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February 7, 2020

FirstWorks Artistic Ambassador Daniel Bernard Roumain (DBR) Performs with Local Legends

“New Face of Classical Music” debuts musical collaboration with seven leading Rhode Island artists as part of year-long residency

Providence, RI – **FirstWorks**, a Rhode Island non-profit dedicated to building community through world-class arts, will present renowned Haitian-American violinist/composer **Daniel Bernard Roumain (DBR)** performing “Redemption Songs and Sonatas” with the Humanist Septet at **The First Unitarian Church of Providence** on **Saturday, February 29, 2020 at 7:00 p.m.** Tickets are \$30 advance, \$35 at the door, with community discounts available. Tickets are available by phone at (401) 421-4278, or online at first-works.org. A pre-show fair will spotlight local social justice groups from 6:00-7:00 p.m. in the church’s Parish hall.

Hailed by the New York Times as “about as omnivorous as a contemporary artist gets,” Haitian-born, Harlem-raised artist Daniel Bernard Roumain joins FirstWorks to perform his “Redemption Songs and Sonatas,” a concert celebrating a worldview of civil rights for all. From songs by Jamaican music icon Bob Marley to the Haitian and Israeli national anthems, “Redemption Songs and Sonatas” is a composer’s view of our desire to define ourselves, our world, and sometimes, one another. DBR is part of FirstWorks’ “Raise Your Voice” programming, a season-long project



designed to amplify diverse voices and celebrate differences through the performing arts.

“FirstWorks is thrilled to deepen our partnership with Daniel Bernard Roumain to empower collaboration with Rhode Island’s own musical talent,” said Kathleen Pletcher, Executive Artistic Director of FirstWorks. “DBR’s belief in the power of music to effect positive social change reinforces FirstWorks’ mission to lift Rhode Island through the arts.”

DBR has been embedded in Providence’s creative community as FirstWorks’ inaugural Artistic Ambassador during the organization’s 2019-2020 season. His residency spans workshops for students, teachers, and elders, community meals and discussions, and collaborations with local artists toward the creation of new works. DBR performed at PVDfest 2019 and will again join local and international performers at PVDfest 2020, this year taking place June 11-14.

At the evening performance of “Redemption Songs and Sonatas” on February 29, DBR will be joined onstage on by local artists Becky Bass (steel pan, vocals), Alex Chapman (drums), Joe Godfrey (piano), Frederick Jodry (organ), Christopher Johnson (spoken word), Kim Trusty (guitar, vocals), and Jerry Wilfong (bass), together forming The Humanist Septet. The group has been rehearsing with DBR since fall 2019 to develop new material in the spirit of resistance and social change.

The evening performance will be preceded by a Social Justice Fair, beginning at 6:00 p.m. in the First Unitarian Church’s Parish Hall. Members of local social justice organizations including The Womxn Project, Hope and Change for Haiti, and Climate Action RI will be on hand to discuss their work and ways to become

involved. First Unitarian Church social justice committees will provide homemade baked goods, and The Peace Flag Project will offer a peace flag making workshop. (A complete list of Social Justice Fair participating organizations appears below.)

As part of FirstWorks' vision for visiting artists to engage with the larger community, DBR's residency includes these additional events:

DBR will join RISD's Associate Provost for the Center of Social Equity and Inclusion Matthew Shenoda for a dialogue dinner on Wednesday, February 26, 2020 at 7 p.m. at the RISD ProvWash Building at 20 Washington Place, Providence. Presented by FirstWorks in collaboration with RISD Center for Social Equity and Inclusion, the evening will trace relationships between the arts and activism and feature traditional Haitian dishes from Providence's Garden of Eve restaurant. To register for this free event visit first-works.org.

As part of FirstWorks' education programming, DBR will conduct a series of workshops in Rhode Island public schools throughout February, as well as host a Professional Development session for teachers. Members of The Humanist Septet will also offer in school songwriting and performance workshops to students across the state.

FirstWorks' "Raise Your Voice" initiative brings world-class artists to Rhode Island for in-depth residencies featuring K-12 educational matinees, artist-led workshops for students and older adults, film screenings, and community engagement programming designed to generate empathy through the arts. "Raise Your Voice" is made possible in part with support from the National Endowment for the



Arts, Providence's Department of Art, Culture + Tourism, and the Otto H. York Foundation.

For more information on FirstWorks' 2020 season, visit first-works.org. Educator and community discounts are available by calling 401-421-4278.

About Daniel Bernard Roumain

Daniel Bernard Roumain's acclaimed work as a composer, performer, educator, and activist spans more than two decades, and he has been commissioned by venerable artists and institutions worldwide. Known for combining his classical training with urban, electronic, and African American sounds, DBR's genre-bending collaborations span the worlds of Philip Glass, Bill T. Jones, Savion Glover, and Lady Gaga. He is a composer of chamber, orchestral, and operatic works; has won an Emmy for Outstanding Musical Composition for his collaborations with ESPN; featured as keynote performer at technology conferences; and created large scale, site-specific musical events for public spaces. DBR earned his doctorate in Music Composition from the University of Michigan and is currently Institute Professor and Professor of Practice At Arizona State University. An avid arts industry leader, DBR serves on the board of directors of the League of American Orchestras, Association of Performing Arts Presenters and Creative Capital, the advisory committee of the Sphinx Organization, and was co-chair of 2015 and 2016 APAP Conferences.

About FirstWorks

FirstWorks is a non-profit based in Providence, Rhode Island whose purpose is to build the cultural, educational and economic vitality of its community by engaging diverse audiences with world-class performing arts and education programs. Since 2004, FirstWorks festivals, performances and programs have attracted more than 600,000 participants. Last season, FirstWorks arts education programs reached over 5,500 students from public and charter schools across Rhode Island with transformative, arts-based learning experiences. FirstWorks is the founding partner of PVDfest, collaborating with the City of Providence to produce the City's free signature arts celebration held each June. In 2019 PVDfest drew 130,000 visitors to Providence to experience music, art and spectacular performances. Embracing collaboration, FirstWorks has fostered over 90 community partnerships across business, social service, government, arts, and education sectors. Sustained collaborations with higher education include ambitious programming with Brown Arts Initiative at Brown University, artist

workshops at Providence College, and lectures at Rhode Island School of Design. Visit first-works.org to learn more.

Social Justice Fair Participants

AMOR; The Center for Reconciliation; Climate Action RI; Doulas of RI; The FANG Collective; First Unitarian social justice committees Side with Love and Sanctuary Congregation; The George Wiley Center; Hope and Change for Haiti; The Peace Flag Project; Providence Student Union; RISD Flips; Sista Fire; Standing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ); Sunrise Providence; Women's Fund of RI; The Womxn Project.

Listings Information:

WHO: FirstWorks presents Daniel Bernard Roumain (DBR) "Redemption Songs and Sonatas" with The Humanist Septet

WHAT: Renowned violinist/composer DBR collaborates with local artists in a concert celebrating a worldview of civil rights for all

WHEN: Saturday, February 29, 2020, 7:00 p.m.

WHERE: First Unitarian Church of Providence, 1 Benevolent Street, Providence

TICKETS: \$30 advance at first-works.org, (401) 421-4278. \$35 at the door. Educator and student discounts available (401) 421-4278

WHO: FirstWorks presents Local Social Justice organizations and committees

WHAT: Social Justice Fair

WHEN: Saturday, February 29, 2020, 6-7:00 p.m.

WHERE: Parish Hall, First Unitarian Church of Providence, 1 Benevolent Street

WHO: FirstWorks presents Daniel Bernard Roumain (DBR) and Matthew Shenoda (RISD Center for Social Equity and Inclusion)

WHAT: Dialogue Dinner about arts and activism featuring traditional Haitian fare

WHEN: Wednesday, February 26, 2020 at 7 p.m.

WHERE: RISD ProvWash Building, 20 Washington Place, Providence

TICKETS: Free, registrations required at first-works.org

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