

## MUSIC REVIEW

# Imani wind quintet traverses the globe

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*Special to The Times*

One advantage of working a road less traveled is the lack of precedents that can trip you up or make for easy comparisons — a quality of freshness savored by the Imani Winds.

Formed in 1997, this ambitious and infectiously dedicated crew seeks both to expand awareness of the wind quintet and to push its repertoire into a new terrain where African American, Latin and European musical experiences converge. It's a tall double order, but the members are well on their way to fulfilling their mission.

Sunday afternoon at Caltech's Beckman Auditorium, in this season's closing event of the "Sundays With Coleman" series, the Imani ("faith" in Swahili) laid out its agenda while offering tightly integrated sonorous pleasures.

A running theme, in this concert and in the group's career, entails melding folk, vernacular and classical idioms while exploring links between various diasporas.

African American notions came through in flutist Valerie Coleman's expansive arrangement of the classic spiritual "Steal Away" and also in her Concerto for Wind Quintet, the orchestra-less premiere of which

took place at the Imani's Carnegie Hall debut in 2001. In this engaging showpiece, deftly woven polyrhythmic lines — suggesting the pulse of Cuban clave and even James Brown — blend with plaintive lyricism.

From the Iberian world came Manuel de Falla's "Four Spanish Pieces," originally for piano but given a vibrant multihued texture in Wayne Peterson's wind arrangement.

From Argentine sources, the group offered an informative one-two punch. Celebrated film/jazz/concert music composer Lalo Schifrin's "La Nouvelle Orleans" pays tribute to the traditional New Orleans funeral, in a style first tango-inflected and then plainly bluesy. The twist here was that it features wind quintet, not brass band.

"Nuevo tango" master Astor Piazzolla's beloved tune "Oblivion," which came next, was elaborately recast in horn player Jeff Scott's arrangement, at times too intense to properly frame the fragile tenderness of its pleading theme.

Capping the program with a token standard repertoire piece, the Imani dug into Hindemith's 1922 "Kleine Kammermusik für fünf Bläser," its musical language full of rigor and rubber. The five musicians nailed it too. All in all, they've got the right stuff.