

VENTURA COLLEGE  
DEPARTMENT OF PERFORMING ARTS

# WADADA LEO SMITH

A PORTRAIT



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Friday, Feb-14, 2025, 3:00PM  
VC Performings Arts Center, Yunker Auditorium

### String Quartet No. 3, Black Church: A First World Gathering of the Spirit Movement 1

Carlos Ozuna, violin 1  
Liah Kraft, violin 2  
Alex Fager, viola  
Ashley Walters, cello

### Rosa Parks - Oratorio of Seven Songs Song 6, The Light

Ventura College Singers,  
Brent Wilson, Director and Conductor  
Carlos Ozuna, violin 1  
Liah Kraft, violin 2  
Alex Fager, viola  
Ashley Walters, cello

### Winter

Performed by members of the VC community

### Mrs. Till and Emmett Till: Again: Can You See the Light

Ventura College Jazz Band  
Fundi Legohn, director  
Ashley Walters, conductor

### Leroy Jenkins

Ventura College Symphony Orchestra  
Ashley Walters, Director and Conductor  
Carlos Ozuna, violin solo

## WELCOME

It's truly been an honor to have Wadada Leo Smith on campus this week. Over the past three days, Wadada has collaborated with the Ventura College students and community, guiding us all through the nuances of his innovative music and process. As a friend and colleague, it's been a privilege to witness his incredible musicianship and the profound impact his visit has had on our students. This afternoon, we are delighted to present a concert of his music, showcasing our talented student performers, that reflects the creativity and dedication that have marked Wadada's remarkable career. – Ashley Walters

## COMPOSER BIOGRAPHY:

Wadada Leo Smith (b. 1941) is a trumpet player and composer, originally from Leland, Mississippi. Smith's early musical education was from his stepfather, Alex "Little Bill" Wallace, and through the U.S. Military band. He furthered his education at Sherwood School of Music and Wesleyan University where he studied Indonesian music performance, African and South Indian flute music, Anthropological study of American Indigenous music, and Japanese koto music. Smith has held teaching positions at the University of New Haven, Bard College, the California Institute of the Arts, and most recently as a Visiting Lecturer at Harvard University.

Smith's awards and accolades are numerous and include the awards of Artist, Trumpeter, and Album (America's National Parks) of the year in DownBeat Magazine's 65th Annual Critics Poll, Artist of the Year in the Jazz Times' Critics Poll of 2016, and Musician of the Year in 2017 by the Jazz Journalists Association. In addition, he was a finalist for a Pulitzer Prize in 2013 for his work *Ten Freedom Summers*, was a Guggenheim fellow in 2009, received the 2016 Doris Duke Artist Award, was awarded a Lifetime Achievement Award by the Vision Festival in 2022, and was inducted into The American Academy of Arts and Letters in 2023.

Over his lifetime, Smith has created own symbolic language score called *Ankhrasmation*. This guides his work as a composer, creator, performer, and educator. These scores are developed with a variety of mediums including pens, paints, metallics, and found objects. These pieces have been on exhibit in The Museum of Rhythm, Museum Sztuki, Łódź, Poland; The Hammer Museum, University of California, Los Angeles, CA; Kalamazoo Institute of Arts, Kalamazoo, MI; Kadist Art Foundation, San Francisco, CA; and the Renaissance Society, The University of Chicago, Chicago, IL.



Ventura College's Department of Performing Arts prepares students to pursue careers in music, theatre, and dance. Students have the opportunity to study with a highly qualified and recognized faculty in a variety of ensembles including Symphony Orchestra, Chamber Orchestra, Chamber Music Ensembles, College Chorus and Singers, VC Musical Theatre & Opera, Jazz Band, VC Dance, and VC Theatre.



For more information, visit our website:  
[www.venturacollege.edu/performing-arts](http://www.venturacollege.edu/performing-arts)

## SUPPORT

If you would like to help support programs like these, please consider making a donation to the VC Foundation Music Fund. Gifts in any amount are a vital part of promoting Ventura's homegrown talent. You can donate online, or via text message (text "VCMusic" to 41444).



## SPECIAL THANKS

Anthony Mansueto  
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Nathan Cole  
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