



**Composer David Baker**  
His "Through This Veil of Tears" will be performed Friday.

## Sounding a vibrant new note

Diversity enlivens chamber series

By **Derrick Henry**  
Staff writer

Alvin Singleton, the primary organizer of three chamber music programs this week made up of 14 pieces by African-American composers, says it's a mistake for listeners to assume they can identify a composer's race by hearing his music.

"The only thing that defines African-American composers is that they live an African-American life," says Mr. Singleton, an Atlanta composer whose music has been extensively performed in Europe as well as the United States. "Don't think that just because composers are black their music should be something you can snap your fingers to."

In short, the works to be performed during the three National Black Arts Festival-sponsored concerts Wednesday through Friday at Georgia State University promise to be as different as the people who wrote them. The 14 composers represent virtually every region of the country; several are foreign-born. They cover several generations, too, beginning with George Walker (born 1922), whose works are among the most frequently performed of any black composer's, to David Soley (born 1962), a Stanford University

### MUSIC PREVIEW

**"Music Alive 1990: Three Concerts of New Chamber Music by African-American Composers"**

8 p.m. Wednesday-Friday Georgia State University Recital Hall, Art and Music Building, Peachtree Center Avenue and Gilmer Street. Performances preceded at 7:30 p.m. by discussions with composers. Free. Information: 651-3676 (GSU School of Music) or 730-5870 (Arts Festival hotline).



**Alvin Singleton**  
Organized chamber concerts

## Chamber: Mix of styles puts zip into series

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Ph.D. candidate.

Mr. Singleton has taken pains to program works that offer a variety of contrasts of mood, color, tempo and style.

"I wanted pieces that would break new ground," says Mr. Singleton, who began his search for appropriate scores last October, seeking recommendations from a large network of composers and performers. Eleven of the works to be performed were written in the past decade. Three of these pieces will receive their world premieres.

Many of the composers represented come from backgrounds as jazz performers and arrangers, among them David Baker, Hale Smith, T.J. Anderson, Olly Wilson and Dwight Andrews. But while jazz elements permeate their concert music, it is not jazz. Mr. Anderson's "Bridging and Branching," for instance, also draws from Renaissance and Baroque influences and from contemporary classical trends.

Other composers turn to African-American sources for their inspiration. For example, Mr. Wilson's "A City Called Heaven" makes use of the traditional spiritual of that name. But he transforms it so thoroughly that a casual listener might not recognize the tune. (The piece also makes use of blues and boogie-woogie.)

Wendell Logan's "Runagate, Runagate" concerns itself with fugitive black slaves and is permeated with phrases from spirituals ("Mean mean mean to be free," "And before I'll be a slave, I'll be buried in my grave"). Mr. Baker's "Through This Veil of Tears," which deals with the death of Martin Luther King Jr., includes a modernized setting of the spiritual "Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child." Tania Leon's "A La Par," for percussion and piano, reflects the rhythmic energy of her Cuban upbringing.

Two instrumental pieces are programmatic—that is, they tell a story or paint a picture through music. "On a Third Day," by John E. Price, portrays the Egyptian god Osiris entering and returning from the underworld; in "Albatross," Jalalu-Kalvert Nelson seeks to convey "the soaring spirit of the albatross."

Still other compositions are abstract (the music speaks for itself, without any programmatic implications): Mr. Singleton's "La Flora," a study in instrumental color; Hale Smith's "Introduction, Cadenzas and Interludes," a fanciful set of variations; and Noel Da Costa's "Chime-Tones," which juxtaposes the sounds of a solo horn with vibraphone, bells and chimes.

In spite of the superlative training of the composers represented in this series, the question nags: Why do we seldom get to hear their music?

The answer, says cellist Ronald Crutcher, who will play in six of the chamber works, has little to do with quality.

Rather, he suggests, the problem lies with exposure.

"Music will not be performed if musicians do not know about it," says Mr. Crutcher, a former member of the Cincinnati Symphony and newly appointed dean of faculty at the Cleveland Institute of Music.

"My experience is that when the musicians see these scores and hear the music, they get enthusiastic and want to play it. We have to wake up people to what's out there. Listeners who attend these three concerts will discover some of the most outstanding new chamber music being written in the country."