

October 9, 2023

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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“Uptown String Quartet” performs historic reunion recital in Ashland

Local nonprofit is bringing the legendary all-Black, all-female ensemble for a week of events



Ashland, Oregon—On Sunday, November 5 at 3:00pm at the SOU Music Recital Hall, Ashland-based nonprofit Anima Mundi Productions will proudly produce the reunion concert of the renowned Uptown String Quartet, a classically trained string quartet created and fostered in the 1980’s by legendary percussionist Max Roach—father of the group’s violist, Maxine Roach.

Storied history

When they burst on the scene at the Kennedy Center following their 1989 debut album, *The Washington Post* hailed the Quartet’s “delightfully eclectic and often daringly arranged” repertoire, noting, “Traditional melodies... demonstrated the quartet’s precision, warmth and expressiveness... But what began as a lovely, quaint rendition of the Scott Joplin rag *Easy Winners* ultimately took on a distinctly earthy personality, the first of many unusual touches.” The group often performed Maxine Roach’s arrangement of her father’s *Extensions*, for which she received a Grammy nomination.

The story continues

The four members eventually moved on to brilliant careers as performers, composers, and educators teaching at prestigious institutions and playing on numerous Hollywood soundtracks. The Uptown String Quartet’s extraordinarily gifted cellist, Eileen Folson, passed away in 2007, and the remaining members are now spread across three states. In addition, violinist Dr. Lesa Terry has close ties to Southern Oregon as a member of the Board of Directors of Ashland-based Anima Mundi Productions, the nonprofit producing the Quartet’s reunion residency. Dr. Terry, Maxine Roach, violist and Diane Monroe, violinist are reuniting for this residency and concert. Joining this reunion residency is the highly talented and acclaimed Juilliard-trained cellist, Marika Hughes.

A week-long residency that touches the whole Rogue Valley

Anima Mundi Productions is partnering with Southern Oregon ESD, Unite Oregon, BASE, the Ashland BIPOC Sanctuary, and other local community/education organizations to offer free Uptown String Quartet events for teens and families in Grants Pass, Medford, and Ashland. The Quartet will also perform live on JPR Radio on Wed. Nov.1 and at the R.V. Manor. The general public is invited to join them at a free community conversation event on Friday, Nov. 3, starting with an informal reception at 7:00pm downstairs in the Ashland Elks Lodge. Details at www.AnimaMundiProductions.com/uptown

A historic reunion

The residency culminates in a reunion concert Sunday, Nov. 5 at 3:00pm in the SOU Music Recital Hall on Mountain Ave. in Ashland. **Tickets at www.HumanityTickets.com or (541) 833-3066**

THE UPTOWN STRING QUARTET REUNION CONCERT

DATE: Sunday, November 5, 2023 @ 3:00pm

VENUE: SOU Music Recital Hall, 450 S Mountain Ave, Ashland, OR 97520

TICKETS: www.HumanityTickets.com

(541) 833-3066 | tickets@animamundiproductions.com

Reduced price at the door for students under 25, SOU Faculty/Staff, and Oregon Trail cardholders. Please arrive 30 minutes early to purchase discounted tickets.

Press quotes and backstory:

Maxine Roach:

The Uptown String Quartet was born after a conversation between my father and my grandmother. She said to her son, “Max, you’ve played with Duke Ellington, Miles Davis and Charlie Parker. When are you going to play with your daughter? That’s how it all started.

Diane Monroe:

Max Roach named the string quartet of all black women, “Uptown” symbolic of black musicians who were only allowed to generate and perform their music Uptown in the jazz clubs of Harlem, New York City. The Uptown String Quartet’s international touring began as the “big band” innovative sound of the Max Roach Double Quartet. Our touring included an eleven-year tenure of performances at the famous Blue Note Jazz Club in New York City. There, we were soon ‘discovered’ by Columbia Artists Management in 1988. Now, with the assistance of top rate management, we made exclusive debut appearances and recordings representing generations of Black music including our own arrangements and original compositions.

Lesia Terry:

I'll never forget the phone call I received from Max Roach asking me to join the quartet in NYC at the legendary Blue Note jazz club. I was elated and freaked out all at the same time as I arrived straight off the plane from Atlanta. I quickly learned from Max Roach what would become a driving force in my artistic expression...to value each moment with confidence in my soul and belief in myself!

Marika Hughes:

When I was a teenager in the 1980s, knowing about and hearing The Uptown String Quartet inspired me to no end. There they were – four black women playing in a string quartet, on their own musical terms; playing their music and arrangements at the highest level of artistry. And always deep in the pocket. It is my great honor to play with these incredible women, musicians and trailblazers.

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For media inquiries: Please contact executive director Ethan Gans-Morse at (541) 833-3066 ext. 3. For press-ready photos: <http://animamundiproductions.com/press>

About Anima Mundi Productions

The mission of Anima Mundi Productions is to create, present, and produce new musical works that harness the power of the arts to stir the soul, foster community, and address urgent social and environmental problems.

The mission of our **Heart of Humanity Concert Series** is to bring world-class musicians to Oregon to give voice to underrepresented people with compassion and depth, turning the concert hall into a space for renewed hope, communal healing, and mutual understanding.