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Contact: Joyce Linehan 617-282-2510, joyce@ashmontmedia.com

FRANKLIN PARK COALITION ANNOUNCES
2008 ELMA LEWIS PLAYHOUSE IN THE PARK

FREE SUMMER PERFORMING ARTS SERIES
Tuesdays, July 8 – August 19, 2008

Odetta to open Season July 8

(BOSTON – May 20, 2008) The Franklin Park Coalition (FPC) partners with the National Center of Afro-American Artists (NCAAA) and the Boston Parks and Recreation Department's ParkARTS Program to present a free performing arts series named for the founder and director of the Elma Lewis School of Fine Arts. Lewis, a beloved Boston icon, established Playhouse in the Park in 1966, and presented artists like Duke Ellington, Olatunji, Odetta, Billy Taylor, and the Boston Ballet. In its original inception, it ran through 1978.

Four years ago, the FPC, NCAAA, and ParkARTS began their effort to re-establish Playhouse in the Park as an exciting multicultural summer performance venue. This year, they present 11 Tuesday shows. The 10:30 a.m. morning shows run about one hour, and are geared toward children, families and summer camps. Evening shows, hosted by Naheem, run from 6 to 8:30 p.m., unless otherwise noted. These FREE, outdoor performances take place at Valley Gates, next to The Playstead, the big field in Franklin Park between White Stadium and the rear entrance of the Zoo, not far from where the original Playhouse stood. Rain locations for some shows TBA. For more information, call (617) 282-2881 or visit www.franklinparkcoalition.org.

July 8, 6 p.m. - Odetta, Stephen O'Neal and IntaAfrika

Legendary folk artist and activist Odetta returns to open the 2008 season. She first performed at the Playhouse in the Park 40 years ago, on Aug. 31, 1968 - the last weekend of a tumultuous summer in Boston and throughout the country.

Opening for Odetta is IntaAfrika, featuring Stephen O'Neal who has been part of the Elma Lewis School of Fine Arts' annual performance of Langston Hughes' "Black Nativity" since the beginning in 1970. O'Neal and drummer Salim Abdul-Rahman were students of the world renowned M. Babatunde Olatunji. O'Neal is the co-founder of IntaAfrika which has a 15 year history in the community. Joined by his 13 year old son, Stephen Korliss, the group has traveled extensively, with stops in Senegal and Gambia.

July 15, 10:30 a.m. - Frederick Hayes Dance Company

The Frederick Hayes Dance Company is a group of multigenerational dancers that welcomes performers with physical challenges, encouraging participants to dance despite these challenges. Hayes grew up in Roxbury and now spreads his creative wings in the communities of Boston. As director of the Reggie Lewis Center's dance program, Hayes' works to make dance accessible to everyone. The company repertoire also includes liturgical dance pieces.

July 15, 6 p.m. - Makanda Project

Prolific jazz artist Makanda Ken McIntyre, a native Bostonian who performed with such greats as Cecil Taylor and Eric Dopley, left behind some 400 compositions when he died in 2001. The Makanda Project, a nine piece ensemble, keeps these compositions alive. Led by pianist and former student John Kordalewski, the band has dedicated itself to the rich body of McIntyre's work.

July 22, 10:30 a.m. - Stephen O'Neal & IntaAfrika plus Marcos Santos and Batukaxé'

African drummer Stephen O'Neal has been part of the Elma Lewis School of Fine Arts' annual performance of Langston Hughes' "Black Nativity" since the beginning in 1970. O'Neal and drummer Salim Abdul-Rahman were students of the world renowned M. Babatunde Olatunji. O'Neal is the co-founder of IntaAfrika which has a 15 year history in the community. Joined by his 13 year old son, Stephen Korliss, the group has traveled extensively, with stops in Senegal and Gambia.

Afro-Brazilian ensemble Batukaxé presents a modern style of the authentic tradition of Blocos Afro and Axe music. Marcus Santos and Sandro Scoccia created Batukaxé as part of AfroBrazil.org, an organization whose goal is to preserve, promote, and strengthen the Afro-Brazilian culture in the U.S. Developed in the state of Bahia, this music is rooted in the tradition of the Carnival Blocos Afro, groups of vocalists and percussionists performing Brazilian rhythms based on African roots.

July 22, 6 p.m. - Wyatt Jackson plus Adrienne Hawkins and Larry Roland's Bass-Line

Motion

Wyatt Jackson and his Urban Liturgical Dancers move their ministry out of the church at Bethel AME in Jamaica Plain and into the park.

Choreographer/dancer Adrienne Hawkins and musician/poet Larry Roland perform a 45-minute "choreopoem" of colorful and soulful scenarios about the African-American experience. Using

music, movement and spoken word, Bass-Line Motion travels through the spiritual, historic and romantic aspect of the lives of a people.

July 29 10:30 a.m. - Fuerza International and Estrellas Tropicales

The young people from Boston's neighborhoods in Fuerza International perform traditional and modern dance from Puerto Rico to Santo Domingo. Then, the batons will be flying as one of Boston's premiere baton-twirling groups, Estrellas Tropicales performs.

July 29, 6 p.m. - Mango Blue

Mango Blue blends an exciting mixture of styles to create a refreshing new sound in Afro-Latin and World music, through songs of celebration and social conscience. Led by Ecuadorian composer, bassist and singer Alex Alvear, this invigorating hybrid playfully integrates a wide array of influences from Rhythm & Blues, Jazz and Funk to Caribbean Roots, with a strong rhythmic foundation that draws from diverse Afro-Latin musical traditions.

August 5, 10:30 a.m. - A. Major Dance

*Performances on Aug. 5 take place inside the Franklin Park Zoo, which has free admission all day as part of National Night Out.**

This local dance company celebrates over 40 years of training young artists for the local and national dance stage. A. Major dancers have gone on to perform on stages with "Bring in the Noise, Bring in the Funk," Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, the Essence Music Awards, Broadway's "A Few Good Men" and Debbie Allen's musical "Soul Possessed." See tomorrow's great dancers today.

August 5, 5 p.m. (note earlier than usual start time) – Vivian Cooley-Collier and Company, plus the Boston Community Choir

Enjoy the jazz stylings of Vivian Cooley-Collier and Company, plus the uplifting gospel of the Boston Community Choir with your neighbors.

* National Night Out Boston 2008, "The Power of Neighbors," is the 25th annual citywide celebration. This program cultivates and strengthens partnerships between the community, youth, police, city agencies and community-based organizations. National Night Out also acknowledges the remarkable contributions of Neighborhood Crime Watch groups, and seeks to increase participation in these programs from local residents. For more information visit www.BostonCrimeWatch.com or call 617-343-4345.

August 12, 10:30 a.m. - The Art of Black Dance and Music

A.B.D.M.'s mission is to bridge cultural gaps by teaching the common history of humankind through African-rooted dance, music and folklore, and to entertain audiences of all ages with culturally diverse expressions of African-American heritage.

August 12, 6 p.m. - Andre Ward

Take a seasoned musician who can play the soprano, alto and tenor saxophone with skilled ease and passion and mix in varied elements of gospel, jazz, R & B and you have Boston's own Chicago-born, Berklee trained Andre Ward. An accomplished purveyor of smooth jazz, Ward has performed for delighted audiences all over the world. Ward was the musical director for Freddie Jackson and has toured with Teena Marie, Will Downing, The Bobby Jones Gospel Group, The Four Tops, The O'Jays and Dizzy Gillespie.

MONDAY, August 18 at dusk – Mayor's Movie Night

Bring the whole family to see Dreamworks Animation's *Flushed Away*.

August 19, 10:30 a.m. - 1 p.m. - Boston Children's Festival

For more information about the Mayor's Movie Night or Boston Children's Festival, call the Boston Parks & Recreation Department at (617) 635-4505.

Said Walter Little, of the Franklin Park Coalition Board of Directors, colleague and supporter of the late Elma Lewis, "Miss Lewis was a visionary leader who sought to inspire and train young people. The Playhouse gave students from the Elma Lewis School of Fine Arts both a stage for public performance as well as exposure to professional musicians and entertainers. She sought to instill in young people of color the highest aspirations for success. The Playhouse revival this summer features young performers, offers shows targeting youth audiences, and as always, builds community around Franklin Park."

The Elma Lewis Playhouse in the Park is produced by First Night, in cooperation with the City of Boston, Mayor Thomas M. Menino; the Boston Parks and Recreation Department, Antonia Pollak, Commissioner; ParkARTS and the National Center for Afro-American Artists, with support from The Boston Foundation, Clipper Ship Foundation, A. C. Ratschesky Foundation, Mabel Louise Riley Foundation, an anonymous donor, and many local Franklin Park supporters. *E/Planeta* is the official print media sponsor. Boston Parks and Recreation Department's ParkARTS Program, of which this is a part, is sponsored by Bank of America.

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