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University of Minnesota to Host 35th Annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Tribute featuring Committed, 1/21/16

MINNEAPOLIS/ST. PAUL (12/21/15) – On Thursday, January 21, 2016 at 6 pm, the University of Minnesota will host the 35th Annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Tribute featuring a cappella singing group Committed, winners of NBC’s The Sing-Off, plus performances by jazz vocalists Pippi Ardennia and Sheri Hixon. KFAI Radio is the media sponsor for this event.

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. Tribute 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/MLK2016 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. Committed has performed on NBC’s The Today Show, the NAACP Image Awards and the Dove Awards. The group was featured on the second season of NBC’s hit singing competition, The Sing-Off, and emerged as the season two champions. They recently received a 2016 Grammy nomination in the “Arrangement, Instrumental or A Cappella” category for their performance of “Do You Hear What I Hear?”(Armand Hutton, arrangement). Their recent holiday album, Home for Christmas, was released by Mixed Bag Music Group in November 2015. 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 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. More on Committed’s website.

Pippi Ardennia, founder, president, and hostess of the PipJazz Foundation, has been singing since she was 13. She has performed at many of Chicago's most respected jazz clubs from the Burning Spear and Mr. Kelly’s to the
famous Rosebud on Rush, Green Dolphin, Chicago Symphony Center, the Taste of Chicago, and Buddy Guy Legends. Locally, Pippi has appeared at the Dakota Jazz Club, the Bedlam, and Lake Harriet Spiritual Center, just to name a few. Additionally, Pippi has been the opening headliner stage performer for the annual Twin Cities Jazz Fest every year since 2011. She has performed for such notables as: President Bill Clinton, Mayor Daley, Tony Bennett and Liza Minnelli, and performed along with Freddie Hubbard, George Freeman, Billy Branch, and Johnny Taylor. Pippi has released two CDs Love So Good 2 and Black Coffee. Pippi was named Changemaker 2013 for paving the road for young women in jazz and hosting annual Women in Jazz workshops and concerts. Pippi created the PipJazz Foundation to provide experience and opportunities for young musicians in Minnesota. Andrea Canter stated that the PipJazz Foundation approach is unique in offering real life experience, more common to classical musical contexts, but rare in jazz.

Singer-song writer/flutist Sheri Hixon started writing and performing songs at the age of five. Her debut album, Life Stories (2009), was conceptualized, written, performed, and produced by Sheri. Her music spans may genres and has been described as pop, country, Latin Jazzy Neo-Soul, with a folksy twist. “Sheri Hixon is a throwback to another era of singers, singer-songwriters from the sixties where you could just soak in the music and bathe in the luxurious vocals.” – Joe Montague, Riveting Riffs Magazine.