

What: “*New Harmonies: Celebrating American Roots Music* with Robert Santelli”

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Presented By: Utah Humanities Council

### **For Immediate Release (April 5, 2010) –**

The Utah Humanities Council announces *New Harmonies: Celebrating American Roots Music*, a traveling Smithsonian exhibition that is making its debut in Utah. The exhibition, which examines the cultural significance of roots music in America, will celebrate its grand opening in Park City on **Saturday, April 10** at the Park City Museum. Exhibition curator and **GRAMMY Museum director Robert Santelli** will speak at the historic **Egyptian Theatre, 528 Main Street, Park City, at 2:30 p.m.** Santelli will share his knowledge about roots music and the process of creating a traveling Smithsonian exhibition. This event and the exhibition are both free and open to the public.

*New Harmonies* will travel to museums in five Utah communities from April 2010 to January 2011. Following Park City, the exhibition will tour to Boulder, Cedar City, Moab, and West Jordan. Each exhibition host will feature local musical history, docent-led tours, workshops for children and adults, concerts, public speakers, and public humanities programs.

"We believe that harmony is made when people work together to make their communities brighter. That's why we support the Utah Humanities Council's American Roots Music traveling exhibit, to bring the vitality of the humanities to people throughout the state," said Scott Anderson, Zions Bank President and CEO.

*New Harmonies* is part of Museum on Main Street, a collaboration between the Smithsonian Institution and the Utah Humanities Council. The Utah tour of *New Harmonies* is made possible by generous support from Zions Bank, The Utah Office of Tourism, the George S. and Dolores Dore Eccles Foundation, KRCL, and KUER. For more information, contact Megan van Frank or Stephanie Rokich at 801.359.9670 or visit: <http://www.utahhumanities.org/newharmonies.htm>.

### **About the *New Harmonies* Exhibition**

*New Harmonies*, the sixth Museum on Main Street exhibition, tells the American musical story through photographs, instruments, lyrics and artist profiles. Although “roots music” is a relatively new term that generally applies to forms of folk music, its influences run deep throughout American culture and can be heard in today’s commercial country, gospel, pop and hip-hop genres. The exhibition explores the work of well-known folk, gospel, country and blues artists who have inspired generations of musicians, like Ma Rainey, B.B. King, Jimmie Rodgers, the Carter Family, Mahalia Jackson, Woody Guthrie and Joan Baez, and captures the spirit of musical styles that are at the heart of local heritage in the United States—Tejano, zydeco, polka, Cajun, conjunto and klezmer. *New Harmonies* focuses on how roots music gives Americans a soundtrack and a voice for their stories.

The main beat of the exhibition is the on-going cultural process that has made America the birthplace of more music than any place on earth. The exhibition provides a fascinating, inspiring, and toe-tapping listen to the American story of multi-cultural exchange. The story is full of surprises about familiar songs,

histories of instruments, the roles of religion and technology, and the continuity of musical roots from "Yankee Doodle Dandy" to the latest hip hop CD.

### **About Utah Roots Music**

Did you know that in Utah pioneers sang a capella songs because they didn't have room for instruments in their wagons? Or that the Utes perform the Bear Dance, a social dance accompanied by song that is held in spring to celebrate new life and the passing of winter? Or that Salt Lake was an important site of the national folk-music revival in the 1960s?

Utah has a rich musical history beginning with the state's first inhabitants and continuing with the pioneers and the various immigrant groups that have settled here.

The earliest musical traditions in Utah are Native American, belonging to the tribes that have lived in the region for centuries—the Shoshone, Ute, Goshute, Paiute, and Navajo. They still sing and dance to ancient songs while also composing new ones within their traditions, which include ceremonial music, social dances, handgame songs, and more.

A variety of European and American musical traditions arrived in Utah with the coming of Mormon settlers in the 1840s. They brought rich traditions that included Scandinavian and British fiddle tunes, ballads, and other songs. The Mormons were a close-knit group living in near-isolation from the rest of the American people. These factors were favorable for the development of distinct music.

African-Americans have been in Utah from the earliest settlement days. Today there are black churches in Salt Lake and Ogden, where gospel choirs, small ensembles, and soloists perform music in celebration of their faith. Newer immigrant groups maintain their traditional music in Utah, including Mexicans, Filipinos, Vietnamese, and others who have opportunities to publicly perform their music and dance. As a result, our musical palette is much more diverse than it once was, and families are able to maintain their musical heritage more easily. Utah roots music of all stripes will live on.

For more information about Utah roots music, see the essay written by *New Harmonies* state scholar Elaine Thatcher, at: <http://www.utahhumanities.org/newharmoniesessay.htm>.

### **About Robert Santelli**

Robert Santelli was named Executive Director of The GRAMMY Museum in 2006. A noted blues and rock historian, Santelli is also the author of more than a dozen books on American music, including *Greetings from E Street (The Story of Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band)* and *The Bob Dylan Scrapbook*, both New York Times bestsellers. Santelli has also contributed to *Rolling Stone*, *Musician*, *Modern Drummer*, *Guitar Player*, *Downbeat*, *the New York Times*, and *New Jersey Monthly*, among other periodicals.

After pursuing American Studies through graduate programs at USC and NYU, Santelli wedded his passion for music and education in 1992 when he joined the music department of Monmouth University in West Long Branch, New Jersey. There he established a thriving Popular Music Studies program before becoming an adjunct professor and guest lecturer at Rutgers University.

In 1993, Santelli was one of the original curators of the then nascent Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum, moving to Cleveland in 1995 to become the museum's first Director of Education and Vice President of Public Programs. There he started the American Music Masters Series and the Oral History Project, working with Amet Ertegun, Jerry Wexler, Sam Phillips, and others. In 2000, he became the CEO

of Paul Allen's Experience Music Project in Seattle, the first ever interactive music museum. During Santelli's tenure at EMP, he spearheaded over thirty exhibitions, including *Bob Dylan's American Journey* and *The Blues*, a project closely connected to Martin Scorsese's PBS Blues series.

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### **About the Utah Humanities Council**

The Utah Humanities Council is a nonprofit organization that provides lifelong learning across the state through programs that explore diverse traditions, values, and ideas. UHC is funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Salt Lake County Zoo, Arts, and Parks Fund, the State of Utah, and gifts from individuals, foundations, and corporations. Each year, the Council underwrites hundreds of educational and cultural programs throughout Utah. For more information, visit [www.utahhumanities.org](http://www.utahhumanities.org).