

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 will present The Makanda Project, a tribute to the late multi-instrumentalist and educator Makanda Ken McIntyre, arranged by John Kordalewski on April 3, 7pm. This event is free and open to the general public.

This remarkable tribute is comprised of unrecorded works by the Boston-born saxophonist, Makanda Ken McIntyre. This world-renowned multi-instrumentalist, composer, orchestrator and educator was a tireless musical innovator for nearly half a century, with 12 albums and more than 600 compositions and arrangements to his credit. His works include compositions for woodwind quartets, chamber ensembles, jazz bands, and full orchestra, as well as hundreds of lead sheets. He composed ballads, calypsos, bebop, avant-garde and the blues.

The tribute is unique in an important way, as John Kordalewski, the arranger and coordinator of the project comments, "As an approach to extending Makanda's legacy, I like playing the unrecorded music much better than having a "ghost band" that would try to re-do the things Makanda already did. This way, his work keeps moving forward."

John Kordalewski has arranged unrecorded compositions for 6 horns. He and Kurtis Rivers (alto saxophone, clarinet) constituted the nucleus of the ensemble. Together, they spent considerable time exploring Makanda's works. They then found others who were enthused about playing the music, thereby completing the ensemble. They include John Lockwood (bass), Yoron Israel (drums), Josiah Woodson (trumpet, flute), Bill Lowe or Robert Stringer (trombone), Sean Berry (tenor saxophone, flute, clarinet), Charlie Kohlhasse (baritone saxophone), and Salim Washington (tenor saxophone, flute, oboe).

The group holds weekly rehearsals at New England Conservatory. John Kordalewski says, "*I feel that this body of work truly shows Makanda's brilliance as a musical mind. It has attractive melodies and rhythms while doing unconventional things harmonically and structurally. It is not easy to play and it has challenged us to get far enough inside it and play it enough so that we can bring it to life. Once that happens, a unique world of beauty opens up. I think it is something that really deserves to be heard.*"

More about Makanda Ken McIntyre

Makanda, whose given name was "Kenneth Arthur McIntyre," was born on September 7, 1931 in Boston, Massachusetts. His parents, who were from Jamaica, raised him in the South End, a largely West Indian area. He picked up his first saxophone at the late age of 19 after being inspired by Charlie Parker. He made up for lost time through tireless practice and discipline.

After serving two years in the Army, Makanda earned his bachelors in Music Composition from the Boston Conservatory of Music in 1958, with a certificate in flute performance; a Masters in Music Composition from the Boston Conservatory in 1959. He took an Ed.D. in Curriculum Design from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst in 1975.

Makanda was known primarily for leading his own ensembles -- performing on alto saxophone, flute, bass clarinet, oboe and bassoon -- and being proficient on more than 16 instruments, including bass, drums and piano. His playing on all these instruments projected a highly energetic, celebratory life force.

His tremendous work ethic was evident throughout his life and his teachings. He committed himself to inspiring all people about music and believed in the unlimited potential of every student. Makanda taught extensively in the New York City schools and also served on the faculties of Central State University, Wesleyan University, Fordham University, Smith College, and the New School University Jazz and Contemporary Music Department. In 1971, he began a 24-year tenure at the State University of New York/College at Old Westbury. At Old Westbury, he founded and chaired the American Music, Dance and Theatre Program, which was one of the country's first departments dedicated to the arts in the African American tradition. Makanda designed and taught more than 10 courses in instrumental music, arranging, history, theory and composition. He retired as a professor emeritus from Old Westbury in 1995.

In 1983, Makanda founded The Contemporary African American Music Organization (CAAMO) to promote free expression and continuing education in music and the performing arts with African American origins. CAAMO held more than 250 performances and educational workshops throughout the New York area. The CAAMO orchestra performed in many venues, including Carnegie Recital Hall, throughout the 80's.

Makanda performed to great acclaim worldwide. He toured with the Beaver Harris and the 360-degree Experience, with Charlie Haden's Liberation Music Orchestra, and appeared on Cecil Taylor's groundbreaking album, Unit Structures. In the early 90's he was artist-in-residence Bolivia. In 1998, he served as a Jazz Ambassador to the Middle East under the auspices of the Kennedy Center and the United States Information Agency.

In addition to teaching and performing, Makanda composed and arranged songs and scores for film and TV specials. He served on The New York State Council for the Arts, National Endowment for the Arts, and was an active member of International Association of Jazz Educators, National Black Music Caucus and Local 802 Musicians Union. He also published numerous articles and music guidebooks and lectured internationally.

He had the privilege to perform and record with such artists as Nat Adderley, Walter Bishop, Jr., Joanne Brackeen, Jaki Byard, Ron Carter, Richard Davis, Eric Dolphy, Charlie Haden, Craig Harris, Sam Jones, David Murray, Charli Persip, Ben Riley, Warren Smith, Andrei Strobert, Arthur Taylor, and Reggie Workman.

It was in the early 90's that he changed his name to Makanda Ken McIntyre. While performing in Zimbabwe, a stranger handed him a piece of paper on which was written, "Makanda," which means "many skins" in the Ndebele language and "many heads" in Shona.

Makanda was devoted to his family, and named many tunes after them, including his mother, Blanche, his father, Arthur Augustus, his sister, Eileen Mercedes ("Puunti"), his first wife, Charlotte ("Charshee"), his sons Kaijee and Kheil, and his second wife, Joy. His song titles reflect a deep pride in his Jamaican heritage, his commitment to African American struggles, his spiritual nature, and his love of good food!

Makanda passed away at the age of 69 as a result of a heart attack on June 13, 2001, at his home in New York City.

For more information: 413-545-5177