

# New name, season for Page singers

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## CLEVELAND

A new page is about to be written in the life of the Robert Page Singers. This season, the ensemble becomes the Cleveland Singers, a name founder Page believes will identify his professional group more closely with the city it calls home.

"After I'm dead and buried, the Robert Page Singers would have to change its name," says Page. "I wanted to do it while I was alive and working. I don't want it to be just identified with me, I want to think the quality is identified with me, but not just with my name."

The ensemble will begin its 11th season Oct. 22 at Cleveland State University's Waetjen Auditorium, where Page will lead four concerts this year. The opening program, "The New Europe Sings," is a program of music from countries that have gained independence in the past four years. Estonian composer Arvo Paert's Magnificat will receive its Cleveland premiere on this concert.

Page's annual performance of Handel's "Messiah" is set for Dec. 10, while the singers will offer "A Heartbeat in 3/4 Time," a potpourri of selections from beloved operettas, Feb. 18.

Page becomes most animated when he talks about the season's final concert, "A Celebration of Music by African-Americans," that is scheduled for March 18. The program will include works by living composers Leslie Adams, Adolphus Hailstork, Robert Harris and Dolores White, as well as



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H.T. Burleigh, Nathaniel Dett and William Grant Still.

"It's something I had dreamed about doing for quite a while," Page says. "The jargon of the 1990s seems to be multiculturalism. I just feel that within the black music category, I'm tired of rap and gospel being accepted as the voice of the black community. We're going to do a concert of serious music by black composers — no arrangements, no spirituals, no rap."

Page's aim is to point out that important black music is being made not just by popular musicians, but by compos-

ers immersed in the traditions of classical music who transform them through their individual styles.

"I want to educate the audiences as to what's really being done out there and to bring out to the black and white community that musical role models are not necessarily entertainment figures, but really creative people," he says.

To follow-up along these lines, Page has devised a series of workshops for March 19 during which eminent black musicians will discuss the history of black composers — with illustrations from the Cleveland Singers — and the black experience as expressed in serious music. Composers Adams, Hailstork and Harris will be on hand, as will Neville Ottley, who conducts an ensemble in Washington, D.C.

Page is inviting students and faculty members from local colleges and secondary schools to participate.

"We need this kind of emphasis," he says. "I'm tired of the programs done by essentially white organizations that do not go out into other communities and do not try to be part of their culture and understand where they're coming from. To go out and really study their music and see where they're coming from, that's a major step. I want to get the quiet black middle class involved in this."