



Building Community Through Rhythm

PRESS RELEASE

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11th Annual World Rhythm Festival Dedicated to Babatunde Olatunji

Largest free percussion festival in the world dedicated to African Master

SEATTLE — April 21, 2003 — The Seattle World Percussion Society announced today that it will dedicate the 11th annual World Rhythm Festival to world music pioneer Babatunde Olatunji. Baba, who passed away recently at the age of 76, was a frequent festival performer and teacher. His 1959 recording, *Drums of Passion*, is credited with bringing African music to a wide American audience. He won a Grammy in 1991 for his work with Planet Drum, and his 1997 release, *Love Drum Talk*, was nominated for a Grammy. Olatunji influenced many modern musicians, including John Coltrane, Mickey Hart and Carlos Santana.

“Baba touched many in the Pacific Northwest with his gospel of love and the power of the drum. We were blessed to have had him with us so many times, and I was fortunate to know him. A great tree has fallen,” says John Avinger, Executive Director of the Seattle World Percussion Society.

A special dedication will take place during the Opening Ceremony on the Seattle Center House Stage at 7:00pm on Friday, April 25, 2003. This dedication will include Gordy Ryan, who played with Olatunji for 30 years in the group Drums of Passion.

In addition, Arthur Hull will facilitate the Great Northwest Drum Circle in Olatunji’s honor on Saturday, April 26, at 6:00pm in the Snoqualmie Room. Hull is the acknowledged founder of the modern facilitated drum circle movement. These community rhythm events provide an opportunity for drummers of all levels to enjoy a powerful group playing experience.

The World Rhythm Festival is the largest free percussion festival in the world and is expected to draw more than 10,000 people from around the world. For more information, including an online press kit, visit www.swps.org.

For more information, contact:

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Founded in 1994, the Seattle World Percussion Society (SWPS) believes in the positive impact of rhythm and strives to provide opportunities for people to experience this powerful effect in their lives. These opportunities include the annual World Rhythm Festival and community rhythm events.

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The Seattle World Percussion Society is a 501(c)(3) Nonprofit Organization.