

For Immediate Release

June 24, 2009
media contact:
erica lewis-finein
brightbutterfly pr
brightbutterfly[at]hotmail.com

AFROSOLO THEATRE COMPANY PRESENTS
AFROSOLO ARTS FESTIVAL 17
July 29-October 15, 2010

SAN FRANCISCO (July 13, 2010) - San Francisco's award-winning AfroSolo Theatre Company presents its 17th annual **AfroSolo Arts Festival**, celebrating African American artists giving voice to the Black experience. This year's theme, **UNITED IN PEACE: Artists, Clergy, Legislators, and Community**, promotes the power of peace through live performances, the visual arts, and other events to envision and celebrate peace. This year's festival not only pays homage to and explores the rich legacy of African Americans and people of African descent, but also focuses on a coming together of all people for the common purpose of peace. Festival events (**July 29-October 15**) featuring a panel discussion, live music, visual art, and works for the stage will take place in San Francisco at Yerba Buena Gardens, the Main San Francisco Public Library, the African American Art and Culture Complex, and the Ella Hill Hutch Community Center. Most events are free and open to the public. For more information, the public may visit afrosolo.org or call **415-771-AFRO (2376)**.

"In celebrating our 17th AfroSolo Arts Festival, we wanted to explore what it means to live in peace," says AfroSolo Artistic Director Thomas Robert Simpson. "With the political acrimony that welcomed President Obama's election, the growth of the Tea Party, recent commentaries from controversial talk radio hosts, problems with crime, and the ongoing war, we decided to produce a festival to unite around peace from a multi-cultural point of view. Our hope is to enlist members of the entire community to perform acts of peace and celebrate, envision, and discuss the role the arts can play in uniting us all."

The line up for AfroSolo 17 is as follows:

The Arts: A Medium for Peace
A Panel discussion in collaboration with the Commonwealth Club of San Francisco
Thursday, July 29, 2010

Reception: 5:30pm; Panel discussion: 6-7pm

San Francisco Commonwealth Club (595 Market Street, SF)

Tickets: \$12 members, \$20 non-members (for tickets www.afrosolo.org)

From the iconic peace sign to singer/songwriter John Lennon's "Give Peace A Chance" to AfroSolo Artistic Director Thomas Robert Simpson's solo performance piece *There Is No Hatred Here*, artists throughout the years have used art as a medium to promote peace. The Commonwealth Club joins AfroSolo Arts Festival 17 in hosting a lively panel discussion about using art to envision, promote, and celebrate peace, examining the role the arts have played in peacemaking movements of the past and present. Acclaimed Bay Area poet, novelist, and playwright *Jewelle Gomez* moderates this panel, featuring *Michael Morgan*, Conductor and Musical Director of the Oakland East Bay Symphony, and *Arisika Razak*, Dancer/Choreographer and Program Chair of the Women's Spirituality Department at the California Institute of Integral Studies.

Jewelle Gomez is a writer and community activist. She is the author of the double Lambda Award-winning novel *The Gilda Stories*, and her fiction, essays, criticisms, and poetry have appeared in publications including *San Francisco Chronicle*, *New York Times*, *The Village Voice*, *Ms. Magazine*, *ESSENCE*, *The Advocate*, *Callaloo*, and *Black Scholar*. Her books include *Don't Explain*, a collection of short fiction and *Forty-three Septembers*, a book of personal and political essays.

Arisika Razak is a dancer, choreographer, and performance artist. Her performance art is equally grounded in the cross-cultural tradition of spiritual dance and her 25-year study of African, Asian, Native American and Neo-Pagan religious systems. She appears nationally and internationally as a guest lecturer and workshop leader on women's issues and is the Program Chair of the Women's Spirituality Department at the California Institute of Integral Studies.

Michael Morgan, conductor, Oakland East Bay Symphony, also fills key roles with the Oakland Youth Orchestra, Sacramento Philharmonic, Festival Opera in Walnut Creek and the Peoria, Illinois, Symphony, and teaches at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. He began his conducting career at the age of 12 in the public schools of Washington, D.C. and has been a guest conductor with many of America's major orchestras and a number of major opera companies. He is known as a champion of arts education and minority

access to the arts.

A Concert for Peace
Outdoor Jazz Concert in Yerba Buena Gardens
Saturday, August 7, 1-3 pm
Yerba Buena Gardens (Mission Street between 3rd & 4th, SF)
Free and open to the public

In collaboration with the Yerba Buena Gardens Festival, AfroSolo presents its ninth free concert in the Gardens. This year's offering features the **Junius Courtney Big Band Orchestra**. A 19-piece multicultural band noted for its swinging interpretations of Duke Ellington and Count Basie classics, original compositions, and Latin jazz works, the Junius Courtney Big Band Orchestra was founded in 1966. After the passing of Junius Courtney at the age of 88, son Nat Courtney became the bandleader, under the musical direction of George Spencer. Sharing the stage will be incomparable vocalist **Denise Perrier**, who has performed for over 30 years throughout the Bay Area, Europe, Latin America, and Asia.

"The **Junius Courtney Big Band Orchestra** was asked to participate in this year's AfroSolo Festival in part because the group can be seen as a metaphor for the world- members of the Asian, African American, Caucasian, Latino, LGBT communities coming together to peacefully make beautiful music," says AfroSolo Artistic Director Thomas Robert Simpson. "We see them and think, if they can, then there is hope for the rest of us."

Performance for Peace
(Festival Gala Performance)
Sunday, August 8, 3-5:30 pm
(Reception to Follow Performance)
African American Art & Culture Complex (762 Fulton Street, SF)
Tickets: \$35-100 (for tickets www.afrosolo.org)

AfroSolo hosts this exciting multicultural, cross-cultural, and intercultural performance showcase in which actors, dancers, musicians, poets, and performers representing different cultures and backgrounds emphasize the bonds that we all share in performances highlighting compassion, understanding, joy, and peace. Performers include: **Colette Eloi, Paco Gomes, Genny Lim, Raymond Nat Turner, and Dr. Brenda Wade.**

Colette Eloi performs *SHE (an excerpt from A Voudoun Opera)*, a theatrical dance work exploring a modern day African American woman's struggles in society and her peaceful resolution as the result of a mysterious visit from an activist who participated in Haiti's Revolution against the French. AfroSolo Artistic Director Thomas Robert Simpson directs.

Eloi is the Artistic Director of El Wah Movement, which presents Haitian and African Diaspora Dance. Her emphasis is on Haiti, the native land of her parents. As a dancer/choreographer Eloi has performed nationally and internationally.

Paco Gomes performs *Peace, is it possible?... We can do it if we try.* Through his unique blend of Afro-Brazilian and modern dance, Gomes explores the meaning, desire, and possibility of peace in our lifetime.

Gomes is an acclaimed dancer, choreographer, musician and teacher from Bahia, Brazil. He has studied folkloric and religious dance since his childhood, specializing in Orixá, Capoeira, and folkloric working dances from slavery. He is known for infusing modern with Afro-Brazilian folkloric dance.

Genny Lim performs an excerpt from *Where is Tibet?*, a passionate look at the legacy of China and Tibet's shared history from the eyes of a Chinese American. Lim explores their current conflicts as manifested in the tensions of the Beijing Summer Olympics of 2008; also featuring Tibetan, Tsering Bawa.

Lim, a native San Franciscan, is an internationally known poet, performer and award-winning playwright. She has performed with such artists as Max Roach, Tootie Heath, Eddie Marshall, Jon Jang, and Herbie Lewis. Lim was also the subject of an award-winning video documentary, *The Voice: Genny Lim*.

Raymond Nat Turner premieres *Peace, Ray, Peace*, a jazz-based spoken word work examining the relationship between a mother and son, and lessons learned in both life and death.

Turner has performed live nationally and internationally, as well as on television and radio. Since 1990, he has been the Artistic Director of the JazzPoetry ensemble UpSurge!, a group that fuses poetry with jazz. He has opened for the late James Baldwin, as well as Dave Zirin and Cynthia McKinney, and has appeared with UpSurge! at numerous festivals and universities.

Dr. Brenda Wade presents *Peace Right Here, Right Now*, an audience experiential act. Dr. Wade is a psychologist, peace activist, and the NBC Today Show's Family - Relationship Expert; she makes regular appearances on shows including *The Oprah Winfrey Show* and

Good Morning America. In the San Francisco Bay Area, Dr. Wade hosts *Black Renaissance* on the CW network. Her company Heartline Productions, Inc. was founded to produce quality media programs that focus on transforming lives.

Visual Arts Exhibit

United in Peace: Visual Artists Leading the Way

Sunday, August 15 - October 15

Artist Reception August 15, 3-5pm

San Francisco Main Public Library (100 Larkin Street at Grove)

Free and open to the public

AfroSolo presents a visual art exhibition showcasing works from African American artists and artists from the African Diaspora, exploring the theme of peace. This multi-media group show includes works from **April Martin Chartrand** (mixed media cigar boxes); **Tomye Neal-Madison** (stained glass); **Malik** (painting); **Justice Renaissance** (wood sculpture); **Nena St. Louis** (wood sculpture); **Thomas Robert Simpson** (photography); **Fely Tchaco** (painting); **Morrie Turner** (cartoons); and **Z'Ma Wyatt** (photography).

UNITED IN HEALTH

Artists, Healthcare Workers, and Community

Saturday, August 14, 10 am - 2 pm

Ella Hill Hutch Community Center (1050 McAllister Street at Webster, SF)

Free and open to the public

In collaboration with Supervisor Ross Mirkarimi, MoMagic, the African American Health Disparity Project, St. Mary's Hospital, California Pacific Medical Center, and Kaiser Permanente, AfroSolo hosts this annual community health fair. This event is free and open to the public and includes community forums, health care screenings and demonstrations, information tables, and access to healthcare professionals, in addition to food, games, and prizes.

Peace: Youth Leading The Way

Saturday, August 21, 3-5pm

African American Art & Culture Complex (762 Fulton Street, SF)

Free and open to the public

In collaboration with city-wide youth programs, AfroSolo hosts a youth performance showcase featuring poetry, spoken word, music and dance. All of the performances will follow our theme of peace with performers representing different cultures and backgrounds. Youth artists TBA.

Founded in 1993 by Jefferson Award-winner **Thomas Robert Simpson**, **AfroSolo Theatre Company** presents the experiences of African Americans and those from the African Diaspora through solo performances and the visual and literary arts. Through these mediums, people of all ethnicities are brought together to explore and share the human spirit that binds us all. AfroSolo has presented celebrity guests, including award-winning Broadway actor Ruby Dee; political humorist and activist Dick Gregory; the late blues and jazz legend Charles Brown; the late poet June Jordan; legendary songstress Mavis Staples; and gospel artist Emmit Powell. The AfroSolo Festival has presented the works of over 115 emerging solo artists.

FOR CALENDAR EDITORS:

WHAT:

San Francisco's award-winning AfroSolo Theatre Company presents the 17th annual **AfroSolo Arts Festival**, celebrating African American artists giving voice to the Black experience. This year's theme, **UNITED IN PEACE: Artists, Clergy, Legislators, and Community**, promotes the power of peace through live performances, the visual arts, and other events to envision and celebrate peace. This year's Festival not only pays homage to and explores the rich legacy of African Americans and people of African descent, it also focuses on a coming together of all people for the common purpose of peace. Festival events featuring live music, visual art, and works for the stage will take place in San Francisco at Yerba Buena Gardens, the Main San Francisco Public Library, the African American Art and Culture Complex, and the Ella Hill Hutch Community Center. Most events are free and open to the public.

The line up for AfroSolo 17 is as follows:

The Arts: A Medium for Peace

A Panel discussion in collaboration with the Commonwealth Club of San Francisco

Thursday, July 29, 2010

Reception: 5:30pm; Panel discussion: 6-7pm

San Francisco Commonwealth Club (595 Market Street, SF)

Tickets: \$12 members, \$20 non-members (for tickets www.afrosolo.org)

From the iconic peace sign to singer/songwriter John Lennon's "Give Peace A Chance" to AfroSolo Artistic Director Thomas Robert

Simpson's solo performance piece *There Is No Hatred Here*, artists throughout the years have used art as a medium to promote peace. The Commonwealth Club joins AfroSolo Arts Festival 17 in hosting a lively discussion about using art to envision, promote, and celebrate peace, examining the role the arts have played in peacemaking movements of the past and present. Acclaimed Bay Area poet, novelist, and playwright **Jewelle Gomez** moderates this panel, featuring **Michael Morgan**, Conductor and Musical Director of the Oakland East Bay Symphony, and **Arisika Razak**, Dancer/Choreographer and Program Chair of the Women's Spirituality Department at the California Institute of Integral Studies.

A Concert for Peace
Outdoor Jazz Concert in Yerba Buena Gardens
Saturday, August 7, 1-3 pm

Yerba Buena Gardens (Mission Street between 3rd & 4th, SF)
Free and open to the public

In collaboration with the Yerba Buena Gardens Festival, AfroSolo presents its ninth free concert in the Gardens. This year's offering features the **Junius Courtney Big Band Orchestra**. A 19-piece multicultural band noted for its swinging interpretations of Duke Ellington and Count Basie classics, original compositions, and Latin jazz works, the Junius Courtney Big Band Orchestra was founded in 1966. Sharing the stage will be incomparable vocalist **Denise Perrier**.

Performance for Peace
(Festival Gala Performance)
(Sunday, August 8, 3-5:30 pm
Reception to Follow)

African American Art & Culture Complex (762 Fulton Street, SF)
Tickets: \$35-100 (for tickets www.afrosolo.org)

AfroSolo hosts this exciting multicultural, cross-cultural, and intercultural performance showcase in which actors, dancers, musicians, poets, and performers representing different cultures and backgrounds emphasize the bonds that we all share in performances highlighting compassion, understanding, joy, and peace. Performers include: **Colette Eloi, Paco Gomes, Genny Lim, Raymond Nat Turner, and Dr. Brenda Wade**.

Visual Arts Exhibit
United in Peace: Visual Artists Leading the Way
Sunday, August 15 - October 15

Artist Reception August 15, 3-5pm
San Francisco Main Public Library (100 Larkin Street at Grove)
Free and open to the public

AfroSolo presents a visual art exhibition showcasing works from African American artists and artists from the African Diaspora, exploring the theme of peace. This multi-media group show includes works from **April Martin Chartrand, Tomye Neal-Madison, Malik, Justice Renaissance, Nena St. Louis, Thomas Robert Simpson, Fely Tchaco, Morrie Turner, and Z'Ma Wyatt**.

UNITED IN HEALTH
Artists, Healthcare Workers, and Community
Saturday, August 14, 10 am - 2 pm

Ella Hill Hutch Community Center (1050 McAllister Street at Webster, SF)
Free and open to the public

In collaboration with Supervisor Ross Mirkarimi, MoMagic, the African American Health Disparity Project, St. Mary's Hospital, California Pacific Medical Center, and Kaiser Permanente, AfroSolo hosts this free community health fair.

Peace: Youth Leading The Way
Saturday, August 21, 3-5pm

African American Art & Culture Complex (762 Fulton Street, SF)
Free and open to the public

In collaboration with city-wide youth programs, AfroSolo hosts a youth performance showcase featuring poetry, spoken word, music and dance. All of the performances will follow our theme of peace with performers representing different cultures and backgrounds. Youth artists TBA.

TICKETS:

Most events are **free and open to the public**, unless otherwise noted. For tickets and more information, the public may visit afrosolo.org or call **415-771-AFRO (2376)**.

Funding for the AfroSolo Theatre Company is made possible in part through the support of the African American Health Disparity Project, Dr. Robert Brescia, California Arts Council, California Pacific Medical Center, Friends of AfroSolo, William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, Kaiser Permanente, LEF Foundation, San Francisco Grants for the Arts/Hotel Tax Fund, The National Endowment for the Arts, Yerba Buena Gardens Festival and the Zellerbach Family Foundation.

Presenting Partners: African American Art & Culture Complex, The Commonwealth Club, San Francisco Main Public Library, and Yerba Buena Gardens Festival.

###