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May 16, 2013, 6:23 p.m. EDT

# World Premiere of "The Multi-Layered Legacy of Madame E. Azalia Hackley" Set for June 15

Press Release

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Public Invited to New Hope Baptist Church for Performance by The Spirituals Project Choir

DENVER, CO--(Marketwired - May 16, 2013) - The world premiere of "The Multi-Layered Legacy of Madame E. Azalia Hackley," a choral work by award-winning composer Jacqueline Hairston, will be performed by The Spirituals Project Choir Saturday, June 15, 2013 at New Hope Baptist Church. The presentation is part of the first REAP National Conference on the Spirituals scheduled for June 13-15 at DU.

The public is invited to attend the Saturday evening program, which begins at 7:30 p.m. and will include a keynote address, "Every Time I Feel the Spirit," by Dr. Nikki Giovanni, the world-renowned poet, writer, commentator, activist and educator. In addition to the new work composed by Ms. Hairston expressly for the conference, the Choir will perform other spirituals under the direction of artistic director Bennie Williams, associate choir director LaDamion Massey and assistant choir director Michael Reilly. Limited tickets for the June 15 evening program are available online through The Spirituals Project website at <http://www.spiritualsproject.org> or by calling the office of The Spirituals Project at (303) 871-7993.

Dr. Arthur Jones, founder and chair emeritus of The Spirituals Project and associate dean for inclusive excellence at Colorado Women's College of the University of Denver, characterizes the upcoming premiere as "a perfect dream." "Having our Choir be a part of this conference here on the University campus and for them to be performing a composition that honors the story of DU's first African-American graduate is very exciting." Dr. Jones, who describes Ms. Hairston as an amazing composer, says the Choir began practicing her new creation in April.

"When Dr. Jones' noble suggestion came to me to write something for the first National REAP Conference on Spirituals, I was sufficiently motivated so that what started as a prompting turned into a commissioned piece to be performed as a world premiere, and sung by the time-honored Spirituals Project Choir," says Ms. Hairston. "The piece sings the story of this first African-American graduate of the University of Denver with two components: first, through several diverse musical genres superimposed from spirituals to minstrel songs; and second, correlated, interspersed commentary specifying Madame Hackley's notable music colleagues' influences, thanks to researcher-historian Dr. Stephanie Krusemark's scholarly assistance. Included within this musical story-telling framework will be a few delightful surprises!"

Dr. Krusemark, the scholar whom Ms. Hairston references, will also be conducting a plenary session at the conference focused on the musical and cultural contributions of Madame Hackley.

Madame Hackley completed her formal post-secondary education at DU in 1900 with a degree in music. A prominent social activist in the Denver community, she also was one of the country's most renowned classically-trained operatic musicians. The well-known singer, conductor, teacher and composer founded the Philadelphia-based People's Chorus, whose singers included the legendary Marian Anderson, and the Chicago-based Vocal Normal Institute to bridge her classical vocal training with the African American Spirituals tradition.

The REAP National Conference is being presented by The Spirituals Project in collaboration with the University of Denver. Organized to facilitate dialogue between professionals and the general public from around the country, the event offers interactive workshops and presentations in diverse areas including music, education, health and healing, literature, history, religion, culture, and social justice. REAP stands for the four pillars of research, education, activism and performance, which are central to the mission and guiding vision of The Spirituals Project. Conference registration is open online at <http://spiritualsproject.org/reap>.

The Spirituals Project Choir, which was formed in 1999 and currently includes more than 70 singers, was the idea of Arlen Hershberger, one of the nonprofit's inaugural board members and the first director of the choir. Hershberger believed, and fellow board members enthusiastically agreed, that a community choral

group would serve as an exciting, publicly prominent ambassador for The Spirituals Project's mission of preserving and revitalizing the music and teachings of the sacred songs called "spirituals," which were created and first sung by enslaved Africans in America in the 18th and 19th centuries.

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