



UMS ACTIVITIES WITH YO-YO MA TO FEATURE TALK IN ANN ARBOR, “DAY OF ACTION” IN FLINT

“Flint Voices: Culture, Community, and Resilience”

A Day of Action in Collaboration with the University Musical Society and Yo-Yo Ma
Includes Over 30 Flint-Based Partners Exploring Culture’s Power to Create Positive Change
Thursday, February 28 in Flint

Visit Also Features Ma’s Talk on “Culture, Understanding, and Survival”
Wednesday, February 27 in Ann Arbor’s Hill Auditorium

ANN ARBOR, MI (February 4, 2019) — The **University Musical Society** (UMS) is pleased to announce a visit to Michigan by cellist **Yo-Yo Ma** that will take place February 27-28, 2019 in Ann Arbor and Flint. This special visit builds on the performer’s two-year journey to perform Johann Sebastian Bach’s Six Suites for Solo Cello as a catalyst for social action, and it marks the first time Ma is extending the model beyond the Bach Project to engage a broader audience. The activities include a talk in the University of Michigan’s Hill Auditorium on “Culture, Understanding, and Survival” as well as a “Day of Action” in Flint, MI, with the theme “Flint Voices: Culture, Community, and Resilience.” This day-long set of activities will bring together 50 Flint-based community leaders for a working session on cultural collaboration for social change led by Yo-Yo Ma, as well as a Community Cultural Showcase celebrating Flint’s past and future, which is open to the public.

“Culture matters because it helps us connect and understand one another. And it’s only through connection and understanding that we can create strong, inclusive, and resilient communities and build a better future. I have watched with the nation as Flint has done just that,” says Yo-Yo Ma. The Day of Action will explore how culture has raised the city’s many voices, forging a strong community and a shared, forward-looking narrative for Flint.

Ma's visit to Michigan comes in the midst of his Bach Project, a two-year journey to perform Johann Sebastian Bach's six suites for solo cello in 36 locations around the world, performances that Ma sees as part of a much larger conversation about culture's role in society. In each Bach Project location, Ma and his team partner with artists and culture makers, cultural and community organizations, and leaders from across sectors to design conversations, collaborations, and performances.

UMS President Matthew VanBesien, who has worked with Ma countless times over the past two decades, explained UMS's commitment to this project: *"Yo-Yo Ma is truly a wonderful artist and individual. He is one of the great thinkers in music and the arts, able to connect with people on a personal level while constantly exploring how he can use his abilities to build a better world. When he approached us about wanting to do his talk in Ann Arbor and a 'Day of Action' in Flint, we were thrilled to be involved. We are truly honored to be helping to lead this effort, building new partnerships in the Flint community, and looking ahead to long-lasting relationships that extend well beyond this residency."*

Yo-Yo Ma's visit is made possible with support from the **University of Michigan–Flint Office of the Chancellor** and the **University of Michigan–Flint Office of the Provost**. Additional support is provided by the **Charles Stewart Mott Foundation**, **The Hagerman Foundation**, and the **Ruth Mott Foundation**.

The two-day visit kicks off with a **talk from Ma on Wednesday, February 27 at 7 pm in Hill Auditorium** on the University of Michigan campus (Ann Arbor). In this presentation, Ma will discuss his role as a citizen artist, addressing the vital role of culture and the arts and sciences in our society, and how we can all come together to work as "cultural citizens." Exploring how culture can help us to imagine and build a better future, he will draw on examples from his own life as a musician and citizen, illustrating his points with music and images.

The talk will be followed on Thursday, February 28 by the Day of Action in Flint, where Ma will work with community partners to champion culture's power to transform lives and forge both a more connected world and a healthy and vibrant local community. The Day of Action will begin with a strategy session with Ma and a group of Flint cultural leaders, culture makers, and other community and civic leaders to explore how culture can raise all voices in Flint and build a more inclusive and resilient community. The goal of the session is to find new opportunities for collaborations across Flint's cultural communities and organizations. This invitation-only event will be held at the Flint Fresh Food Hub, a

collaboration of five Flint organizations: the Flint Farmers' Market, the Community Foundation of Greater Flint, the Flint YMCA, the Neighborhood Engagement Hub, and the Local Grocer. The wholesale facility, which opened in September 2018, brings together produce from over 20 local and regional growers/farmers and creates cost-effective sale and supply to north Flint's schools, hospitals, senior care facilities, restaurants, and grocery stores, as well as a mobile market that reaches public apartment complexes and senior centers and accepts most forms of food assistance benefits.

The Day of Action continues from 4-6 pm with a celebration of Flint in a **community cultural showcase** hosted by Ma at the historic Berston Field House, a 1923 building that offers athletics, arts, education, classes, and social services to Flint community members. The showcase will feature a wide spectrum of performances and presentations that show off Flint's vitality, diversity, and artistry, and tell Flint's story in new ways. This event is an open and inclusive community celebration that will include food from Flint Farmers' Market vendors, an interactive community visual art project, and a live storytelling experience. (Berston Field House, 3300 N. Saginaw Street, Flint, MI). This event is free and open to the public, until capacity is reached.) Friends of Berston Executive Director Bryant Nolden noted, *"We are extremely excited that Yo-Yo Ma has chosen the Flint Community for one of his Days of Action, and we're so honored to be a community sponsor and host site for this event. We look forward to inviting others in the community in to see what kinds of special events happen at Berston on a daily basis, and to showcase both the facility and our incredible cultural community to a wider audience."*

Additionally, local journalists from Flint Beat and Flintside will be onsite, engaging attendees in civic engagement through participating in local reporting that maintains the authenticity of community narratives. Other offerings include vendors from the Flint Farmers Market, who will provide fresh food, and other hands-on art-making experiences.

Throughout the day, Ma will be accompanied by one of Flint's hometown heroes: songwriter and recording artist Tunde Olaniran. Tunde is a driving creative force in Flint and a beloved fixture in the Detroit music scene. A recipient of the prestigious United States Artists fellowship and a University of Michigan–Flint alumnus, his breakout single "Namesake" was featured in commercials for Motorola, Chevy, and the Apple iPhone 8, and his 2015 breakthrough debut album garnered critical praise from outlets as wide-ranging as the *New York Times*, *Rolling Stone*, *Jezebel*, *Pitchfork*, *Afropunk*, and more.

Flint community members are playing an active role in developing the Day of Action and welcoming Ma to Flint. This extraordinary group of individuals and organizations includes **Kevin Collins' African Drum and Dance, Berston Field House, Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Flint, Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, Communities First, Inc., Chosen Few Arts Council, Ed Morrison and Strategic Doing, Dallas and Sharon Dort, El Ballet Folklórico Estudiantil, Factory Two, Flint & Genesee Chamber of Commerce, Flint Area Chapter of The Links, Inc., Flint Cultural Center Corporation, Flint Fresh Food Hub, Flint Institute of Music, Flint Neighborhoods United, Flint Public Art Project, Friends of Berston Field House, Greater Flint Arts Council, The Hagerman Foundation, Mayor's Office of the City of Flint, McCree Theatre, Natasha Thomas-Jackson, Rachel Bendit, Ruth Mott Foundation, Sphinx Organization, Sylvester Broome Empowerment Village, Tapology, The Community Foundation of Greater Flint (Lisa Graham and Lynn Williams), University of Michigan Regent Michael J. Behm, University of Michigan, University of Michigan-Flint (Chancellor Susan Borrego, Interim Provost Susan Alcock, and Jennifer Hogan), and Wallace House of the University of Michigan.** The project is continuing to evolve through a series of planning meetings convened by the University Musical Society and the Community Foundation of Greater Flint.

“Flint is a place where resilient and talented people have used creativity, arts, culture, and activism to shape the life of the city for a long time,” noted community organizer and artist Natasha Thomas-Jackson, who is curating the Day of Action Community Cultural Showcase. *“So, it makes a lot of sense to me that Yo-Yo Ma would choose Flint to host a Day of Action. This day is a wonderful opportunity for our community to explore how we can better cultivate a culture of inclusion, accessibility, and diversity in both large institutions and small grassroots organizations. It’s also an opportunity for the many brilliant artists in our city to collaborate with and perform alongside Yo-Yo Ma. I am excited to see the intentional action steps and the amazing performances that come out of this day.”*

Sue Alcock, Interim Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs at the University of Michigan–Flint commented, *“It is exhilarating to be part of an inspiring project that seeks to heal and bring people together. Arts and culture have long played a key role in how we have imagined and built our past, present, and now, our future, and we’re elated that Yo-Yo Ma wants to shine a spotlight on the strong and talented community that is Flint.”*

University of Michigan President Mark S. Schlissel added, *“The University of Michigan is honored to partner with the Flint community and UMS to bring Yo-Yo Ma to our state. This wonderful residency will celebrate and promote a broader understanding of one of our nation’s most important communities.”*

For more information about the Day of Action activities and tickets to the talk, visit ums.org/dayofaction or call **734.764.2538**.

ABOUT YO-YO MA’S BACH PROJECT:

Yo-Yo Ma’s visit to Michigan is inspired by his two-year, globe-spanning Bach Project, which began in August 2018. For Ma, Bach’s 300-year-old music is one extraordinary example of how culture connects us and can help us to imagine and build a better future, but he believes there are many, many more. And for Ma, culture includes not just the arts, but everything that helps us to understand our environment, each other, and ourselves — from music and literature to science and food. The Bach Project explores and celebrates all the ways that culture makes us stronger as individuals, as communities, as society, and as a planet.

ABOUT YO-YO MA’S DAYS OF ACTION:

These public events and creative experiences are different in every location; they aspire to local relevance and global significance; they demonstrate culture’s power to create positive change; they inspire new relationships, connect partners across locations, and ask us all to keep culture at the center of our efforts to build a shared future.

ABOUT UMS

A recipient of the 2014 National Medal of Arts, UMS (also known as the University Musical Society) contributes to a vibrant cultural community by connecting audiences with performing artists from around the world in uncommon and engaging experiences. One of the oldest performing arts presenters in the country, UMS is an independent non-profit organization affiliated with U-M, presenting over 70 music, theater, and dance performances by professional touring artists each season, along with over 100 free educational activities. UMS is committed to bold artistic leadership, engaged learning through the arts, and access and inclusiveness. Since 1990, the organization has co-commissioned and supported the production of nearly 80 new or reimagined works. Matthew VanBesien became the organization’s seventh president in July 2017.

SPONSORS

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Additionally, the Community Foundation of Greater Flint has provided invaluable support as a convening partner.

MEDIA CONTACTS

Television crews and still-photographers are welcome to cover the Day of Action; please contact Mallory Shea at mschirr@umich.edu or 734.647.4020 to arrange media coverage.

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