



NEWS RELEASE

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- WHAT:** [SWEET HONEY IN THE ROCK...A TRIBUTE](#)
- WHEN:** Thursday, November 7, 7:30 p.m.
- WHERE:** Fine Arts Center Concert Hall
University of Massachusetts Amherst
- TICKETS:** Call 1-800-999-UMAS or 545-2511 for tickets or go online to <http://www.fineartscenter.com/>
- IMAGES:** To download images relating to this press release please go online to <https://fac.umass.edu/Online/PressImages>

SWEET HONEY IN THE ROCK...A TRIBUTE CONCERT TO ODETTA, MIRIAM MAKEBA & ABBEY LINCOLN AT THE UMASS FAC

www.fineartscenter.com/Online/SweetHoneyInTheRock

Celebrating its fourth decade of performances, the historic African-American a cappella group **Sweet Honey In The Rock** returns to the UMass Fine Arts Center Concert Hall on Thursday, November 7 at 7:30 p.m. This concert reprises their 2011 concert at Lincoln Center where they premiered the tribute to Nina Simone, Odetta and Miriam Makeba--with instrumental backing by a jazz trio. Sweet Honey is comprised of vocalists Carol Maillard, Louise Robinson, Nitanju Bolade Casel, Aisha Kahlil and sign language interpreter Shirley Childress. There will be a pre-concert talk by NEPR Jazz Safari host Kari Njiiri at the Rand Theater starting at 6:30 p.m.

The venerable group is steeped in the music of African-American cultural tradition and the social activism of the civil rights era. "Nina, Miriam, Odetta, and Abbey were all unquestionably inspirational and brilliant. Each, in their unique way, had the courage to use the power of music as a vehicle to promote change in very troubling times," stated SWEET HONEY IN THE ROCK member, Carol Maillard. "Their expression of beauty, inner strength, vision, and soul gave us a sense of pride. And their music provided an inspiring soundtrack to the journeys we've all taken as African American women," she added.

Although world renowned as a premiere vocal ensemble, Sweet Honey In The Rock decided to add a jazz trio to compliment this colorful, eclectic tapestry of music. The trio includes noted pianist/keyboard player and music director, Stacey Wade (*Al Green, Mary J.*

Blige, Michael McDonald and Bonnie Raitt), acoustic and electric bassist, Parker McAllister (*Dorinda Clark, Cecil McBee and Don Palma*) and drummer/percussionist, Jovol Bell (*Ed Thigpen, Jack DeJohnette and Kim Burrell*).

The Tribute presentation offers new arrangements of several classic and popular recordings by the quartet of icons. Some of the songs that are performed include Nina Simone's, "Feelin' Good" and "See - Line Woman"; Odetta's, "Another Man Done Gone" and "Midnight Special"; Miriam Makeba's, "Pata Pata" and "Shuku, Shuku"; and Abbey Lincoln's, "A Turtle's Dream" and "Down Here Below." The show also incorporates material from Sweet Honey In The Rock's more traditional repertoire, and also amazing solo performances by each member of the group. It is well-balanced, and also represents the ensemble's first full concert performance with a contemporary jazz trio.

In the course of creating its adventurous and diverse mixture of blues, African, jazz, gospel and R&B music with excursions into symphonic and dance-theater, 23 vocalists have passed through the group. They formed as a quartet in 1973 at a workshop at the D.C. Black Repertory Theater Company in Washington. Dr. Bernice Johnson Reagon, Carol Maillard, Louise Robinson, and Mie drew their name from the first song they learned, "Sweet Honey in the Rock," based on a Biblical psalm. "Sweet Honey speaks of a land that is so rich when you break the rocks open, honey flows. And we thought it was something like us African-American women . . . strong like a rock, but inside [there's] honey – sweet," explains Robinson.

The vocalists have always walked their talk, appearing at numerous political rallies (Reagon and Barnwell were arrested at the Free Africa Movement anti-apartheid demonstrations in front of the South African embassy in Washington), presenting women's awareness workshops, performing as part of the Nelson and Winnie Mandela celebration tour in 1990 after Mr. Mandela's release from prison, and holding benefit concerts for the deaf. (For decades, Sweet Honey's on-stage line-up has included an American sign language interpreter, a position held by Shirley Childress since 1981).

Tickets for Sweet Honey In The Rock are \$40, \$35, and \$15; Five College, GCC, STCC students and youth 17 and under are \$15, \$12 and \$10. For tickets call the Box Office at 413-545-2511, toll-free at 800-999-UMAS, or purchase online at fineartscenter.com. Fine Arts Center Season Sponsors are Baystate Health and Health New England. Event sponsors include The Rainbow Times, UMass Hotel and Conference Center, WRSI 93.9FM and NEPR 88.5FM.

PHOTOS

Hi-res photos available for download: <https://fac.umass.edu/Online/article/Images>.

PRESS PASSES

A limited number of press passes are available. Please contact Shawn Farley at 413-545-4159 or sfarley@admin.umass.edu.

ABOUT THE FAC

The Fine Arts Center, located on the UMass Amherst campus, is a presenter of music, dance, theater and the visual arts, bringing hundreds of outstanding and provocative artists to the Pioneer Valley for over 35 years.

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