

# BRAITHWAITE & KATZ

Communications

## NEWS RELEASE

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### Legendary composer and trumpeter Wadada Leo Smith Celebrates release of *Rosa Parks: Pure Love an Oratorio of Seven Songs*

Friday, April 26 – Sunday, April 28, 2019 at The Kitchen in NYC

"The trumpeter's meditation on the legacy of civil rights and the heroism of Rosa Parks is formally inventive and emotionally gripping.... Vividly conveying historical injustice and ongoing struggle through wild instrumental swings and empathetic composition, *Rosa Parks* is music for the ages." – Ben Cardew, Pitchfork

"Wadada Leo Smith's intricate and ravishing oratorio, a meditation on civil rights activist Rosa Parks, must rank as one of his greatest achievements as a composer-performer... Make no mistake, this is a major, ambitious statement from a musician who has specialized in major, ambitious works... It's a paean to both a remarkable individual and to the ideals of freedom and spiritual love." – Ed Hazell, Point of Departure

Groundbreaking composer and trumpeter **Wadada Leo Smith** celebrates the release of his acclaimed TUM recording *Rosa Parks: Pure Love an Oratorio of Seven Songs* in concert at **The Kitchen**, 512 West 19th St., New York City, **Friday, April 26 – Sunday, April 28, 2019**. Shows are at 8 p.m. on Friday and Saturday and 3 p.m. on Sunday. Tickets are \$35, \$25 for Kitchen members and are available at <https://thekitchen.org/event/wadada-leo-smith-rosa-parks-pure-love-an-oratorio-of-seven-songs>.

The oratorio pays tribute to Rosa Parks, "a person of exceptional courage and wisdom, who made the right move of resistance at the right time," says Smith. "Her action generated a movement worldwide for liberty and justice for human beings."

For this performance Smith is joined by: **Diamond Voices**, a trio with **Min Xiao-Fen** (voice and pipa), **Karen Parks** (voice), and **Carmina Escobar** (voice); the **RedKoral Quartet** with **Shalini Vijayan** and **Mona Tian** (violins), **Andrew McIntosh** (viola), and **Ashley Walters** (cello); the **BlueTrumpet Quartet**, featuring four trumpeters: **Smith**, **Ted Daniel**, **James Zollar** and **Taylor Ho Bynum**; the **Janus Duo** with **Pheeroan akLaff** (drums) and **Hardedge** (electronics); as well as butoh dancer **Oguri** and video in live performance by **Jesse Gilbert**.

"*Rosa Parks: Pure Love* employs the song form as composition to convey a philosophical and spiritual narrative about my vision of Rosa Parks," Smith notes. "The oratorio is concerned with ideas and my meditation on the Civil Rights movement, and through lighting, photographs and video images, reconnecting history in the present."

Embedded in the oratorio are brief excerpts from early recordings by Smith, Anthony Braxton, Leroy Jenkins and Steve McCall, the four musicians who made up the legendary ensemble known as the Creative Construction Company some fifty years ago. Braxton, Jenkins and McCall are among the dedictees of this recording. "Our shared journey as creative artists was beneficial to each of us, and had a powerful impact on our friendship and artistic thinking. That ensemble impacted the world with its profound musical application and artistic integrity," says Smith.

The first performance of *Rosa Parks: Pure Love* (in an earlier version) took place at the New School in New York City as part of the Festival of New Trumpet Music in September 2016. The recorded version of over 70 minutes in duration received its premiere at the REDCAT Theater in Los Angeles during the Angel City Jazz Festival in October 2018.

The recording was released February 11, 2019 via TUM Records and has generated wide critical acclaim.

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“... a celebration of the titular figure’s personal bravery, symbolic power and lasting importance... the performers masterfully bring an electric coherence and introspective intensity to the bandleader’s bold vision.” – Peter Margasak, DownBeat

“His slow, deliberate horn playing often sounds like a practice of resistance, and he always knows the right time to act.” – Giovanni Russonello, New York Times

“Wadada Leo Smith’s intricate and ravishing oratorio, a meditation on civil rights activist Rosa Parks, must rank as one of his greatest achievements as a composer-performer... Make no mistake, this is a major, ambitious statement from a musician who has specialized in major, ambitious works...It’s a paean to both a remarkable individual and to the ideals of freedom and spiritual love.” – Ed Hazell, Point of Departure

4-stars “...a deeply immersive experience... another epic work.” – John Sharpe, All About Jazz

## **About Wadada Leo Smith**

Trumpeter, multi-instrumentalist and composer **Wadada Leo Smith** is one of the most boldly original and influential artists of his time. Transcending the bounds of genre or idiom, he distinctly defines his music, tirelessly inventive in both sound and approach, as "Creative Music."

For the last five decades, Smith has been a member of the legendary AACM collective, pivotal in its wide-open perspectives on music and art in general. He has carried those all-embracing concepts into his own work, expanding upon them in myriad ways.

Throughout his career, Smith has been recognized for his groundbreaking work. A finalist for the 2013 Pulitzer Prize in Music, he received the 2016 Doris Duke Artist Award and earned an honorary doctorate from CalArts, where he was also celebrated as Faculty Emeritus. In addition, he received the Hammer Museum’s 2016 Mohn Award for Career Achievement "honoring brilliance and resilience." In 2018 he received the Religion and The Arts Award from the American Academy of Religion.

Smith regularly earns multiple spots on the DownBeat International Critics Poll. In 2017 he topped three categories: Best Jazz Artist, Trumpeter of the Year and Jazz Album of the Year, and was featured as the subject of a cover story in August 2017. The Jazz Journalists Association also honored Smith as their 2017 Musician of the Year as well as 2017 Duo of the Year for his work with Vijay Iyer. The JJA named him their 2016 Trumpeter of the Year, 2015 Composer of the Year, and 2013 Musician of the

Year, and he has earned top billing in two categories in the JazzTimes Critics Poll as Artist of the Year and Composer of the Year.

In October 2015 The Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago presented the first comprehensive exhibition of Smith's Ankhration scores, which use non-standard visual directions, making them works of art in themselves as well as igniting creative sparks in the musicians who perform them. In 2016, these scores were also featured in exhibitions at the Hammer Museum, and the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts and Kadist in San Francisco.

Born December 18, 1941 in Leland, Mississippi, Smith's early musical life began at age thirteen when he became involved with the Delta blues and jazz traditions performing with his stepfather, bluesman Alex Wallace. He received his formal musical education from the U.S. Military band program (1963), the Sherwood School of Music (1967-69), and Wesleyan University (1975-76).

Smith has released more than 50 albums as a leader on labels including ECM, Moers, Black Saint, Tzadik, Pi Recordings, TUM, Leo and Cuneiform. His diverse discography reveals a recorded history centered around important issues that have impacted his world, exploring the social, natural and political environment of his times with passion and fierce intelligence. His most recent recording is 2019's *Rosa Parks: Pure Love*, an Oratorio of Seven Songs. His 2016 recording, *America's National Parks* earned a place on numerous best of the year lists including the New York Times, NPR Music and many others. Smith's landmark 2012 civil rights opus *Ten Freedom Summers* was called "A staggering achievement [that] merits comparison to Coltrane's *A Love Supreme* in sobriety and reach." Writing about Smith's 2017 album *Solo: Reflections and Meditations on Monk* in the New York Review of Books, Adam Shatz notes: "For all the minimalism of his sound, Smith has turned out to be a maximalist in his ambitions, evolving into one of our most powerful storytellers, an heir to American chroniclers like Charles Ives and Ornette Coleman."

wadadaleosmith.com

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