

# Composer Tuning Up for Premiere

By NANCY GRAHAM,  
Times Staff Writer

Selma Smith will realize a life-long dream Sunday when her composition, "Espressivo," is premiered by the Brentwood-Westwood Symphony at Paul Revere Junior High School in Brentwood.

It will be the first time the 67-year-old retired attorney from Encino will have a chance to hear her work played by a full orchestra.

Smith said she could read music before she could read words. At age 5 she would hum the melodies she read from her 21-year-old brother's violin music. As a child she played the violin and later studied classical Spanish guitar, piano and singing. She also studied dance, including ballet, flamenco and folk dancing.

Smith followed the lead of an older sister and three brothers in pursuing a law degree and was admitted to the California Bar in 1943 at age 23.

She practiced law for more than 40 years and was admitted to practice before the U.S. District Court, U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals and the U.S. Supreme Court.

Through it all, music has been a constant part of Smith's life. She has composed more than 100 piano and instrumental pieces and says she always has a melody in mind. Many times, she said, she would pause while dictating to her secretary, pick up a pencil and jot down the music she was hearing, then proceed with her law work.

For 12 years, she served as a docent with an affiliate group of the Los Angeles Philharmonic that presented concerts in the schools.

Fluent in Spanish, Smith became the first Philharmonic docent to make presentations in Spanish-speaking communities. She also served on the Philharmonic Minority Training Committee, assisting



CASSY COHEN / Los Angeles Times

Selma Smith, who says she often hears music in her mind, has composed more than 100 piano and instrumental pieces.

in the selection of minority youth who studied with members of the orchestra.

In 1966, Smith combined her interests in Spanish language, culture, music and the law. She invited Spanish-speaking women members of the Los Angeles consular corps to be guests at a Law Day program of the Women Lawyers' Assn. of Los Angeles. She introduced them all in Spanish, then

entertained at the piano, performing 20 minutes of her own compositions.

"Espressivo" was written for piano and orchestrated by Alvin Mills, conductor of the Brentwood-Westwood Symphony.

The concert will begin at 3 p.m. in the auditorium of Paul Revere Junior High School, 1450 Allenford Ave., Brentwood. Admission is free.