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**THE 2011 MAGIC TRIANGLE JAZZ SERIES PRESENTS:**

**Amir ElSaffar's Two Rivers Ensemble**

The Magic Triangle Jazz Series, produced by WMUA, 91.1FM and the Fine Arts Center at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, continues its 22nd season on **Tuesday, March 29**, at **Bezanson Recital Hall** with an **8:00pm** performance by **Amir ElSaffar's Two Rivers Ensemble**.

In 2006, upon receiving commissions from the Painted Bride Arts Center in Philadelphia and from the Festival of New Trumpet Music (FONT), ElSaffar composed *Two Rivers*, a suite that invokes Iraqi musical traditions and frames them in a modern jazz setting. His 2007 Pi Recordings release, *Two Rivers*, featuring jazz (Rudresh Mahanthappa, Nasheet Waits, Carlo DeRosa, Amir ElSaffar) and traditional Iraqi musicians (Tareq Abboushi, Zaafer Tawil), was described by All About Jazz as, "a stirring example of the creative possibilities of international jazz in the 21st century." The disc landed on many Top 10 of the year lists. "Two Rivers is a staggering accomplishment," writes The Chicago Reader.

After winning the 2001 Carmine Caruso International Jazz Trumpet competition, Amir ElSaffar traveled to his father's homeland to immerse himself in the Iraqi maqam, pursuing masters who could impart this centuries-old oral tradition. "This is new turf," writes The Philadelphia Inquirer, "and it's likely to be a lot for either culture to digest. Yet the feeling and eloquence that emanate from this sextet make the experiment worthwhile."

ElSaffar also leads a collaborative quartet with tenor saxophonist Hafez Modirzadeh, featuring Mark Dresser, bass and Alex Cline, drums. Their recent release, *Radif Suite* (Pi Recordings), has already received considerable acclaim. Time Out Chicago calls it "a stunning album...a surprisingly inviting amalgam of influences, merging both Iraqi and Persian modal systems into a continuous whole. The quartet adds a new chapter to the jazz tradition's ever-evolving history."

ElSaffar has received commissions from the Jazz Gallery and Jerome Foundation for the creation of a new work, *Within Between*, which premiered in February, and from Chamber Music America for a new work for Two Rivers. ElSaffar has also composed for theater projects, including the Wilma Theater's productions of Heather Raffo's *Nine Parts of Desire* and Wajdi Mouawad's *Scorched*. He has composed, improvised, and performed on several film soundtracks, and appeared in Jonathan Demme's Oscar-nominated film, *Rachel Getting Married*.

Tickets are \$12/general public and \$7/students and are available through the Fine Arts Center Box Office, 1-800-999-UMAS. Join us April 20 for Mostly Other People Do the Killing.

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