



Photo by Ogata

**Vijay Iyer and  
Wadada Leo Smith**  
*Defiant Life*

Sat, May 16, 2026 at 8 pm  
The Nimoy

**CENTER  
FOR THE ART OF  
PERFORMANCE  
UCLA**

# WELCOME TO THE 2025–26 SEASON

UCLA's Center for the Art of Performance (CAP UCLA) is dedicated to the advancement of the contemporary performing arts in all disciplines – dance, music, spoken word and theater, as well as emerging digital, collaborative and cross cultural platforms – by leading artists from around the globe.

Our mission aligns with UCLA's mission of education, research and civic engagement by providing cultural and experiential programs that provoke inquiry and facilitate connection and creativity.

[cap.ucla.edu](http://cap.ucla.edu)



Throughout history, in moments of uncertainty and transformation, it is the arts that have helped us hold the line — and imagine the horizon. As we move through a shifting political and cultural landscape, we return to the stage not only to reflect, but to lead.

Artists have long been the truth-tellers, the visionaries, the builders of bridges where none existed. In the face of fear or division, they light the way forward — sparking dialogue, resisting silence and creating the emotional commons where we rediscover our shared humanity. Art doesn't just document history — it shapes it. It asks bold questions. It offers sanctuary. And it dares us to dream.

For our 2025–26 season CAP UCLA invites you into a radical act of gathering across 30 performances with more than 100 artists from around the globe. Imagine a world where strangers become companions in belonging, where performance becomes public square and where artistic voices help us build a more compassionate and courageous society.

This season is more than a series of performances — it is a call to community. Exciting new theater, revolutionary music and dance remind us that unity is not an ideal — it is an act. The stage becomes our platform, our laboratory, our refuge. Here, we witness. We reckon. We rejoice.

Even in tumultuous times — especially in those times — art meets the moment. And so do we.

With hope and imagination,



**Edgar Miramontes**  
*Executive and Artistic Director*



Photo by Maria Baranova



Photo by Ogata

CAP UCLA presents

# Vijay Iyer and Wadada Leo Smith *Defiant Life*

Sat, May 16, 2026 at 8 pm  
The Nimoy

Program duration: 60 minutes  
No intermission



PALIHOTEL  
WESTWOOD VILLAGE



KPFK 90.7FM

Support provided by Fariba Ghaffari. Additional support provided by the NEA Challenge Grant Endowment.

## **ABOUT DEFIANT LIFE**

Two of creative music's most heralded luminaries, each feted with prizes and critical accolades from across the globe, composer-pianist Vijay Iyer and composer-trumpeter Wadada Leo Smith construct powerful, uncategorizable duets full of subtle emotion, mystery, and spiritual intensity. Their music reveals the improvisational magic of the duo, the expressive individuality of the participants, and the ways that they can – as Smith says – “merge as a single wave, or a single voice.”

Referring to Smith as his “hero, friend and teacher,” Iyer played in the AACM icon’s “Golden Quartet” from 2005 through 2012. Their duo, first formed in the crucible of that band, received sweeping praise for their 2016 album *A Cosmic Rhythm with Each Stroke* (ECM). Nine years later, with Smith now an octogenarian, the duo returned with their spellbinding 2025 release *Defiant Life* (ECM). As Iyer writes in the liner notes to *Defiant Life*, “This recording session was shaped by our ongoing sorrow and outrage over the past year’s cruelties, but also by our faith in human possibility.” *Defiant Life* was named one of the best albums of 2025 in various publications, including *The Wire*, *Stereogum*, *Magnet*, *The Boston Globe*, *The ArtsFuse* and the *San Diego Union-Tribune*, whose critic called it “one of the most contemplative, understated and moving albums of the year.”

“What follows might be a two-figure play in which the exchanges involve mortality or impermanence or divinity. The musicians seem to trade remarks and sometimes talk with one another ... the discourses are both cultivated and passionate.” As *The New Yorker* so poetically described, the visionary collaborations of Smith and Iyer express the rigor, care and strength of a deep human connection spanning generations and nurtured over decades.

## ABOUT THE ARTISTS

**Wadada Leo Smith:** Composer, trumpeter and author Wadada Leo Smith is one of the creative music world's most heralded artists. He grew up steeped in the musical traditions of the South, performing in Delta Blues and other traditional bands before moving to Chicago, where he joined the legendary AACM collective. Smith defines his work as "Creative Music," and his diverse discography reveals a recorded history of music centered in the idea of spiritual harmony and the unification of social and cultural issues of his world. Among his major recordings are *Ten Freedom Summers*, *America's National Parks* and *String Quartets Nos. 1-12*. A finalist for the 2013 Pulitzer Prize in Music, Smith has received numerous other awards and honors including a 2016 Doris Duke Artist Award, a Guggenheim Fellowship, the Hammer Museum's 2016 Mohn Award for Career Achievement "honoring brilliance and resilience," the UCLA Medal, and the 2022 Vision Festival's Lifetime Achievement Award, among many others. In 2023 he was selected for induction into the American Academy of Arts and Letters. An esteemed educator, from 1994–2013 Smith was on the faculty at California Institute of the Arts, where he served as director of the African-American Improvisational Music program. He most recently served as the Spring 2024 Fromm Foundation Visiting Lecturer on Music at Harvard University.

**Vijay Iyer** has carved out a unique path as an influential, prolific, shape-shifting presence in twenty-first-century music. A composer and pianist active and revered across multiple musical communities, Iyer has created a consistently innovative, emotionally resonant body of work over the last three decades, earning him a place as one of the leading music-makers of his generation. His honors include a MacArthur Fellowship, a Doris Duke Artist Award, a United States Artist Fellowship, three Grammy nominations and the Alpert Award in the Arts. His newest albums are *Fifteen* (Nonesuch, 2026), an all-star collective with composer-performers Henry Threadgill and Dafnis Prieto; *Defiant Life* (ECM, 2025), his second suite of duets with visionary composer-trumpeter Wadada Leo Smith; *Compassion* (ECM, 2024), featuring his celebrated trio with drummer Tyshawn Sorey and bassist Linda May Han Oh; *Thereupon* (Pi Recordings,

2025), by the group Fieldwork (Iyer, Sorey, and saxophonist Steve Lehman); *Trouble* (BMOP/sound, 2024), a composer portrait album comprising three of his orchestral works, including the titular violin concerto performed by Jennifer Koh; and *Love in Exile* (Verve, 2023), his Grammy-nominated collaboration with Arooj Aftab and Shahzad Ismaily. *The New York Times* observed, “Iyer’s music has always been both intelligent and unpretentious, complex without being opaque; [he] ponders a phrase with obsessive rumination, unveiling layers of shifting, subtle emotion, before letting it fly with joyous abandon.” He is a professor at Harvard University.



# SOMETHING NEW IS ON THE HORIZON

Follow [@cap\\_ucla](#) on Instagram to be the first to know



# DESIGN FOR SHARING (DFS)

Each year, Design for Sharing (DFS) brings thousands of K-12 public school students from across Los Angeles to CAP UCLA venues for free performances and interactive workshops with professional artists.

DFS programs are open to any public school in greater Los Angeles, and are always free to attend.

[cap.ucla.edu/dfs](http://cap.ucla.edu/dfs)



**CAP  
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# UCLA NIMOY THEATER

CAP UCLA has a new home for live performance  
in Westwood!

Located near the UCLA campus on Westwood Boulevard,  
The Nimoy is a reimagining of the historic Crest Theatre as a  
flexible, state-of-the-art performance space.

This dynamic and intimately scaled venue immerses  
audiences in a profoundly engaging experience of live  
performance – while providing contemporary performing  
artists from Los Angeles and around the world expanded  
opportunities to develop and present new work.

[cap.ucla.edu/nimoy](https://cap.ucla.edu/nimoy)



# LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We at UCLA's Center for the Art of Performance acknowledge the Gabrielino/Tongva peoples as the traditional land caretakers of Tovaangar (the Los Angeles basin and South Channel Islands).

As a land grant institution, we pay our respects to the Ancestors (Honuukvetam), Elders (Ahihirom), and relatives/relations (Eyoohinkem) past, present and emerging.

# There is no room for racism, intolerance, or inequity.

## Anywhere

Not on our stages, in our offices, on our loading docks, in the box office lines, or on the dance floor.

## With anyone

Not with our staff, crew, artists, volunteers, ushers, audiences or fans.

We uphold and embrace principles of antiracism, equity, diversity and **AUTHENTIC** inclusion as integral to our mission.

We must **EMPOWER** the historically underrepresented.

We must **UPLIFT** excluded voices.

We must **RESIST** structural racism.

We will **COMMIT** fiercely to our responsibility to observe, absorb, consider, contemplate, endure, share and engage in this change.

We **STAND AGAINST** all forms of discrimination.

We will **STRIVE** to make our organization more equitable and inclusive.

As part of UCLA's School of Art & Architecture (SOAA), we – UCLA's Center for the Art of Performance (CAP UCLA) and Theater Management Services (TMS) – are committed to connecting and creating space for the arts and for all communities.

We acknowledge our organizations' histories as being predominantly white institutions.

We are facing uncomfortable truths about systemic racism as we work to make the deep changes necessary to transform the organizational dynamics in our work culture and business practices and dismantle existing oppressive structures. We know there will be shortcomings, which we will face head on. We commit to continually addressing and adapting to changes as they arise. It is only in an improved, supportive work environment that everyone can be fully present, and respected as their true authentic selves.

*This statement was drafted by a committee of staff members from both the Center for the Art of Performance and Theater Management Services, from a variety of backgrounds, viewpoints and perspectives.*

Together we stand with UCLA's School of Art and Architecture's EDI statement.



# CAP UCLA COUNCIL LEADERSHIP

## CAP UCLA Executive Producer Council

The Executive Producer Council is CAP UCLA's philanthropic leadership group, which develops and contributes resources vital to CAP UCLA's programming and mission. The Council champions the creative development and presentation of live programs and public dialogue with contemporary performing artists by providing direct support for CAP UCLA's annual programming. The Council is engaged in dialogue about the artistic and curatorial practices that inform annual programs, long-term initiatives and collaborative planning efforts which stand at the heart of CAP UCLA's mission and public purpose.

## Design for Sharing (DFS) Council

The Design for Sharing Council is a group of dedicated supporters whose efforts help to resource the K-12 arts education programs of DFS.

[cap.ucla.edu/councils](http://cap.ucla.edu/councils)



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# CAP UCLA STAFF

## Director's Office

Executive and Artistic Director: Edgar Miramontes  
Director of Education and Special Initiatives: Meryl Friedman  
Artist Liaison Manager: Zarina Rico  
Associate Technical Director/Audio & Video: Duncan Woodbury  
Associate Technical Director/Lighting & Stage: Katelan Braymer  
Community Projects and Operations Managers: Mads Falcone  
Assistant to the Executive and Artistic Director: Emily Davis

## Marketing and Communications

Director of Marketing and Communications: Bahareh Ebrahimzadeh  
Marketing Coordinator: Elvis Harold  
Marketing Associate: Helene Griffin

## Development

Associate Director of Development: Erika Herran  
Development Assistant: Zoey Mendoza

## Education

Director of Education & Special Initiatives: Meryl Friedman  
Education Program Coordinator: Theresa Willis Peters  
Student Arts Coordinator: Theo Bonner-Perkins

## Financial Management

Manager of Finance and Accounts: Stephanie Tarvyd  
Finance Analyst: Jodi Klein  
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## Human Resources

Human Resources Assistant: Erah Lulu

## Ticketing

Director, UCLA Central Ticket Office: Gerardo Galeano  
Event Box Office Manager: Katherine Hernandez  
Assistant Director, Performing Arts & Customer Service: Jamal Johnson

## Royce Hall

Director of Operations: Heidi Snyder  
Venue Manager: Evan "Otter" Wilkinson  
Rentals Manager: Anthony Jones  
Rentals Associate: Christina Montano

## Royce Hall Production

Production Manager: Jeff Wallace  
Stage Manager: Lauren "Ren" Westbury  
Event Manager: Thomas Colen  
Audio/Video Supervisor: John Coleman  
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## Royce Hall Patron Services

Patron Services Manager: James Porter  
House Manager: Ernie Ybarra  
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## Royce Hall Custodial

Custodian Supervisor: Ranoya Exum  
Custodian Lead: Delshena Murphy  
Custodian Lead: Montrell Calloway

## CAP UCLA Administrative Offices

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## General Questions

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# THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS

**CAP UCLA gratefully acknowledges our donors, sponsors and members.**

**This list reflects donations and commitments to the UCLA Nimoy Theater campaign as well as annual gifts made from Jan 1, 2025 to Jan 31, 2026.**

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**Over time, many generous individuals have initiated leadership gifts to establish endowments that support the performing arts at UCLA in perpetuity. We gratefully acknowledge:**

Barbara and Bruce Dobkin, James A. Doolittle, Arthur E. Guedel, Kevin Jeske, Henry and Ginny Mancini, Merle & Peter Mullin, José Luis Nazar, Evelyn & Mo Ostin, Beatrix F. Padway, Mimi Perloff, Lloyd E. Rigler, Sally & William A. Rutter, Shirley & Ralph Shapiro, Roslyn Holt Swartz & Allan J. Swartz, and Mimi & Werner Wolfen.

## NAME YOUR SEAT

The opening of The Nimoy offers donors a rare opportunity to create a lasting legacy while celebrating their passion for contemporary performing arts at UCLA. Learn more about naming a seat in The Nimoy – CAP UCLA’s newest home for live performance – and other opportunities to become a part of this state-of-the-art theater.

[cap.ucla.edu/give-nimoy](https://cap.ucla.edu/give-nimoy)



# BECOME A CAP UCLA MEMBER

Membership is an invitation – to be closer to the creative process, to champion new ideas and to help the arts thrive.

Members receive priority access, ticket benefits and invitations to special gatherings that deepen the experience of our shared journey.

Join today at [cap.ucla.edu/membership](https://cap.ucla.edu/membership)

