

## **IMANI WINDS**

**Valerie Coleman, flute; Mariam Adam, clarinet;  
Toyin Spellman-Diaz, oboe;  
Jeff Scott, French horn; Monica Ellis, bassoon**

*"Imani Winds represents nothing less than the future of the once-quiet notion of the wind quintet."*

*- Washington Post*

Since its inception in 1997, the Grammy-nominated **Imani Winds**, comprised of five bold yet accessible musicians, has been enriching the traditional wind quintet repertoire with European, African, Latin American and American music traditions. Just as the name Imani denotes faith in Swahili, the ensemble closely follows its mission over a decade, carving out a distinct presence in the classical music world for their dynamic playing, culturally poignant programming and inspirational outreach programs, which they have brought to many communities throughout the country.

Imani Winds began their 10th anniversary season in grand fashion with a Paris debut at La cité de la musique in a performance with jazz icon Wayne Shorter, with whom further collaborations are planned. Furthering their trend of collaborating with jazz artists and expanding the traditional role of the wind quintet, the Quartet also collaborated with bassist and trombonist Chris Brubeck of the famed Brubeck jazz family in summer of 2007 for a performance and recording of music written especially for wind quintet and jazz quartet. The recording of Chris Brubeck's original music, as well as arrangements of standards written by his father, pianist Dave Brubeck, will be released by KOCH International Classics in 2008.

Season 2007-08 celebrates the Ensemble's 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary with the **Legacy Commissioning Project** – a mission to seek ten new works for woodwind quintet from ten composers over a period of 5 years (2007-2012). The group aims to create a diverse body of 21<sup>st</sup> century chamber music literature, drawing influences from African and Afro-Cuban traditions, Asian and Middle Eastern cultures, jazz and mixed media. Upcoming commissions and premieres include works by Stephan Harris, Jason Moran, Roberto Sierra and Alvin Singleton. Other 2007-08 highlights include an all Esa-Pekka Salonen program at the Miller Theater at Columbia University, and concerts in Atlanta, Chicago, Philadelphia, San Francisco, and Washington D.C. They also have been invited to perform at some of the most reputable jazz festivals in the world including those of Montreal, Marciac (France), and Veszprem (Hungary).

The 2006-'07 season carried on the success of the multi-media **Josephine Baker – A Life of Le Jazz Hot!** with a classical music history making debut at the legendary Apollo Theater on June 3, 2007 (the 101<sup>st</sup> birthday of Baker), as well as a multi-city national

tour. Concurrently with the Apollo concert, KOCH International Classics released Imani's third major-label record **Josephine Baker – A Life of Le Jazz Hot!**. In addition, the Ensemble maintained a heavy concert and residency schedule, which brought them to Spain, France, Hungary, Mexico, Chicago, Philadelphia, New York, Washington D.C., Houston, Indianapolis, Cincinnati, Santa Fe, among others. The Imani Winds was also a 2007 ASCAP Concert Awards Honoree for innovative programming and successful career in concert music.

Summer of 2006 saw Imani Winds in the world premiere of *TERRA INCOGNITA*, the first-ever commission for classical artists by jazz composer, performer and legend **Wayne Shorter**, at the La Jolla Music Society in August. The group played another world premiere of composer Bruce Adolphe's *Zephyronia*, also in La Jolla in August, for an audience of young people. Other summer highlights included BRAVO! Vail Valley Music Festival, Rockport Chamber Music Festival, and a Naumburg Concert in New York.

Highlights of the 2005-2006 season included extensive touring and residency throughout the United States, with performances at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., in Los Angeles and San Francisco, and in Vancouver, Canada. Imani Winds continued to collaborate with extraordinary artists such as vocalist Rene Marie and composer Paquito D'Rivera in the new Josephine Baker Project and in *Kites Over Havana*, an original 2005 commission, respectively. The multi-media *Josephine Baker – A Life of Le Jazz Hot* premiered in Pittsburgh in April 2006, followed by engagements in St. Louis, Puerto Rico and New Haven. The group also released a self-titled second CD on Koch International Classics to critical acclaims in January 2006.

Imani Winds has enjoyed significant national exposure in all forms of media, with appearances on MPR's Saint Paul Sunday, NPR's Performance Today and News and Notes with Ed Gordon, the Bob Edwards Show on XM Satellite Radio, BBC The World, as well as frequent coverage in major music magazines and newspapers. The previous seasons saw a successful recital in New York's Alice Tully Hall with Paquito D'Rivera, their Canadian debut in Ottawa, and participation in Chamber Music Society Two, a professional residency program of The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. The ensemble was also invited to the Virginia Arts Festival, where their residency week of performances and demonstrations in 2004 was so popular that they were immediately invited to return in 2005. Their residency and touring has taken them to nearly 20 states.

Imani Winds recently won the CMA/ASCAP award for Adventurous Programming, as well as the CMA/WQXR Award for its CD "*Umoja*." Also, Imani Winds was chosen to participate in the 2003 Association of Performing Arts Presenters (APAP) Young Performers Career Advancement Seminar and was showcased at the Weill Concert Hall as a part of the conference.

At the 2001 Concert Artists Guild International Competition, Imani Winds was selected as first-ever Educational Residency Ensemble, in recognition of their significant educational mission, tremendous musical abilities and innovative programming. This creative group offers a wide array of residency programs for various settings, age groups and community outreach projects. Residencies often explore the culture and heritage of the African Diaspora, and introduce Western classical traditions to diverse classrooms. Additionally, the repertoire offered by Imani Winds highlights its members' commitment to a multiplicity of music. Featuring numerous works by African, Latin and American composers, the ensemble often adds percussion and folk influences to the

traditional wind quintet textures, taking its audience on a captivating journey through divergent ethnic and musical identities.

Imani Winds' past performance highlights included their New York debut at Carnegie Hall's Weill Recital Hall as winners of the Artists International Annual Prize, concerts at the Kennedy Center, Chicago Symphony Musicians Residency Program, Ravinia Festival, Princeton University, Columbia University, Carnegie Hall Neighborhood Concerts, Chautauqua Institution, St. Louis Premiere Performances, Savannah on Stage International Music Festival, Chamber Music America's Rural Residency Program and the Fischhoff Chamber Music Association. Also, the ensemble has toured internationally with eminent saxophonist Steve Coleman and can be heard on his recording *The Ascension to Light*.

Imani Winds' debut recording, entitled "Umoja", featured original works by Imani flutist, Valerie Coleman. Their major label debut, "the Classical Underground" on Koch Entertainment, was released in January 2005 and nominated for a Grammy in 2006.

(September 2007)

This biography is brought up to date regularly. If you are using it more than six months after the date it was prepared, please check with Jay K. Hoffman & Associates for the most recent version.
---