shot in high-definition, includes a full-length feature presentation plus almost 50 minutes of behind-the-scenes features. The companion CD was created as audio music theatre – similar to a radio play – and, like the DVD, includes both Henson-Conant’s original stories and music as well as her original orchestrations.

"We wanted to create a work that used state-of-the-art technology to bring this incredibly creative collaboration to life," says producer Jonathan Wyner. "Deborah and I were completely absorbed in this project for more than two years. When you're that focused on developing a single idea, it's nearly impossible to gauge how others will receive it, so it's very, very gratifying to receive this nomination for something we both so strongly believe in and which so powerfully represents an artist's vision."

Following the announcement of the GRAMMY winners in 2007, Henson-Conant will tour selections from "Invention & Alchemy" with the Syracuse Symphony, as well as premiere a new work for electric harp and symphony. Following that, she'll be touring her solo show in the U.S. and Europe.

(more)

(GRAMMY Nomination for Best Classical Crossover Album – “Invention & Alchemy” – cont.)

About the Creative Team for “Invention & Alchemy”

After Deborah Henson-Conant's first performance with the Grand Rapids Symphony, philanthropist Peter Wege walked up to her, took her hand and said, "What I saw out there, I want the whole world to see." The DVD and CD project "Invention & Alchemy" is the result of that handshake.

Henson-Conant is known for creating performances that mix story and music, bridge musical styles, involve the audience and inject a theatrical spirit into a musical context.

"It was very moving for me that the musicians were willing to go where I wanted to go, to cross the realm of safety, cross into ways of playing, into roles that they're not usually asked to play. It's essential to me to break the walls that separate performers from each other, or that separate the audience from the performance. It's important to understand that the role of audience, or the role of conductor is a choice, not a prison sentence. There comes a point where the audience needs to sing with the orchestra, a point when the conductor needs to sweep off the stage, grab an instrument and play in his own impassioned voice, when the timpani needs to be the center of attention, the throbbing epicenter of power. There comes a point when I need to be inside that incredible beast that is a symphony orchestra, where I need to break it apart so you can see its separate facets sparkling. And that's what I got to do with this project – not in any elite or cerebral way, but simply by following my own musical desire and by having a profound amount of fun."

What comes through immediately is how much fun everyone is having on stage. What may not be immediately evident, because it seems so natural, is the breadth of talent in the creative team and their willingness to take on unusual roles to integrate with Henson-Conant's creativity.

Not only is David Lockington a world-class conductor, but he's also a passionate cellist, and a comic actor – and Henson-Conant took complete advantage of that, writing a piece in which Lockington wields his cello like a sultan's sword and joins her in a duet straight out of the "1001 Arabian Nights."

The members of the 80-piece Grand Rapids Symphony, recipient of two ASCAP awards for innovative programming and the Governor's Arts Award, are not simply orchestral musicians. "Most play in the symphony, the opera and the ballet – so I knew their breadth of experience gave me a broad palette to work with," says Henson-Conant. "Instead of balking when I asked them to stretch beyond standard classical playing, they jumped right in, coming up with ideas of their own, entering completely into the spirit of each piece."

The technical aspects were handled by a team of award-winning professionals – each committed to reflecting the artist's vision. Producer Jonathan Wyner is Henson-Conant's creative partner. Together, he and Henson-Conant conceived the project and developed it through to the final edits, and Wyner mixed the audio with Grammy-winning audio engineer Tom Bates. Lighting Design was handled by Bob Peterson, who took his cues directly from the music. "It's almost as if the lighting became a part of the orchestration itself," says Henson-Conant.

The director for the project is Emmy-Award winner Bob Comiskey. "Aside from his incredible skill, what was amazing about Bob was his willingness to involve Jonathan and myself in the editing process," says Henson-Conant. "It's a testament to his artistic confidence and the strength of his work that he let us take his basic edits and continue to mold them in the shape of our original vision. It's very unusual that a director would let the composer do that. But the result is that the compositions, the performances and the film all speak with a single voice."

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