



On Nov. 11, 2005 Deborah Henson-Conant and conductor David Lockington will step onto the stage. Lockington will raise his baton, 75 musicians will take a deep breath ... and the cameras will roll. During the next three nights, they'll record Deborah's symphonic show in front of a live audience. Not just the music, but the full spectrum of her colorful, high-energy performance – the stories, the music, the sometimes-

"You really have to see Deborah perform to get the full impact of her work. A CD only tells half the story. A full-spectrum, surround-sound DVD was what we needed."

Jonathan Wyner, Producer

lush, sometimes-fiery orchestrations and the powerful vision of Henson-Conant sweeping across the stage with her electric strap-on harp.

"Cool. She's making a DVD," you say. "But what's the big deal? Heck, lots of performers are doing it." OK, so technologically, it's easy to record for DVD these days. But a full-spectrum, surround-sound DVD with a professional orchestra? That's another thing entirely.

Financially, it's daunting. Musicians' fees alone can run to hundreds of thousands. Then there's the camera crew, the directors, the editing and manufacturing costs. For that you need the kind of financial support artists can only dream about. For that, you need an angel.

Enter Peter Wege, philanthropist, environmentalist and music-lover. In 1999 when Deborah first performed with his home-town orchestra, the Grand Rapids Symphony (GRS), he was moved by what he saw on stage: the chemistry between the orchestra, the passion and humor of Deborah's performance. He came back stage after the show glowing. "What I just saw out there," he said to Deborah, "I want everyone to see."

Wege and Henson-Conant became friends. Turns out they're passionate about a lot of the same things: music, art, water, big projects -- and the Grand Rapids Symphony.

Huh?!? The Grand Rapids Symphony?? Isn't that just some little orchestra out there in the Midwest??

Yeah, right -- and Deborah Henson-Conant is just another harp player.

The Grand Rapids Symphony happens to be a gem of an orchestra. Already one of America's leading regional orchestras, supporters like Wege are fast turning it into a musical jewel, with a world-class conductor, substantial educational outreach and some of the most dedicated and spirited musicians you'll find on any stage.

"This is a very unusual ensemble," says Deborah. "The enthusiasm and camaraderie of the players is palpable. When you play with the GRS, you know why they call making music 'playing.'" David Lockington is a thrill to work with and everyone from associate conductor John Varineau to

"Inside every cultural cliché, like the harp or the Pops orchestra, there was once vibrant life, innovation and passion. Go back to the original intent – pull away the façade. Find the life, the passion, the beauty. Reignite them." *Deborah Henson-Conant*

Deborah Henson-Conant is all about reinvention.

She took the stately, stuffy concert harp and transformed it into an instrument with a voice that stretches from Flamenco to Blues, from achingly beautiful ballads to Hendrix-like rock. "At its origin, the harp was that kind of instrument," says Deborah, "powerful and expressive. I'm not out to change the instrument. I'm out to reignite it."

Now she's doing the same thing for the orchestral Pops format. "Pops" was originally a vibrant alternate programming, a chance for audiences to connect with living composers and new compositions with that larger-than-life symphonic breadth.

Since her debut with the Boston Pops in 1995, Deborah Henson-Conant is bringing that spirit back to life, opening the stunning power and beauty of the symphony to a new audience, through vibrant, moving, accessible - and completely new - music.

Now she's bringing that to DVD.

"A combination of Leonard Bernstein, Steven Tyler and Xena, the Warrior Princess"

The Boston Globe

Operations Manager Roger Nelson is out to make the music come alive."

That spirit is turning the GRS into the orchestra of choice for composer/performers like Henson-Conant and fiddle virtuoso Mark O'Connor, who are both performing on the 2005 GRS season. They're drawn to the GRS for the energy and enthusiasm of the players and Lockington's artistry, musicianship and openness to musical challenge.

To read more about this project or to book a date for the 2006-2007 tour, visit Deborah's website or contact her office at the numbers below. For more on the GRS Concert Season: grsymphony.org



Above: The movers and shakers behind this project: John Varineau, GRS Associate Conductor, David Lockington, GRS Music Director, DHC, Peter Wege, Jonathan Wyner, Producer.
TV photo (above left) : Orlando Philharmonic, Andy Lane Conducting.
Photo by Brion Price, Orlando, FL.

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