



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**ONE YEAR LATER...  
PARTNERS IN FLINT BENEFIT FROM UMS INVESTMENT  
FOLLOWING YO-YO MA'S DAY OF ACTION IN 2019**

**Ma Returns to Ann Arbor for Concert of Beethoven Piano Trios with  
Emanuel Ax and Leonidas Kavakos on March 3**

ANN ARBOR, MI (March 2, 2020) — One year ago, the **University Musical Society (UMS)** brought cellist Yo-Yo Ma to Southeast Michigan, where he led a “Day of Action” in Flint. During that event, which Ma created to use Bach’s Six Suites for Solo Cello as a catalyst for social action, the famed cellist brought together 50 Flint-based community leaders for a working session on cultural collaboration for social change, and participated in a Community Cultural Showcase that celebrated Flint’s past and future. The day-long set of activities explored how culture has raised the city’s many voices, forging a strong community and a shared, forward-looking narrative for Flint.

“Last year’s Day of Action that UMS facilitated with Yo-Yo Ma and community partners in Flint was truly inspiring.” Said UMS president Matthew VanBesien. “There’s a rich cultural history that is deeply woven into the Flint community, and this experience gave UMS an opportunity to learn from the city’s leaders and identify ways that we can partner to ensure that the arts continue to serve its residents. We’re thrilled that these partnerships have blossomed further and that the conversation we started at the Day of Action has continued over the past year and we look forward to extending the partnership in the future.”

Since Ma’s visit last year, UMS has continued to partner with Flint organizations to support a number of cultural institutions that serve the city’s residents. In the past year:

- Students at the Flint School of Performing Arts have participated in masterclasses with UMS touring dancers, including members of the Martha Graham Dance Company and American Ballet Theatre.
- Members of the South African music-theater ensemble Isango, who brought two productions to UMS in October, traveled to Flint for a jam session with the Mott Community College Steel Drum Ensemble.

- In November, High School students from the Flint Institute of Music performed before the UMS presentation of Orchestre Métropolitain de Montréal at Hill Auditorium.
- UMS touring artist Stew visited and worked with students at the Flint Repertory Theater.
- When UMS presented the Minnesota Orchestra in January, the Orchestra's associate conductor Akiko Fujimoto gave masterclasses for members of the Flint Institute of Music and fourth and fifth graders at the Flint Cultural Center Academy charter school.
- Flint artist Tunde Olaniran was named UMS Artist-in-Residence for the 2019/20 season to conduct research and develop a new multidisciplinary work as part of a creative residency with Flint artists Emma Davis, Talicia Campbell, and Terra Lockhart.
- The Flint organization Tapology created a new relationship with U-M Flint that allowed them to host their annual summer tap intensive on the U-M Flint campus.

“Since the UMS Day of Action, I’ve been invited to become the UMS 2019/20 Artist-in-Residence, which is amazing. I don't think it would have been possible without the conversations that happened with different people during the Day of Action,” said Tunde Olaniran, who emceed the Community Cultural Showcase. “I've also had the chance to deepen my relationship with Yo-Yo, and learn from him as a mentor and friend. I also started discussions of event collaboration with Factory Two and another group that was in attendance at the Day of Action, El Ballet Folklórico. While one-time events are great moments to celebrate and reflect, more work also seems to happen in the time and space when there's no audience or programmatic goal. I've come to learn that that work needs support and nourishment, too.”

“Our organization, El Ballet Folklórico Estudiantil, has been honored with invitations from UMS to participate in additional activities that have broadened the experiences of our students enormously,” said Sue Quintanilla, founder and director of the company. “Over the past year, our students and instructors have participated in a performance share and intimate dinner with members of Mariachi Nuevo Santander, the high-school mariachi competition winners who opened for Mariachi Vargas in Hill Auditorium. Our parents, students, and teachers were thrilled to have this opportunity here in Flint. We also were invited to prepare a pre-concert lecture for the concert, which allowed our musicians to share the contributions of Mariachi Vargas to the historical development of that genre in Mexico, enhanced with live musical examples. The Yo-Yo Ma Day of Action in Flint had a major impact on our organization in expanding opportunities far beyond our immediate community, and we look forward to continued collaborations with UMS in the future.”

Davin Torre from the Flint School of Performing Arts added, “In just the short year since the Day of Action, FSPA students, faculty, and staff have experienced three transformative events, including a master class with American Ballet Theatre dancer Lauren Bonfiglio – especially wonderful since we are a school that is aligned with the ABT National Training Curriculum. Additionally, FSPA’s Dort Honors String Trio performed prior to the Orchestre Métropolitain de Montréal concert in Hill Auditorium and had a meet-and-greet with Maestro Yannick Nézet-Séguin, and also participated in a master class by the Associate Conductor of the Minnesota Orchestra – as did our 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade string orchestras and the Shand Honors Flute Trio. These events are so meaningful to our students, and this partnership has exceeded my expectations throughout the past year.”

Yo-Yo Ma returns to Ann Arbor near the one-year anniversary of the Day of Action in Flint, performing Beethoven piano trios with pianist Emanuel Ax and violinist Leonidas Kavakos on Tuesday, March 3 in Hill Auditorium. Over a dozen participants from the workshop on social change will be in attendance, invited by UMS to attend the concert at no charge.

#### **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 the University of Michigan, 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.

#### **MEDIA CONTACT**

Sara Billmann, UMS Director of Marketing & Communications  
734.763.0611 / [sarabill@umich.edu](mailto:sarabill@umich.edu)

Mallory Shea, UMS Marketing & Media Relations Manager  
734.647.4020 / [mschirr@umich.edu](mailto:mschirr@umich.edu)