FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

University of Minnesota to Host 31st Annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Concert featuring Committed, 1/15/12

MINNEAPOLIS/ST. PAUL (12/15/11) -- On Sunday, January 15, 2012, from 4-6 p.m., the University of Minnesota will host the 31st Annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Concert featuring Committed, winners of NBC’s The Sing-Off, plus Larry Long with musical guests Tonia Hughes, Billy Peterson, and Billy Steele. The concert will take place at the University’s Ted Mann Concert Hall (2128 4th Street South, Minneapolis, MN 55455, U of M West Bank campus). This program honors Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Dr. Reginald Buckner, founder of the MLK, Jr. Concert.

When the University of Minnesota's Martin Luther King Jr. Concert began more than 30 years ago, it was the only tribute of its kind in Minnesota. The late Reginald Buckner, School of Music professor and an accomplished performer and composer, founded the concert and began the tradition of celebrating the life and accomplishments of Dr. King through the performing arts. After professor Buckner’s death in 1989, the University continued to honor Buckner’s memory and artistic genius by carrying on the inspiring legacy of this annual program. The Martin Luther King Celebration is now a joint program of the University of Minnesota’s Office for Equity and Diversity and the School of Music.

The concert is free of charge and open to the public; no advance tickets or reservations are required. For more information about the program, or for disability accommodations, contact the Office for Equity and Diversity at oed@umn.edu or 612-624-0594. Visit z.umn.edu/MLK2012 for more information.

ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

Committed is a highly sought-after a cappella singing group comprised of six young men who love creativity, music, and God. The group began in 2003 at Forest Lake Academy and solidified their sound while at school at Oakwood University in Huntsville, AL. Members of the group include Maurice Staple, Alain “Tommy” Gervais, Theron "Therry" Thomas, Robbie Pressley, Dennis “DJ” Baptiste, and Geston Pierre.

Committed has been compared to a cappella groups like Take 6 and Boyz II Men. What sets Committed apart is its versatility – four out of the six members are instrumentalists, and all of them are able to sing various styles of music from gospel, pop, R&B, contemporary worship, and jazz.

The group was featured on the second season of NBC’s hit singing competition, “The Sing Off,” and emerged as the season two champions. It has been their strong faith, hard work, and creativity that has gotten them to the point of being called one of the nation’s top ten a cappella groups. Committed truly believes that “with God all things are possible,” and they continue to work toward inspiring people through music. More on Committed’s website.
Larry Long, called “a true American Troubadour” by author Studs Terkel, has made his life work the celebration of American stories and heroes. Long’s hundreds of ballads readily capture the American history of our time, while embracing our common humanity with stories about those history makers who are known and those who are unknown. He has worked in urban communities with Latin, Somali, African-American, and Scandinavian students. He has worked in southern rural communities combining black, white, Native American and Latin stories.

Now a Smithsonian Folkways recording artist, Long has sung at major festivals, concerts and events throughout the U.S. and internationally. Long is a recipient of the prestigious Bush Artists Fellowship, the Pope John XXIII Award and In The Spirit of Crazy Horse Award for his work in forgotten communities. For more information, visit Larry Long’s website.

Tonia Hughes has spent the last five years broadening her appeal in the Twin Cities by garnering critical acclaim in musical theatrical productions throughout the area. Her latest and long-awaited release I’m Ready Now is uniquely different from anything that she has done to date in that it embodies all that she is vocally and spiritually.

In addition to serving as a lead vocalist with the Grammy and Stellar Award nominated Excelsior Chorale Ensemble, Hughes has provided background vocals at various events featuring Tremaine Hawkins, Rance Allen, and William Murphy. Because of her versatile vocal ability, Hughes has opened for various events featuring legendary music artists such as Aretha Franklin, Ray Charles and Little Richard. However, she’s most grateful for the experience garnered while working with industry powerhouses Fred Hammond, Mary J. Blige, and Judith Christie McAllister.

Billy Peterson is one of the premier bass players in the world, as well as a successful producer and arranger. He has worked with Ben Sidran, Eddie Harris, Leo Kottke, Bob Dylan and Steve Miller, to name a few. Peterson was also the bassist for the Steve Miller band for 20 years. More at Jazz.com.

The youngest of the Steele siblings, Billy Steele performs, writes, and produces for the Grammy Award-winning ensemble, the Sounds of Blackness, for who he is currently serving as Assistant Director. He is the co-recipient of three Grammys via this talented ensemble. He continues to write and produce for various artists, including the Steeles. His voice has been heard on soundtracks with artists such as Rod Stewart, Luther Vandross and many more. Recently, he collaborated on the Disney soundtrack Legends, The John Henry Story, narrated by James Earl Jones. More at Steele’s website.

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