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NEWS RELEASE

UMass Amherst Fine Arts Center

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: October 16, 2008

**WHAT: Concert: Fine Arts Center Presents Sweet Honey In The Rock
Saturday, November 1, 8:00 PM**

**WHERE: Fine Arts Center Concert Hall
University of Massachusetts Amherst
Call 1-800-999-UMAS or 545-2511 for tickets or
go online to www.fineartscenter.com/tickets**

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Sweet Honey In The Rock Concert Guaranteed to Lift Spirits

The UMass Fine Arts Center/Center Series presents a performance by Sweet Honey In The Rock at the FAC Concert Hall on Saturday, November 1 at 8:00 P.M. In the best and in the hardest of times, Sweet Honey In The Rock has come in song to communities across the U.S., and around the world raising voices in hope, love, justice, peace, and resistance. Sweet Honey invites their audiences to open their minds and hearts and think about who we are and what we do to one another and to our fellow creatures on this planet.

The Sweet Honey In The Rock performance is the first of this season's "Arts Give Back" events, in which patrons are invited to contribute to the success of one of the area's nonprofit social service agencies. Concert goers are asked to bring a new or gently used item of clothing (all sizes welcome) or accessory that will be donated to Dress for Success, a local organization dedicated to promoting the economic independence of disadvantaged women. More information is available at www.dressforsuccess.org.

On the day of the performance, from 9:30 A.M. to 4:15 P.M., performer and interpreter Shirley Childress Saxton of Sweet Honey In The Rock and special guest artist Aaron Kubey, Executive Director of the National Theatre of the Deaf, will conduct a daylong

exploration of ASL interpreting for performance and the relevance of music in the lives of the deaf and hard-of-hearing. Additional information on the workshop is available from the accompanying press release, or by emailing Halina Kusleika at hark@acad.umass.edu.

On Sunday, October 26 at 5:00 p.m., the Fine Arts Center will be screening the film, *Sweet Honey In The Rock: Raise Your Voice*. The showing is in Room 227, Herter Hall on the UMass Amherst campus.

Rooted in a deeply held commitment to create music out of the rich textures of African American legacy and traditions, *Sweet Honey In The Rock* possesses a stunning vocal prowess that captures the complex sounds of Blues, spirituals, traditional gospel hymns, rap, reggae, African chants, Hip Hop, ancient lullabies, and jazz improvisation. *Sweet Honey's* collective voice, occasionally accompanied by hand percussion instruments, produces a sound filled with soulful harmonies and intricate rhythms. *Sweet Honey In The Rock* is Ysaye Maria Barnwell, Nitanju Bolade Casel, Aisha Kahlil, Carol Maillard, Louise Robinson, and Shirley Childress Saxton, who is a UMass Amherst alumna. The group's latest release, *Experience... 101*, was honored with a Grammy® nomination this year.

From Psalm 81:16 comes the promise to a people of being fed by honey out of the rock. Honey—an ancient substance, sweet and nurturing. Rock—an elemental strength, enduring the winds of time. The metaphor of *sweet honey in the rock* captures completely these African American women whose repertoire is steeped in the sacred music of the Black church, the clarion calls of the civil rights movement, and songs of the struggle for justice everywhere.

Founded by Bernice Johnson Reagon in 1973 at the D.C. Black Repertory Theater Company, *Sweet Honey In The Rock*, internationally renowned a cappella ensemble, has been a vital and innovative presence in the music culture of Washington, D.C., and in communities of conscience around the world. Now in their fourth decade, the Grammy® Award-winning ensemble moves forward, following Bernice Johnson Reagon's retirement in February 2004, continuing the legacy begun thirty-three years ago.

Tickets for *Sweet Honey In The Rock* are \$35, \$30, and \$15. Youth 17 and under and Five College/GCC students are \$15. They are available from the Fine Arts Center Box Office at 545-2511, 800-999-UMAS, or online at www.fineartscenter.com.

The appearance of *Sweet Honey In The Rock* is sponsored by *The Rainbow Times*, the Hampshire Hospitality Group, The River 93.9 FM, and the UMass Amherst Alumni Association. The appearance of *Sweet Honey in the Rock* is funded in part by the Expeditions program of the New England Foundation for the Arts, made possible with funding from the National Endowment for the Arts Regional Touring Program and the American Masterpieces initiative, with additional support from the six New England state arts agencies. Support also comes from the Massachusetts Cultural Council and VSA arts of Massachusetts's ADA Cultural Access Initiative Grant Program.

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