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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

WindSync collaborates with AFA and Houston Ballet Academy to present 'Simple Gifts' this holiday season

HOUSTON, TX (November 25, 2014) – Two works by AFA student composers will be featured as part of 'Simple Gifts', a concert performed by WindSync in collaboration with AFA, Houston Ballet Academy, and Houston Public Media on Wednesday, December 16 at Zilkha Hall in The Hobby Center (800 Bagby St, 77002) at 7:30pm. The concert will feature holiday-themed music from a wide variety of cultures.

WindSync, Houston's premier woodwind quintet, was asked to choose two short pieces from AFA's 2014 'World Premieres' concert for inclusion on their holiday program. "These pieces stood out to us for their unique compositional voices," says Tracy Jacobson, bassoonist for WindSync.

These pieces, written by AFA student composers Matt Raymond, a high school junior from Rochester Hills, Michigan, and Matthew Toffoletto, a senior at the High School for the Performing and Visual Arts, were part of AFA's collaboration with Houston Ballet Academy choreography students Alana Campbell and Henry Grey. The ballets will be recreated for the WindSync performance on December 16.

Composer Matt Raymond travelled from Michigan to Houston to participate in the AFA Summer Music Conservatory. The experience of writing an original piece for ballet was exciting, but Raymond says he had little faith in his abilities: "I decided that I might as well learn to write with a new, happy, joyful sound so I immediately scrapped everything I wrote that I didn't like." The AFA experience, however, was transformative. "A couple weeks into the program we met with the choreographers and talked about our pieces. I was so overjoyed that Henry [Grey] liked my music and I began to write even more quickly, and emailed Henry often, sometimes several times a day. We continued this way until my piece was premiered."



AFA student composer
Matt Raymond



AFA student composer
Matthew Toffoletto
photo courtesy of David DeHoyos

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In addition to the short ballets, WindSync will perform their original arrangement of Tchaikovsky's "The Nutcracker", featuring choreography provided by Jennifer Sommers of Houston Ballet. The concert will also feature a commissioned work from Houston composer Paul English entitled "Discovering Sønderho", based on a melody provided by the Danish String Quartet. Other original arrangements to be performed include Valerie Coleman's "Umoja", celebrating Kwanzaa; a traditional Chinese folk song; and works by Prokofiev and Respighi all arranged by WindSync.

To purchase tickets for this performance, visit The Hobby Center at www.thehobbycenter.org. Tickets are \$25 for general admission and \$10 for students.

About AFA:

AFA enriches the lives of young people through music. We accomplish this mission by: Encouraging talent and creativity in opportunities that empower life skills through musical achievement; Creating educational programs for young people in safe and respectful environments; Committing to excellence in teaching, faculty and state-of-the-art partnerships; Leading collaborations that meet the needs of the arts education community. For more information, visit www.AFAtexas.org.

About WindSync:

WindSync, a Houston-based woodwind quintet, has distinguished itself among classical music ensembles as North America's foremost emerging wind quintet. The ensemble is recognized internationally for dramatic and adventurous programming in venues ranging from concert halls to museums, universities and schools. The energetic group plays exclusively from memory, including elements of staging and choreography, and focuses on building connections with audiences through dynamic concert programming and charismatic stage presence. To learn more visit www.windsync.org.

About Houston Ballet Academy:

Since its founding in 1955, Houston Ballet Academy has provided the highest quality ballet training to aspiring dancers. Students are completely immersed in dance for three to six weeks and obtain invaluable training that will enrich and complement their previous dance education. It is an opportunity to train in a professional environment, where students can dance for six to eight hours a day, six days per week, learning from world-class teachers and Houston Ballet company members. Through a 15-year collaboration with AFA, students have the opportunity to work closely with young composers in producing an original work. This is an invaluable experience, offering students the chance to explore the techniques and challenges of creating, rehearsing and performing short pieces of original choreography.

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