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Communications

NEWS RELEASE

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TRUMPETER/COMPOSER WADADA LEO SMITH NAMED A 2013 PULITZER PRIZE FINALIST IN MUSIC FOR HIS CIVIL RIGHTS MASTERPIECE *TEN FREEDOM SUMMERS*

Three-Evening Work To Have Its NYC Premiere Wed., May 1 – Fri., May 3
***Ten Freedom Summers* (Cuneiform) Named One of Best CDs of 2012 by Over 70 Critics**

"A stunning achievement... It merits comparison to Coltrane's *A Love Supreme* in sobriety and reach."
— Francis Davis, Rhapsody Jazz Critics Poll

"His masterpiece." — Barry Witherden, *BBC Music Magazine*

"The veteran trumpeter's defining statement." — Mike Hobart, *Financial Times*

"The most challenging (and emotionally rewarding) release of 2012." — Bret Saunders, *Denver Post*

Trumpeter/ composer/musical innovator **Wadada Leo Smith** — a child of the South who was raised in the red-hot crucible of the civil rights movement — was named one of three finalists, from among 157 entries, for the 2013 Pulitzer Prize in Music for his civil rights masterpiece ***Ten Freedom Summers***. The finalists were Smith, Aaron Jay Kernis, and Caroline Shaw who won the prize. The awards were announced Monday, April 15, 2013.

The Pulitzer website describes *Ten Freedom Summers* as "an expansive jazz work that memorializes 10 key moments in the history of civil rights in America, fusing composed and improvised passages into powerful, eloquent music."

"Composing *Ten Freedom Summers* was one of the highlights of my life. Being recognized as a Pulitzer Prize finalist takes it even higher," says Smith. "I've worked on these pieces over the course of 34 years and this is one of my life's defining works. In the name of all who have worked so tirelessly in the civil rights movement, I am truly honored."

Smith will present the **NYC premiere of *Ten Freedom Summers* on May 1 – 3, 2013**. The full three-evening multi-media presentation of the 5-hour work will take place at **Roulette**, 509 Atlantic Avenue, Brooklyn. This performance will include a new piece to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the March on Washington.

Reviewing *Ten Freedom Summers*' October 2011 live premiere at REDCAT in LA, Larry Blumenfeld wrote in the Wall Street Journal: "***Ten Freedom Summers* was as striking a display of his expansive vision and his vitality**. He still plays trumpet as he always has: with little vibrato and a tone that can be either boldly declarative or soft to the point of breaking... **Mr. Smith had made his own statement through instrumental music. And it sounded complete.**"

Ten Freedom Summers received equal acclaim on CD. Released in May 2012 on the **Cuneiform** label, it earned a place as the #3 jazz record of the year in the Rhapsody Jazz Critics poll, where

respected critic Francis Davis wrote: **“A stunning achievement.... It merits comparison to Coltrane’s *A Love Supreme* in sobriety and reach.”** National Public Radio included the CD in its **Top 50 albums of 2012** and it placed **eighth in the 2012 JazzTimes Critics Poll**, while music criticism aggregator MetaCritic hailed it as the **#1 under-the-radar album of 2012**. In addition, Smith was named International Musician of the Year for 2012 by *Musica Jazz Magazine* and he was one of the New York City Jazz Record’s 2012 Musicians of the Year.

The work is **“stirringly beautiful ... an astounding aesthetic achievement,”** (Michael Casper, *Oxford American*), **“an emotional and intellectual luxury, a chance to commune with greatness,”** (Josh Langhoff, *Pop Matters*), **“the work of a lifetime by one of jazz’s true visionaries. ... Triumphant and mournful, visceral and philosophical, searching, scathing and relentlessly humane, Smith’s music embraces the turbulent era’s milestones while celebrating the civil rights movement’s heroes and martyrs.”** (Bruce Gallanter, *Downtown Music Gallery*), and **“his magnum opus; it belongs in jazz’s canonical lexicon with Duke Ellington’s *Black Brown & Beige* and Max Roach’s *Freedom Now Suite*.”** (Thom Jurek, *All Music Guide*). As Stuart Broomer writes in *Point of Departure*: **“If one had to answer quickly what work will matter most this year in American music (as if matters of mattering arose with some regularity), Wadada Leo Smith’s *Ten Freedom Summers* would trip readily to the tongue.”**

Wadada Leo Smith, whose roots are in the Delta blues, is one of the most boldly original figures in American jazz and creative contemporary music, and one of the great trumpet players of our time. Born and raised in Leland, Mississippi, Smith start playing trumpet in R&B bands, encouraged by his stepfather, blues guitarist Alex Wallace. By the mid 1960s, he had gravitated to Chicago’s burgeoning avant-garde jazz community where he was part of the first generation of musicians to come out of Chicago’s AACM (Association for the Advancement of Creative Music). Smith formed the Creative Construction Company together with saxophonist Anthony Braxton and violinist Leroy Jenkins and collaborated with a dazzling cast of fellow visionaries including Muhal Richard Abrams, Richard Davis and Steve McCall. Early in his career, Smith invented an original music notational system called *Anhkrasmation*, which was radical for its time and remains the physical and philosophical foundation of his oeuvre.

Since the early 1970s, Smith has performed and recorded mainly with his own groups. He currently leads four principal ensembles: Mbira, a trio with pipa player Min Xiao-Fen and drummer Pheeroan akLaff; the Golden Quartet, his highly celebrated group that now includes Anthony Davis, John Lindberg and Pheeroan akLaff; Organic, a larger ensemble that utilizes instrumentation consisting primarily of electric string instruments; and the Silver Orchestra, which explores Smith’s music for large ensemble. He has released nearly 50 albums under either his own or his bands’ names on ECM, Moers, Black Saint, Tzadik, Pi Recordings, TUM, Leo, Intakt and Cuneiform, among others. In addition to the 4-CD *Ten Freedom Summers*, he also recently released *Ancestors*, a duo CD with Louis Moholo-Moholo on the TUM label.

Smith has been awarded grants and fellowships from the Fromm Music Foundation at Harvard University, the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, Chamber Music America with support from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, the FONT (Festival of New Trumpet Music) Award of Recognition, Southwest Chamber Music funded by the James Irvine Foundation and the Clarence E. Heller Charitable Foundation, the MAP Fund and the National Endowment for the Arts, among others. An esteemed educator and music theorist, Smith has been on faculty since 1993 at Cal Arts, where he is director of the African American Improvisational Music Program and has profoundly influenced several generations of artists.

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