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The Flynn Reopens with Diverse Voices from Local, National, and Global Artists

Over \$2M in support from the Shuttered Venue Operators Grant, multiple foundations, private donors, and members make new programs and updated facilities possible

BURLINGTON, VT — The Flynn is excited to announce **the grand reopening of its historic Main Stage theater**, which will feature special programs from local, national, and global artists, updated facilities, and a Broadway season. The Grand Reopening Celebration will be held, at full capacity, on Saturday, October 23. This significant moment will be marked by a full evening of reunions, tributes, dancing, stories, and incredible music. Many diverse voices from the local community have been invited to join in this joyous celebration, and the evening features a major international star headlining the show, “Africa’s premier diva” (*TIME*), genre-bending Beninese superstar **Angélique Kidjo**. Tickets are available now to Flynn members at www.flynnvt.org.

The Flynn received a wave of generosity for its reopening from the community and from state and federal grant programs, including \$1.8 million from the Shuttered Venue Operators Grant as well as additional support from both the Bruce J. Anderson Foundation and the Christopher and Dana Reeves Foundation. It also received \$300,000 from two former and current board members, who came together with the hope of inspiring others to support the Flynn and the performing arts as our region emerges from the pandemic. **These funds will allow the Flynn to begin hiring the staff needed to return to full operations and also to update the facilities.** The building now has new LED lighting, renovations to the stage and backstage spaces, ultraviolet filters for the air ducts, new damper controls and HVAC upgrades for the classrooms, and enhanced entranceways to improve accessibility. In addition, all summer camps are “pay what you can” this year, to allow access to all students, and the Flynn will once again host a variety of student matinee performances throughout the season.

Efforts to support the arts were led by **Congressman Peter Welch**, who has consistently advocated for Vermont’s artists and cultural institutions. “Our performance venues are the lifeblood of our downtowns and communities. When the pandemic started, we all knew there were tough times ahead for them and they would need to find a way to survive. In Congress, we responded quickly to build a broad bipartisan coalition last summer to introduce the Save Our Stages Act to help performing arts organizations, so they could host all of us again. I’m thrilled that day has finally come for the Flynn. Their grand reopening is confirmation that the Shuttered

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Venues Operator Grant serves as a lifeline for businesses and nonprofits who have borne the brunt of this pandemic and bring immense value to our communities.”

The Grand Reopening Celebration is just the beginning. The Flynn is pleased to offer a wide variety of performances for the 2021-2022 season, showcasing the importance of lifting up all voices, local and international. To lead off the season, the Flynn will present five additional shows: **Shake & Holla**, featuring the **North Mississippi Allstars** and **Rebirth Brass Band**, plus special guest **Cedric Burnside**; **Cartography**, a multimedia theater piece about migration; **Ayodele Casel**, a transcendent tap dancer performing with Grammy-winning Latin jazz pianist **Arturo O’Farrill**; **Trey McLaughlin & The Sounds of Zamar**, a Gospel group from Georgia; and **Flip Fabrique**, the Québec-based circus sensation. These five shows are on sale now for new and existing Flynn members, and will be available to the general public later this summer. Audiences craving foot-stomping music, mesmerizing dance rhythms, heartbreaking and hopeful stories, and jaw-dropping physical stunts are sure to love this series of season shows. Flynn members will also have priority access to **the Flynn’s spectacular Broadway season**, which includes **Hairspray**, **Jersey Boys**, **John Cameron Mitchell performing the songs from his career-defining role in Hedwig & The Angry Inch**, and **Burlington Does Broadway**, the popular New Year’s Eve collaboration between the Flynn, Lyric Theatre, and the Vermont Symphony Orchestra. More shows will be announced all year on a rolling basis. The Flynn has many surprises in store for the coming season.

“It’s thrilling that the first few months of our season open with such an amazing array of talent and perspectives from some of the best artists in the world. The Flynn will always be a place where everyone’s stories are shared and celebrated—and this year we will hear from a Beninese vocal superstar, a tap dancer raised in Puerto Rico, a Memphis-born guitar player, and a Vermont storyteller with a Haitian background. We have all, collectively and individually, endured so much, and the desire for electrifying, inspiring artistic experiences is palpable,” said **Jay Wahl, Flynn executive director**.

Grand Reopening Celebration featuring Angélique Kidjo – October 23 at 7:30 pm

Four-time Grammy-winner Angélique Kidjo is a creative force and one of the greatest artists in international music today. As a performer, her striking voice, stage presence, and fluency in multiple cultures and languages have won respect from her peers and expanded her following across national borders. Kidjo has cross-pollinated the West African traditions of her childhood in Benin with elements of American R&B, funk, and jazz, as well as influences from Europe and Latin America. She has spent a lifetime laying the groundwork for the ascendance of African sounds and voices on the international stage. Ms. Kidjo’s new album, *Mother Nature*, is a tour de force collaborative project with some of the continent’s hottest stars, including Burna Boy, Sampa the

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Great, and Mr Eazi. The lineup for the grand reopening also includes special appearances by virtuoso violinist/composer/activist, and Flynn Creative Chair, Daniel Bernard Roumain (DBR); captivating local storyteller Ferene Paris Meyer; the showstopping gospel collective Nicole Nelson & the Resistance Revival Chorus VT; as well as a dance party with dj cRAIG mITCHELL open to all attendees after the show. As part of this fundraiser event, the Flynn is honored to pay tribute to the leadership of former Flynn Board Chair Staige Davis and former Interim Executive Director Charlie Smith.

Shake & Holla – November 3 at 7:30 pm

Hitch a ride down Highway 61 with Grammy-nominated Southern rock lifers the North Mississippi Allstars and the strutting, freewheeling jazz group Rebirth Brass Band. The Allstars have played with marquee acts like John Hiatt, Mavis Staples, and Robert Plant, burnishing their reputation as a brawny hill-country blues act. They share billing with Crescent City favorites Rebirth Brass Band, Tremé stalwarts famed for their syncopated jam, funk, and bebop-inflected take on traditional jazz. They're joined by the multi-talented Cedric Burnside—AKA Mississippi Delta legend R.L. Burnside's grandson—who is a decorated guitarist, drummer, and singer in his own right.

Cartography – November 6 at 7:30 pm

Designed for audiences young and old, *Cartography* is a sumptuous and deeply felt exploration of life through the eyes of four refugees. Journey with these young people as they leave their worlds behind and begin anew. Created by Brooklyn-based theater artist Kaneza Schaal and author Christopher Myers, drawn from their work with refugee youth in the US and internationally, this visually stunning show combines simple storytelling with interactive video technology to engage the audience from start to finish. Performed by a diverse company of actors from El Salvador, Syria, Lebanon, and Rwanda, this is theater for our times at its most relevant.

Ayodele Casel – December 10 at 7:30 pm

World-famous tap dancer Ayodele Casel has broken out in a big way over the last couple years. She has performed at the White House, Carnegie Hall, Radio City Music Hall, Madison Square Garden, and off-Broadway in Savion Glover's *Downtown: Live Communication*. At the Flynn, she will perform her latest project, *Chasing Magic*, a celebration of artistic encounters that is a vibrant, collaborative showcase for her cool, genre-defying footwork. For this show, she will be joined by acclaimed Grammy-winning Latin jazz luminary Arturo O'Farrill.

Trey McLaughlin & The Sounds of Zamar – January 20 at 7:30 pm

Trey McLaughlin & The Sounds of Zamar are a renowned gospel/neo-soul collective hailing from Augusta, Georgia, known for their opulent harmonies, clever musical theater covers, and beautiful, anthemic originals. The ensemble, organized in 2009, has performed with gospel greats

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such as William McDowell, Kierra “Kiki” Sheard, Richard Smallwood, VaShawn Mitchell, Earnest Pugh, and James Fortune. Led by passionate, multi-hyphenate vocalist Trey M. McLaughlin, The Sounds of Zamar celebrate community through the undeniable power of many voices coming together as one. Their concerts are invigorating, soul-stirring experiences that transcend genres, generations, and cultural boundaries.

Flip Fabrique – February 2 at 7 pm

Québec City-based cirque troupe Flip Fabrique, led by acrobatic comedian Jamie Adkins, return to present a new show, *Six °*. On the stage, six envelopes contain six mysterious invitations for six strangers. The guests have arrived, but one is missing. What if the sixth person, the missing connection, was you? Flip Fabrique's ingenious brand of acrobatic physical comedy makes everyday situations extraordinary. *Six °* explores the sweet madness of waiting, the intricate beauty in a correspondence, and unexpected encounters through slapstick comedy, juggling tricks, and breathtaking feats of acrobatics.

Tickets for the Flynn's Grand Reopening, as well as these season shows, are available to Flynn members Monday, July 12 at noon. Get tickets, find out more information, or become a member at www.flynnvt.org.

Media contact:

Oliver O'Sullivan, marketing content manager, oosullivan@flynnvt.org.