

# Music Mentor

JOHN DUFFY, COMPOSER-IN-RESIDENCE FOR VIRGINIA ARTS FESTIVAL, BRINGS EMMY-AWARD EXPERIENCE AND WORLD-CLASS COMPOSERS TO EXPLORE IDEAS WITH YOUNG ARTISTS

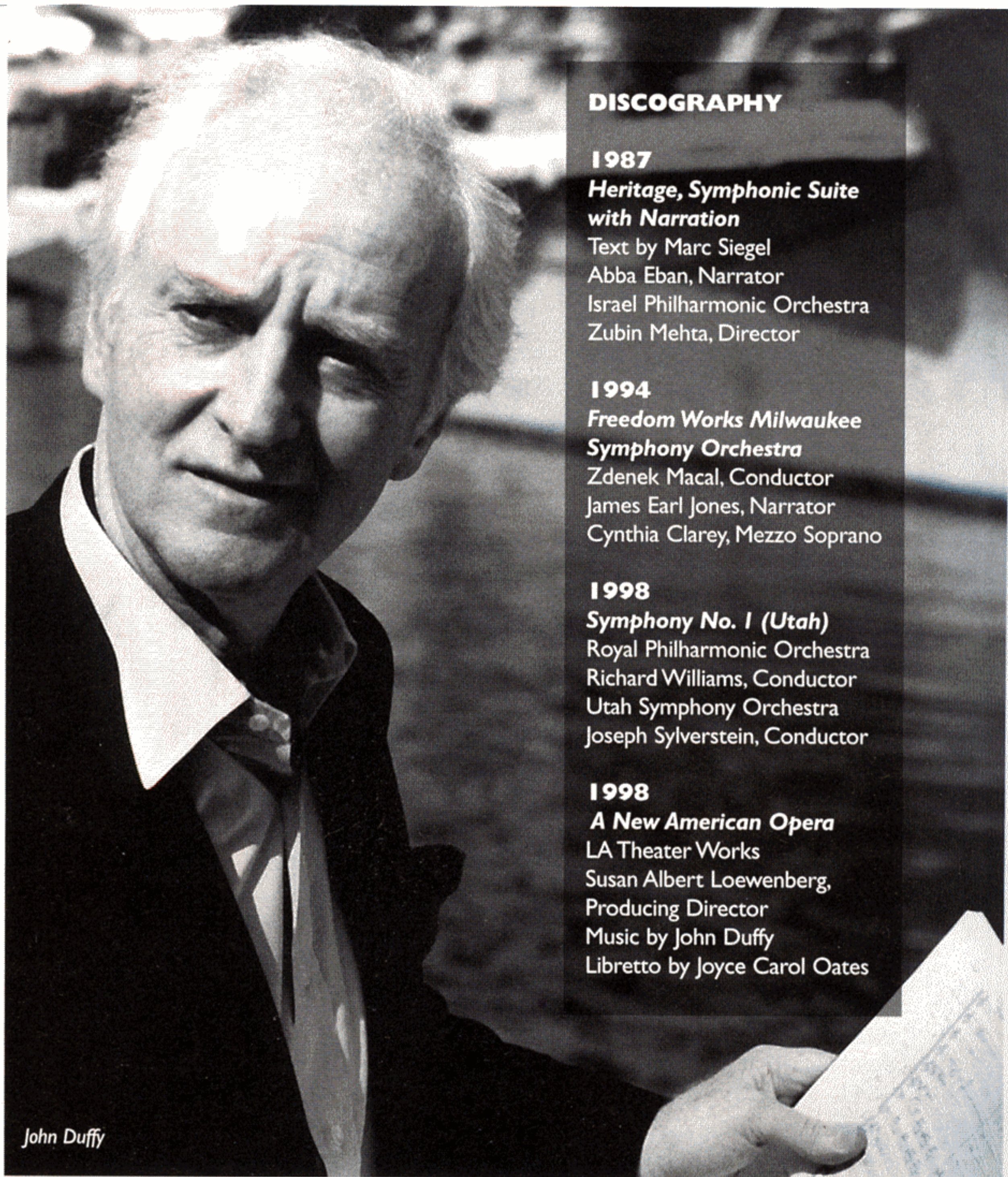
By Montague Gammon III

Two-time Emmy Award-winner, composer for symphony orchestra, opera, theater, television and film, creator of music for Pearl Harbor memorial events, and composer of a new piece about Mark Twain, John Duffy was listening to a radio interview with Ice Cube when his phone rang for an interview recently. "Fascinating," he pronounced the story of the rap star who has become a film producer, noting how the rapper overcame an impoverished upbringing and survived a violent environment.

Duffy came from a home of 14 children himself, so he knows a little about what it is like to grow up in straitened circumstances. As World War II came to an end, he was 17 and fighting in the thick of the Battle of Okinawa, one of the Scout and Ranger teams who were the predecessors of today's SEALs. So Duffy knows more about violence, war and the value of peace than do most people.

Establishing the John Duffy Composers Institute as part of the Arts Festival, Duffy looks forward to helping young artists do what he did after he left the service. The GI Bill let him "follow my heart's bent," he says. He studied with Aaron Copland and a handful of other notable composers.

The Institute will be bringing to Hampton Roads, in its first year, Pulitzer Prize-winner John Corigliano, perhaps most famous for his music for the film *The Red Violin*; Billy Taylor, whom Duffy calls "a great spokesman for jazz," Cuban composer Tania Leon; and Mark Adamo, composer-in-residence at the New York City Opera.



John Duffy

## DISCOGRAPHY

1987

*Heritage, Symphonic Suite with Narration*

Text by Marc Siegel  
Abba Eban, Narrator  
Israel Philharmonic Orchestra  
Zubin Mehta, Director

1994

*Freedom Works Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra*

Zdenek Macal, Conductor  
James Earl Jones, Narrator  
Cynthia Clarey, Mezzo Soprano

1998

*Symphony No. 1 (Utah)*

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra  
Richard Williams, Conductor  
Utah Symphony Orchestra  
Joseph Sylvesterstein, Conductor

1998

*A New American Opera*

LA Theater Works  
Susan Albert Loewenberg,  
Producing Director  
Music by John Duffy  
Libretto by Joyce Carol Oates

This will be an opportunity, Duffy promises, for young artists to be mentored by "master composers." It will also be a place for symposia where "ideas crisscross," reaching beyond the relatively narrow world of serious music.

Noting that Hampton Roads has "large military and religious centers," Duffy says "I would like to explore how the arts and these areas speak to each other." In that context, he talks about his plans to have the Institute "reach into and be part of the people of the community." Not only artists, but "people in commerce and public life" will be important parts of the discussions there. "One of our topics will be censorship of the arts," Duffy comments, adding, "I want to explore the African American heritage" in music. Work at the Institute will also look forward to the 400th anniversary of Jamestown, two years from now.

The public face of the Institute culminates with the John Duffy Showcase on May 4 at Norfolk's TCC Roper Performing Arts Center in Norfolk. Virginia Symphony's JoAnn Falletta will conduct the Virginia Arts Festival Wind Ensemble in a program that includes Duffy's own works, along with pieces by Mendelssohn and Gustav Holst.

So what does the erudite, contemplative Duffy, an artist of melodic fanfares and memorial pieces, think of the music that Ice Cube and other rappers create? He noted that it is "basically a rhythmic underpinning of social commentary." Duffy remarks on the similarity of contemporary gangs to the world of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, both being "inflamed societies." "To get to the heart of the matter," he calls back later to say, "it's searing, dramatic stuff."

Want  
to go?

John Duffy,  
Composer-in-  
Residence  
Virginia Arts

Festival Wind  
Ensemble  
JoAnn Falletta,  
conductor

Wednesday, May 4,  
7:30 p.m.

TCC Roper  
Performing Arts  
Center, Norfolk  
\$25