



PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Scott Dodson, Richmond Symphony
(804) 788.4717 ext. 120 / sdodson@richmondsymphony.com

Celebrate Jackson Ward: Past, Present and Future New Festival Will Showcase the History, People and Places of One of Richmond's Most Historic Neighborhoods May 20-22, 2016

February 25, 2016 – Richmond, Virginia: the First Lady of the Commonwealth of Virginia, Dorothy McAuliffe; The Honorable Dwight C. Jones, Mayor, City of Richmond; The Honorable Charles R. Samuels, Councilman, Richmond City Council, Richmond North Central 2nd Voter District; Marilyn H. West, Chair of the Black History Museum and Cultural Center of Virginia; Dr. Levy M. Armwood, Jr. Pastor, Ebenezer Baptist Church; and Steven Smith, Music Director of the Richmond Symphony are pleased to announce a special festival celebrating the people, places and history of Richmond's historic Jackson Ward. Celebrate Jackson Ward: Past Present and Future will showcase the unique history of Jackson Ward through the stories and performances from individuals and organizations that continue to make a positive impact on the area. The Festival will feature three days of performances and activities on May 20-22, 2016. Anchored by a performance by the Richmond Symphony under its new "Big Tent" with Virginia Repertory Theatre, Richmond Jazz Society and Elegba Folklore Society, the festival will also give many professional, community and school groups a chance to perform on the Symphony's new state-of-the-art outdoor stage. The festival will also highlight ART 180's annual spring showcase, The *Really* BIG Show, as part of the weekend's festivities.

“Jackson Ward has a long and rich heritage as a community filled with African-American leaders who made outstanding contributions as bankers, dancers, ministers and musicians,” says First Lady Dorothy McAuliffe. “The neighborhood continues to thrive, and I am excited to be part of this new festival celebrating Jackson Ward’s energy and diverse culture. The Richmond Symphony and other sponsors are doing great work to highlight this treasure in the heart of Richmond, and I am pleased that the festival will support the preservation of the neighborhood’s history as well as the education of future generations.”

“I am pleased that we will again partner with the Richmond Symphony to highlight another part of our great city. The Jackson Ward Festival also provides the opportunity for more of the city’s musical and cultural groups to experience performing under the Big Tent, while the event itself will leave a lasting impression on future generations,” says Mayor Dwight C. Jones. “Jackson Ward has had such a tremendous impact in the shaping of the Richmond region, and I’m happy the City can be a partner in a festival that will celebrate this historic neighborhood.”

“Music truly has the power to unite humankind” says Richmond Symphony Music Director Steven Smith. “Sharing the planning process for this exciting festival with the many community partners has united us all in support of the joyous celebration that will take place. This celebration will not end in May, but continue for generations to come. Our community is rich with talent, wisdom and resources; the sharing of music, art, faith and history will be the story of our future.”

“The Richmond Symphony is excited to be a partner in the Celebrate Jackson Ward Festival,” says Executive Director David J. L. Fisk. “This will be the second community festival venture for the “Big Tent” as it travels through the city and region. Music has the unique ability to tell a story about who we are as a culture, about where we have come from and where we aspire to go. Jackson Ward has a special place at the heart of the history of Richmond, and its own stories to tell. We hope that this festival will help shine an appreciative light on one of the City’s important neighborhoods.”

“It is a great honor to be part of the 2016 Celebrate Jackson Ward Festival in Abner Clay Park”, says The Honorable Charles R. Samuels, Councilman, Richmond City Council, Richmond North Central 2nd Voter District. “This event will showcase a remarkable variety of musical and artistic talent during the three days of performances in May. Historic Jackson Ward is truly experiencing a renaissance, and this festival will continue the neighborhood’s positive momentum.”

In addition to festival performances and activities, the event is designed to create a lasting and positive benefit in the Jackson Ward Neighborhood. To that end, proceeds from the festival will benefit the Friends Association for Children, The Black History Museum and Cultural Center of Virginia and G.W. Carver Elementary School.

“The Black History Museum board and staff are excited to be a part of the energy that is reinvigorating Jackson Ward” says Black History Museum Board Chair Marilyn West.

“The Celebrate Jackson Ward festival could not be happening at a better time as it coincides nicely with our upcoming grand opening. In addition, we are grateful that the Black History Museum is one of the organizations that will receive funds raised from the festival – the funds will help enhance our community outreach and arts programming.”

“The historic Ebenezer Baptist Church has been one of the faith-based centers in Jackson Ward for 158 years” says Dr. Levy M. Armwood, Pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church. “We are delighted to be included in this historic 2016 Celebrate Jackson Ward Festival. The church has served the community in many ways, especially in education, by organizing public education for African American youth in the 1860’s. Our congregation welcomes and is looking forward to the wonderful activities across from our church.”

Celebrate Jackson Ward will kick off Friday, May 20 with ART 180's spring program celebration, The *Really* BIG Show. This celebration will spotlight artwork created by young people at a dozen ART 180 program sites this spring. Saturday May, 21 will feature a variety of performances including: a children’s performance from Virginia Repertory Theatre, Ezibu Muntu African Dance, the Richmond Symphony Youth Orchestra, various local performing arts groups and storytellers, and will be anchored by a performance of the Richmond Symphony with Virginia Repertory Theatre, Richmond

Jazz Society and Elegba Folklore Society. The festival will conclude on Sunday, May 22 with performances by local church choirs, liturgical dancers, and a mass ecumenical service representing several of Jackson Ward's churches.

The festival is intended to attract thousands of people from throughout the region over the course of the weekend. Local restaurants, craft beer, vendors, businesses and non-profits will also be featured. Festival admittance is free and open to the public.

Organizations, artists, and vendors who wish to participate in the festival should go to celebratejacksonwardva.com to complete an interest form. There will be limited performance time availability. Entry fees may apply to participating vendors.

Sponsor, business partnership and individual support opportunities are also available. For more information, please visit celebratejacksonwardva.com or call 804.788.4717.

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To date, festival sponsors include:

The E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation
Genworth Financial
The Richard and Caroline T. Gwathmey Memorial Trust
The Beirne Carter Foundation
The City of Richmond

To date partners include:

ART 180
Black History Museum and Cultural Arts Center of Virginia
Carver Area Civic Improvement League
Richmond Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities
Richmond Department of Planning and Development Review
Richmond Public Art Commission
Richmond Neighbor-to-Neighbor program
Ebenezer Baptist Church
Elegba Folklore Society
Ezibu Muntu African Dance Company
Friends Association for Children
Historic Jackson Ward Association
J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College
Office of The Honorable Charles R. Samuels, Councilman, Richmond City Council,
Richmond North Central 2nd Voter District
Richmond Jazz Society
Richmond Public Schools

Rotary Club of Richmond
Sixth Mount Zion Baptist Church
TheatreLab
VCU Division of Community Engagement
Virginia BioTech Park
Virginia Museum of Fine Arts
Virginia Repertory Theatre
Virginia Union University

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About the Richmond Symphony

Founded in 1957, the Richmond Symphony is the largest performing arts organization in Central Virginia. The organization includes an orchestra of more than 70 professional musicians, the 150-voice Richmond Symphony Chorus and more than 260 students in the Richmond Symphony Youth Orchestra programs. Each season, more than 200,000 members of the community enjoy concerts, radio broadcasts, and educational outreach programs. The Richmond Symphony is partially funded by the Virginia Commission for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts.