

## Mavis Staples

### A living legend



NORTH ADAMS, MASSACHUSETTS — Mavis Staples is one of the great alchemists of American music, crossing genre lines like no musician since perhaps Ray Charles and weaving her voice into the very fabric of gospel, soul, folk, pop, R&B, blues, rock, and hip-hop. From her debut in the legendary Staples Singers, to her Grammy-winning 2010 collaboration with Jeff Tweedy, *You're Not Alone*, to her recently released *Livin' on a High Note* — produced by M. Ward and featuring contributions by Neko Case, Justin Vernon, Ben Harper, and Tune-Yards — Staples is a classic artist who is as vital today as at any point in her legendary career. Staples performs at MASS MoCA's Hunter Center **Saturday, March 25, at 8pm.**

Born and raised in the musical and spiritual haven that was the Staples household, Mavis Staples and her powerful voice paved the Staples Singers' way in the music world. Led by Roebuck "Pops" Staples, a blue-collar worker who taught his children church hymns and Delta blues tunes on his \$10 guitar, Staples and her siblings Cleotha, Pervis, and eventually Yvonne formed the Chicago-based family band and took their living room gospel tunes to the road. The Staple Singers released major hits including traditionals such as "Will the Circle Be Unbroken," and originals like "This May Be the Last Time." As the band gained national attention, the Staple Singers' music became signatures in many American homes, while teenage Staples' deep, roughhewn sound was praised as a "logic-defying voice that more properly belonged to a woman several decades older" (*Biography*).

Fueled by the folk-blues revival of the early 1960s, the Staple Singers performed a concert in Montgomery, Alabama, that was attended by The Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. After meeting and forming a friendship with Dr. King, Pops Staples decided that the band would spend the next several years devoting their songwriting energy toward the Civil Rights Movement. Through their gospel-based pioneering support of the movement, the Staples' household became a common place to find music icons Ray Charles, Stevie Wonder, Redd Foxx, and Aretha Franklin. Catchy soul tunes fueled by sharing time with music industry greats propelled the Staple Singers success, which culminated in the 1970's chart topping hits "Respect Yourself," "I'll Take You There," and soulful R&B love songs like "Let's Do It Again."

While touring with the Staple Singers, Staples consistently upheld a solo music path of her own. Staples created 14 solo albums spanning four decades. The 2003 album *Have a Little Faith*, her first solo project

after the death of Pops Staples in 2000, revitalized her solo career when it was reviewed to critical acclaim and propelled the success of *We'll Never Turn Back* (2007) and *Live: Hope at the Hideout* (2008). Staples' Jeff Tweedy-produced album, *You Are Not Alone* — released in 2010 when she first played MASS MoCA during Wilco's Solid Sound Festival — won the Grammy Award for Best Americana Album.

"One of the most distinctive voices in the past 60 years of American music" (*Paste*), Staples' relationship with friend and former love Bob Dylan has become as cemented in time as the icons themselves. "It made my hair stand up," Bob Dylan said of the first time he heard Staples' vocal melodies. Staples and Dylan (she reportedly turned down his *The Last Waltz*-era marriage proposal) recently finished a summer European tour together and have plans for future collaborations.

Join us at MASS MoCA for an evening of good vibrations with the gospel-soul legend on **Saturday, March 25, at 8pm**, with museum galleries open from 11am to 7pm. Lickety Split, MASS MoCA's café, serves up crisp salads, hearty soups, and lip-smacking pub fare. A full bar serves Bright Ideas Brewing beers and Berkshire Mountain Distillery spirits. Tickets are \$35 for students and in advance, \$45 day of, and \$55 preferred. Tickets for all events are available through the MASS MoCA box office located on Marshall Street in North Adams, open 11am to 5pm every day except Tuesdays. Tickets can also be charged by phone by calling 413.662.2111 during box office hours or purchased online at [massmoca.org](http://massmoca.org).

## Sponsorship

This performance is sponsored by The Porches Inn at MASS MoCA.

## Images

High-resolution images of MASS MoCA's winter/spring 2017 events are available through this link: [bit.ly/MMWinterSpring2017](http://bit.ly/MMWinterSpring2017).

## About MASS MoCA

MASS MoCA is one of the world's liveliest (and largest) centers for making, displaying, and enjoying today's most important art, music, dance, theater, film, and video. MASS MoCA will nearly double its gallery space in spring 2017, with artist partnerships that include Laurie Anderson, the Louise Bourgeois Trust, Jenny Holzer, the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation, and James Turrell.

Gallery admission is \$18 for adults, \$16 for veterans and seniors, \$12 for students, \$8 for children 6 to 16, and free for children 5 and under through May 21, 2017. Members are admitted free year-round. The Hall Art Foundation's Anselm Kiefer exhibition is open seasonally, spring – fall. For additional information, call 413.662.2111 x1 or visit [massmoca.org](http://massmoca.org).

## Hours

11am to 5pm, closed Tuesdays