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The Music of Wadada Leo Smith

Smith joins Southwest for his *Taif*

Saturday, February 26, 2011 at 8 p.m.

Los Angeles –GRAMMY® Award-winning Southwest Chamber Music welcomes composer and long-time friend Wadada Leo Smith with a program dedicated to his music. Smith has been described as a powerful musician with few peers, and this concert presents three of his works - *In the Diaspora: Earthquakes & Sunrise Mission*, *Moths, Flames & the Giant Sequoia Redwood Trees* with *Taif*—*Prayer in the Garden of the Hijaz* - featuring the composer as trumpet soloist. Southwest Director Jeff von der Schmidt said, “My friendship and admiration for Wadada goes back to the late 1990s. We revived his third string quartet in 2009 and this concert grew out of that reunion. We’ve commissioned him for our 25th anniversary next season, and he’s planning a major artistic statement inspired by the Civil Rights Era. Being born in 1941 in Leland, Miss., he saw first hand the need for a voting rights movement in the Deep South.”

The first piece on the concert, *In the Diaspora: Earthquakes & Sunrise Mission*, is Smith’s fourth string quartet and centers on the subject of migration and the African Diaspora to locations around the world through voluntary or involuntary migration. Smith studied the forced migration of Africans during the 11th century, which he then expanded into the larger context of migration in universal human heritage.

Moths, Flames & the Giant Sequoia Redwood Trees is a composition that celebrates the world’s largest trees, the Sequoia redwoods, found in the Sierra Nevada Mountains of California. When Smith first relocated to California, he was enthralled with the role and process of the annual wildfires in California. Smith uses the image of the flame to convey the necessity of germination that, through fire, produces new life, which he emulates using strings and bass clarinet. Smith compares an intense concentration on God in the Sufi culture to moths encircling a flame. At the center, God transforms

believers through their trust in Him. The flickering movement of the flame is expressed in this piece through the composer's idiomatic vertical and horizontal sounds as well as the flow of focus and tension that listeners can access.

To close the concert, Smith will join Southwest for his *Taif—Prayer in the Garden of the Hijaz*, which uses recorded and live elements. The inspiration for this piece comes from two places. The Russian and Soviet filmmaker Andrei Tarkovsky's use of spiritual themes and dream motifs led Smith to focus on the physical expression of the dream state in *Taif*. Smith was also influenced by the story of Muhammad praying to God in the Garden of Hejaz while facing persecution in the town of Ta'if, southeast of Mecca. The levels of lighting and oscillation between recorded music and live ensemble expresses the opening and closing of eye lids as if listeners were lingering between awake and asleep.

Smith said, "Anyone can write music, but the connection and inspiration behind it makes it powerful." The theme of spirituality saturates the three works presented in this concert. "I write a lot about God," joked Smith. But his reverence for God and dedication to research and inspiration makes his music a powerful experience for listeners.

Smith, 69, currently teaches at California Institute of the Arts and is involved in three ensembles - the Golden Quartet, Silver Orchestra, and Organic - in addition to his composition and international performance activities.

Performers for the concert are Wadada Leo Smith, trumpet, Larry Kaplan, flute, Jim Foschia, clarinet, Lynn Vartan, percussion, Ming Tsu, piano, Shalini Vijayan and Lorenz Gamma, violins, Jan Karlin, viola, Peter Jacobson, cello, and Jeff von der Schmidt, conductor.

Pre-concert Talk

A *Pre-concert Talk* will be held before the performance at **7:30 p.m.** at **The Colburn School** with Southwest Chamber Music's Artistic Director Jeff von der Schmidt and composer Wadada Leo Smith.

Tickets & Parking

Single tickets are \$38, with senior discount tickets available at \$28. Student tickets are available on the day of the performance with full-time student ID for \$10. Save 10% on 7 general admission tickets or more. Parking is available in the Walt Disney Concert Hall parking lot, diagonally across The Colburn School, and also at adjacent outdoor parking lots. All lots charge \$8 after 5 p.m.

For tickets or more information, please call 1-800-726-7147 or visit www.swmusic.org.

SOUTHWEST CHAMBER MUSIC
2010-2011 SEASON Program Listing

(All programs and artists are subject to change)

SINGLE TICKETS: \$38 (GENERAL), \$28 (SENIOR), and \$10 (STUDENT w/ID)
1-800-726-7147

- **Saturday, February 26, 2011 at 8 p.m.**
The Colburn School, 200 S. Grand Ave, Los Angeles, CA 90012

Wadada Leo Smith *Into the Diaspora: Earthquakes & Sunrise Missions*
Moths, Flames & the Giant Sequoia Redwood Trees
Taif—Prayer in the Garden of the Hijaz

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