



Portland jazz and gospel singer Marilyn Keller fronts the Portland Jazz Composers Ensemble for their new CD "From Maxville to Vanport" a group of songs and original music to tell the story of two historic Oregon towns rooted in early African American history.

Maxville to Vanport

CONTINUED FROM FRONT The multi-layered project, according to Detrick, looks at the history of both towns and highlights the need to showcase the under-representation of black people in Oregon history by looking honestly at the prejudice they faced and celebrating "their resilience, courage and important contributions to Oregon through jazz, R&B and blues." Each of the songs has a different theme and tells a different aspect of experiences of the residents of the two communities. Mitchell said she relied heavily on the expertise of black historian Gwendolyn Trice, also part of the creative team, along with

interviews in the homes of descendants of those who lived in Maxville, as well as the feeling she got while standing at the long-abandoned logging site.

"Being on a quad of land where Maxville was once located, everything has its own energy," she said. "To allow the words to come and giving them over to Ezra, who is a musical genius — we had the right people, the right kind of process and everyone brought their 'A' game to the table."

Mitchell said the evolution of the project also included feedback from community members after preview performances earlier this year.

"We invited people to glean it, to really hear the themes we try to make present, themes of resiliency, themes of really appreciating the connections people made to help each other survive," she said. "One thing that came out that was profound — how they had to lean on each other to be able to make it during those times, like how high the snow was, how cold the wind and rain was coming through the walls...I'd love to keep telling this story."

Mitchell added that she's even like to see "From Maxville to Vanport" made into a musical.

"There may be a play coming down the pike at some point, maybe as (part of) some curriculum," she said.

That would be just fine with Keller, as she recalled the evolution of the music from those early preview performances.

"We polled the audience and

they said we were on the right track, but they wanted to hear blues and jazz and the music of the African Diaspora," she said. "And I think Ezra and Renee both captured that."

Keller said she and Weiss had worked together before and by the time she started singing the music, it had become part of her. She also recalled that trip to Maxville and how it affected her.

"When we went to the campsite of Maxville, standing in the cold and snow and still feeling the ghosts of the past, I knew this was something we were going to be affected by."

The result reflects many different styles of music, from the upbeat "Oregon Sounds Like Freedom" to the haunting strains of "What do Your Trees Tell You."

"Woman's Work" tells of the hardships women in the settlement went through: "Sleep is like a tourist, who don't know where it belongs. It don't come regular, don't stay long."

The theme of the entire endeavor could be summed up in the words Mitchell wrote for "Maxville to Vanport," one of the songs on the CD: "Oregon didn't want black folks to stay; But we planted roots here anyway."

Weiss said Mitchell's lyrics came first, which inspired him.


"Renee is not only a poet but was also a reporter with the Oregonian for many years, so she was able to bring in the facts of the story and put it in this sort of poetic treatment," he said. "She was able to create art from that, and for me it was to just get the vibe."

1480 KBMS

Take Us To Work, Home Or Play

Listen Live At Portlandmedium.com
(Click On KBMS icon)

	MONDAY - FRIDAY	SUNDAY
 <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">Rev. Al Sharpton 10am - 1pm</p>	<p>12 Midnight - 3 A.M. MIKE SHANNON</p> <p>3 A.M. - 7 A.M. TOM JOYNER</p> <p>7 A.M. - 10 A.M. TONI TERRELL</p> <p>10 A.M. - 1 P.M. REV. AL SHARPTON (KEEPING IT REAL)</p> <p>1 P.M. - 3 P.M. KENNY SMOOV</p> <p>3 P.M. - 7 P.M. D.L. HUGHLEY</p> <p>7 P.M. - 9 P.M. PAPA SMURF</p> <p>9 P.M. - 12 Midnight MIKE SHANNON</p>	<p>12 Midnight - 3 A.M. MIKE SHANNON</p> <p>3 A.M. - 6 A.M. TOYA BEASLEY</p> <p>6 A.M. - 12 NOON SUNDAY MORNING GOSPEL WANGELA</p> <p>12 NOON - 1 P.M. HIGHLAND C.C. LIVE BROADCAST</p> <p>1 P.M. - 4 P.M. PAPA SMURF</p> <p>4 P.M. - 12 Midnight DOUGLAS WILLIAMS</p>
 <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">Tom Joyner 3am - 7am</p>		



KBMS Radio
1480 * AM
Portland's best music station