



For immediate release

Publicity Contacts: Laura Henrich, (610) 664-8731; Wednights@aol.com
Emily J. Irwin, (267) 253-9303; EJIrwinPR@gmail.com

APPALACHIA WALTZ TRIO FEATURING VIRTUOSO FIDDLER MARK O'CONNOR JOINS MUSICOPIA'S PHILADELPHIA-BASED ROSTER ARTIST AND INTERNATIONALLY-KNOWN JAZZ VIOLINIST JOHN BLAKE, JR. FOR EDUCATIONAL WORKSHOP AND PERFORMANCE

Organized by Musicopia, *Fiddlin' Jazz* workshop with All-City Middle School Chamber Orchestra and Band on May 10 is followed by a public concert at the Independence Seaport Museum on May 12

“Triple-threat O'Connor is a jazz artist, a respected classical/folk composer and a fiddler who performs chamber-music Americana...”—*The Seattle Times*

“Mr. Blake rides those vamps like a master. He also knows how to pace a solo so that it builds to crest after crest, with an oratorical sense of timing.” —*The New York Times*

PHILADELPHIA, PA (April 4, 2007)—Musicopia, formerly known as Strings for Schools, announces an innovative collaboration between the Appalachia Waltz Trio featuring virtuoso fiddler Mark O'Connor and an ensemble led by jazz violinist John Blake, Jr. Through a hands-on workshop with the Philadelphia School District All-City Middle School Chamber Orchestra and Band, these professional musicians from differing backgrounds and styles hope to inspire Philadelphia youth to create and extend their own cultural journeys through music. The project, entitled *Fiddlin' Jazz*, culminates with a public performance of newly commissioned pieces and standard works at the Independence Seaport Museum on May 12. Tickets are available at www.musicopia.net.

“We are thrilled that such impressive artists are taking time to expose Philadelphia students to a dynamic musical experience,” said Denise Kinney, Executive Director of Musicopia, a non-profit organization that brings educational music programs to schools and communities throughout the Delaware Valley. “Over 60% of the kids we work with live in underserved communities. Regardless of their backgrounds, we believe that every child deserves to experience the transformative powers of music. In addition to presenting an incredible night of music to the general public, the *Fiddlin' Jazz* collaboration expands Musicopia's outreach to nearly 50 Philadelphia schools through one unique project.”

Appalachia Waltz, Mark O'Connor's first recording for the Sony Classical record label, was a collaboration with cellist Yo-Yo Ma and double bassist Edgar Meyer. O'Connor's compositions,

including its title track, gained worldwide recognition for him as a leading proponent of a new American musical idiom. The tremendously successful follow-up release, *Appalachian Journey*,

received a Grammy Award in February 2001. O'Connor formed a new chamber ensemble in 2002, the Appalachia Waltz Trio, which now features violist Rebecca Albers and cellist Mike Block. Continuing its musical exploration of Americana, the Trio released its first album, *Crossing Bridges* in 2004 to critical acclaim.

For this collaboration, John Blake, Jr., an internationally-known jazz violinist, performs with pianist Sumi Tonooka and bassist Avery Sharpe. As a leader, Blake has recorded 9 CDs. He is also featured on albums with jazz greats McCoy Tyner, Archie Shepp, Steve Turre and Grover Washington, Jr. As a roster artist and an advisory board member for Musicopia, Blake gives hundreds of educational concerts and workshops each year in Philadelphia and New Jersey.

The project begins on Thursday, May 10 as O'Connor and Blake lead a daytime workshop with the newly-formed All-City Middle School Chamber Orchestra and Band, highlighting the talent of young musicians from schools in Philadelphia. That same evening, the All-City Middle School Chamber Orchestra and Band performs along with their new mentors at 7:00 p.m. at Irvine Auditorium, located on the University of Pennsylvania campus at 3401 Spruce Street, Philadelphia. This performance is free and open to the public. For tickets contact Virginia Lam at 215-400-5974 or by email at vlam@phila.k12.pa.us.

On Saturday night, May 12 at 7:30 p.m., the Appalachia Waltz Trio and the John Blake, Jr. Ensemble perform together at the Independence Seaport Museum, located at 211 South Columbus Boulevard on Penn's Landing, Philadelphia. Tickets are \$35 for adults and \$15 for students. The two ensembles explore the relationship between the many forms of bluegrass, jazz and classical music – what musical elements are alike and what are different, and how these disparate styles relate to the very diverse cultures in America. As O'Connor and Blake step in and out of different genres, they hope to demonstrate how music can offer opportunities to take chances and stretch beyond the familiar.

Founded in 1974, Musicopia (formerly Strings for Schools) presents over 700 programs per year, with a total yearly outreach to over 100,000 students and parents in approximately 200 different schools and communities. Musicopia focuses its outreach to geographical areas that lack adequate music programs or are cut off from the region's rich cultural life. According to the Music Performance Fund (a division of the American Federation of Musicians), Musicopia is "the largest provider of outside music education resources for schools on the East Coast."

This program is made possible by a grant from the Philadelphia Music Project, an Artistic Initiative of the Pew Charitable Trusts, administered by the University of the Arts.

For more information about Musicopia, or to purchase tickets for *Fiddlin' Jazz*, please visit www.musicopia.net.