



MEDIA RELEASE

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Zeitgeist to feature Ethiopian composer Yohannes Tona during annual *Playing it Close to Home* concert

With winning songs from the Eric Stokes Song Contest plus music by local composer Yohannes Tona, Zeitgeist's annual *Playing it Close to Home* concert celebrates the wealth of musical creativity found right here in our own backyard.

The program includes music by Eric Stokes Song Contest winners plus new works by Ethiopian bassist and composer Yohannes Tona, including pieces inspired by Ethiopian folk music and works from his albums *1317* and *Sand From The Desert*.

Concerts will take place on Feb. 8-9 at Studio Z, and on Feb. 10 at Ras Ethiopian Restaurant, accompanied by a meal of Ethiopian cuisine.

Yohannes Tona is a renowned Ethiopian-born Minneapolis bassist and composer. Tona was born and raised in Awassa, a town in Southern Ethiopia. He grew up around music; his father was a church organist, his mother a vocalist. After finishing high school in Awassa, he moved to Addis, the capitol of Ethiopia, to further his musical education. He moved to the U.S. in the late 90's, attending Berklee College of Music in Boston on a scholarship. He later moved to Minneapolis where he has worked with local greats such as The Sounds of Blackness, The Steeles, Dr. Mambo's Combo, Darnell Davis, Cynthia Johnson, Bruce Henry and many more. He has also performed with national and international artists such as Jef Lee Johnson, Benoit Delbecq, and Nachito Herrera, as well as Ethiopian legends like Mahmoud Ahmed, Aster Aweke, Tewodros Tadesse, and Neway Debebe.

Yohannes leads a band under his own name, and between 2006 and 2017 he produced two albums and an EP. He received the Minnesota Emerging Composer Award (MECA) in 2014, and the following year he was a recipient of an award from the Ethiopian Literary Group known as Rhythmic Pen alongside

the great Ethiopian poet Bewketu Seyoum. In 2016, his song “The Jungle Way Out” was nominated for a Grammy, recorded by saxophonist Alex Han and produced by Marcus Miller. Currently, Yohannes keeps busy playing with R&B star Stokley Williams, Minneapolis-based event band Northstar, and as a freelance bassist.

The **Eric Stokes Song Contest** is sponsored by Zeitgeist in memory of late composer Eric Stokes; the contest was designed to encourage and celebrate amateur composers throughout the Twin Cities. 2019 winners to be announced.

Zeitgeist: Playing it Close to Home

Feb. 8-9, 7:30 p.m.

Studio Z: 275 East Fourth Street, Suite 200, St. Paul

Feb. 10, 6 p.m. meal, 6:30 p.m. concert

Ras Ethiopian Restaurant: 2516 7th St. W, St Paul

Tickets: \$15 / \$10 students & seniors

Tickets and details at zeitgeistnewmusic.org.

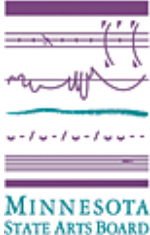
About Zeitgeist:

Founded in 1977, Zeitgeist is a new music chamber ensemble consisting of two percussion, piano and woodwinds, and is one of the oldest and most successful new music groups in the country. Based in St. Paul, Minn., the group presents an annual concert series and delivers a wide variety of community-based performance programs for residents of the Twin Cities and the surrounding areas. Zeitgeist’s mission is to bring newly created music to life with performances that engage and stimulate. Members are: Heather Barringer, percussion; Patti Cudd, percussion; Pat O’Keefe, woodwinds; Nicola Melville, piano.

Zeitgeist is supported by the The City of St. Paul’s Cultural STAR Program, The Amphion Foundation, The Knight Foundation, The Lowertown Future Fund, the Target Foundation, the McKnight Foundation, the Jerome Foundation, the Albrecht Family Foundation, the Aaron Copland Fund, The Mandel Family Foundation, and the Minnesota State Arts Board and the Metropolitan Regional Arts Council, through an appropriation by the Minnesota State Legislature.

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