

PRESS RELEASE

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Augusta Savage Gallery

Fine Arts Center

University of Massachusetts Amherst

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Augusta Savage Gallery at the University of Massachusetts Amherst announces an evening of music by bassist and educator **Vishnu Wood** on **April 4, 7pm.**

Vishnu Wood brings life and honor to his musical exploration called **“Blues Around the World,”** an imaginative, compelling program of music that embodies the roots and spirit of the blues. Known for his muscular, hard-driving sound, this Amherst-based musician continues to make his mark on the language of jazz as well as on new generations of musicians.

Vishnu Wood was born in North Carolina and spent his formative years in Detroit, Michigan in the period between Bebop and Motown. He grew up musically at the feet of jazz greats including Barry Harris and Yusef Lateef. He studied bass with Gaston Brohan and John Matthews of the Detroit symphony. In Detroit he worked with Joe Henderson, Dorothy Ashby and Kenney Burrell. Mr. Wood attended the Detroit Institute of Musical Arts. When Vishnu moved to New York, he worked with Dizzie Gillespie, Thelonius Monk, Charles Mingus and Grover Washington. He has recorded with Randy Weston, Max Roach, Barry Harris, Booker Irwin, Alice Coltrane, and Carmen McRae, and for over a decade collaborated, toured and recorded with Randy Weston. Vishnu was bassist to the legendary blues singer Alberta Hunter. In 1973 he founded Safari East Cultural Presentations, Inc. a multicultural music education ensemble providing a lively interactive mix of live music, dancers, storytellers, imagery and narrative. Safari East has provided programs, workshops, and concerts throughout the greater metropolitan area and around the world. Vishnu has served as consultant to, and panelist for, the National Endowment of the Arts, the Massachusetts Cultural Council, and taught classes and workshops at Rutgers University, SUNY Purchase, Hampshire College and the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

Blues Around the World is a step forward in the cross-pollenization of international culture and movement for world peace. The spiritual essence of the blues is the lament of man’s suffering and his resilient quest for freedom, peace and love. The profound beauty of this music has had historic impact and immense popularity worldwide bridging political, racial and religious differences. The audience is transported on a journey that segues from America to Japan, West Africa, North Africa, the Caribbean and Brazil. Specifically, the pieces selected for performance exemplify both the aesthetic and musical elements of this form employing the bent note or “blue note,” the minor pentatonic scale, improvisation, polyrhythms and the Grigot.

For more information: 413-545-5177