‘FORGOTTEN’ RETURNS TO STAGE, 
SALUTING UAW’S 75th ANNIVERSARY

“Forgotten: the Murder at the Ford Rouge Plant” will return to the stage March 26, 2010 with a cast of actors, singers, musicians, and dancers, many of them rank-and-file union members, in a production that salutes the 75th anniversary of the UAW and the CIO. The Michigan Labor History Society is one of the sponsors.

Composed by Steve Jones, “Forgotten” is a labor jazz/folk opera that tells the dramatic story of workers’ struggles to organize unions in the midst of the Great Depression of the 1930s. With memorable songs and a story of struggles, setbacks, and triumphs, it builds on the real-life story of the Rev. Lewis Bradford, a Methodist minister who went to Detroit to work in the Howard Street Mission, a shelter for homeless and unemployed workers. Bradford started a weekly radio show, “The Forgotten Man’s Hour,” where workers could share their stories, on station WXYZ. The program became a counterpoint to Father Charles Coughlin’s right-wing radio program on a rival station, and one of the show-stopping tunes in “Forgotten” is “Radio, Guns, and Money” with Coughlin (radio), Ford enforcer and chief goon Harry Bennett (guns), and Henry Ford (money).

Bradford, who took a job at Ford’s River Rouge plant in nearby Dearborn, was found fatally wounded one night in a remote part of the plant. While the company said his injury was an accident, his widow and other family members and co-workers were convinced that anti-union forces had targeted him for his organizing efforts.

Some 65 years later, Bradford’s great-nephew, Steve Jones, an award-winning jazz composer and musician in Washington, D.C., found a copy of the original autopsy report, and took it to the county medical examiner who said after reading it that Bradford’s death should not have been ruled an accident, but more likely was a result of homicide. Jones then proceeded to write 25 songs about work at the Rouge, the organizing struggles of the 1930s, and the fight for justice. His songs and story evolved into “Forgotten.” Produced in Detroit in 2004 and 2005, “Forgotten” won rave notices in the Detroit Free Press, Metro Times, NPR’s “Morning Edition,” and many other media, and an original-cast CD has been produced. “Forgotten” has also thrilled audiences in Washington, D.C., Cincinnati, Minneapolis, New York, and elsewhere.

The new production of “Forgotten” will be directed by Detroit native Elise Bryant. Detroit’s own Bill Meyer will be the music director. Retired UAW Solidarity magazine editor Dave Elsila and Lisa Canada will be producers, and the cast will include members of several unions.

“Forgotten” will be presented at the state-of-the-art Macomb Center for the Performing Arts as part of Macomb Community College’s spring theme on the Great Depression and the 1930s, “And Yet They Survived,” in the year that marks the 75th anniversary of the founding of the UAW and the CIO. Exhibits, films, and other programs will round out the event. Tickets will go on sale in January with special rates for students and retirees. For information, please visit www.Forgottenshow.net or telephone 313-882-2032.