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## Strings and software make music at the DSO

05:28 PM CST on Tuesday, March 29, 2005

By **SCOTT CANTRELL** / The Dallas Morning News

Pythagoras imagined music, or at least vibration, as a force uniting the universe. And the idea has come full circle in physicists' current notions of string theory.

So it should come as no surprise that Albert Einstein relaxed from physics by playing the violin. And that he was devoted to "the clear constructions" of that most mathematically exquisite of composers, Bach.

This year marking the centenary of three of Einstein's pivotal papers, including one on the special theory of relativity, composer Cindy McTee is bringing Einstein back together with Bach. She's doing so with a brand new piece for string orchestra, percussion and computer music commissioned by the Dallas Symphony Orchestra.

The DSO will give the world premiere of Dr. McTee's *Einstein's Dream* Thursday through Saturday. Music director Andrew Litton will conduct the program, which also includes Elgar's Violin Concerto and Strauss' tone poem *Also sprach Zarathustra*. Soloist in the

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Elgar will be Alisa Weilerstein.

*Einstein's Dream* is the DSO's second world premiere of a work by Dr. McTee, the regents professor of music composition at the University of North Texas.

"Just by chance I learned that in the year 2005 there would be the celebration of Einstein," Dr. McTee says. "I thought about bringing art and technology together with a theme of Einstein."

For *Einstein's Dream* the non-orchestral sounds are recorded on a CD. They include bowed cymbals, chimes and a flexatone, a percussion instrument which produces eerie whooshing noises. Thanks to computer manipulation, the sounds may not be recognizable.

"There are moments where the computer music is quite distinctive," Dr. McTee says. "The event is clear and sets a tempo. And there are wiggle-room moments when the computer fades out and the orchestra keeps playing."

About 15 minutes long, *Einstein's Dream* is in seven sections played without pause. Early on, it pays homage to Einstein's devotion to J.S. Bach, with a Bach harmonization of the Lutheran hymn "We all believe in one God." There are mad scurries for strings in sections called "Chasing after Quanta" and "The Frantic Dance of Subatomic Particles." "Pondering the Behavior of Light" has a violin floating over strings. "Celestial Bells" has tubular bells playing six pitches over string glissandos. In "Wondering at the Secrets" the strings slowly coalesce on the pitch E – for Einstein.

"I was thinking of the orchestra the entire time I was working on these computer sounds, blurring the threshold between them," Dr. McTee says. "The experience of not really knowing the source of the sound is really fascinating."

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*Dallas Symphony Orchestra Thursday-*

Saturday at 8 p.m. at Meyerson  
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