

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## THE MANN CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS LAUNCHES *NEW FRONTIERS* FESTIVAL INSPIRED BY NASA ASTRONAUT AND PHILADELPHIA NATIVE COL. GUION BLUFORD, JR.

*Six-Month Series of Events Unites City's Major Arts, Science & Community Organizations to Present Original Programming for All Ages*

PHILADELPHIA (Feb. 27, 2017) – The Mann will mount its fourth consecutive festival this Spring titled *New Frontiers: Launch, Explore, Discover*. The festival, which was announced today during a Black History Month celebration, will feature an inspiring collection of original, artistic programming linking the arts and sciences. *New*

*Frontiers* is a six-month festival inspired by the 75<sup>th</sup> birthday of Colonel Guion Stewart Bluford, Jr., pioneering NASA astronaut, Philadelphia native and the first African American in space.



“Presenting curatorial festivals has become central to the Mann’s strategic vision as we work to reflect our commitment to artistic excellence, collaboration and community focus through unprecedented programming,” said Catherine M. Cahill, president and CEO of the Mann. “This year’s festival presents an opportunity to not only join with many of our longstanding partners, but also to join with new partners of art and science to present exciting new programming that takes the Mann beyond our walls and into the community.”

Through a series of arts initiatives, signature performances and educational projects, audiences of all ages will be encouraged to learn about Bluford’s legacy, to take a greater interest in space exploration and its core subjects of math and science, and to embody in their everyday lives the daring ambition to launch, explore and discover. *New Frontiers* is presented by the Mann in partnership with NEWorks Productions.

“Colonel Bluford is an American hero and NEWorks Productions is thrilled to extend our partnership with the Mann to develop this festival in his honor. His life embodies the true spirit of daring achievement. We have curated this festival with a range of programming that will undoubtedly inspire audiences of all ages to launch, explore and discover,” said Nolan Williams, Jr., the Mann’s festival artistic director.

Bluford, whose career serves as an important backdrop for the festival, is an American aerospace engineer, retired U.S. Air Force officer and former NASA astronaut. He launched his career as a NASA astronaut in 1979 and, just four years later, became the first African American in space, participating in four Space Shuttle flights between 1983 and 1992. Bluford was inducted into the International Space Hall of Fame in 1997 and the United States Astronaut Hall of Fame in 2010. On Nov. 22, he will celebrate his 75<sup>th</sup> birthday.

The festival events, which aim to inspire others through Bluford’s pioneering spirit, include in-school participatory workshops and performances, a stargazing event in collaboration with the Philadelphia Science Festival presented by The Franklin Institute, newly commissioned works and a Mann main stage concert with The Philadelphia Orchestra. During the main stage concert entitled *The Heavens are Telling* (July 25), Bluford will be

in attendance and will be honored for his spirit of discovery and his important contributions to history. The festival will culminate with Super Solar Saturday (Aug. 19), a free community day at the Mann featuring family fun and entertainment and a free movie screening of *Hidden Figures*. Several of the events will be free and open to the public. (Full schedule of events below.)

The Mann's 2017 community festival is under the direction of the Mann's festival artistic director, Nolan Williams, Jr., one of the country's foremost producers of inspirational arts programming, and Rhoda Blount, vice president of education and community engagement for the Mann. Williams' work has been performed at the White House, the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and by the National Symphony Orchestra.

### **Unique Partnerships**

The festival is presented by the Mann Center for the Performing in partnership with The Philadelphia Orchestra, The Franklin Institute, the Free Library of Philadelphia and NEWorks Productions. Festival program partners include the African American Museum of Philadelphia and Clef Club of Philadelphia. In addition, KIPP DuBois Collegiate Academy, Global Leadership Academy, Gesu School and Our Mother of Sorrows/Saint Ignatius of Loyola will serve as festival partner schools.

The festival is supported by Bank of America, Cigna, Independence Blue Cross, Merck, Pitcairn, The Presser Foundation, PWC, Republic Bank, TD Bank, USLI, Universal Health Services and Wells Fargo. Festival support was also provided by the Lenfest Foundation.

### **A Festival for a Pioneer**

The schedule for the *New Frontiers* festival is as follows:

#### ***Festival Song Intensive***

**Spring-Summer 2017**

*Location: KIPP DuBois Collegiate Academy*

"Anything," an inspirational song composed by the Mann's festival artistic director, Nolan Williams, Jr., that embodies the spirit of daring achievement will be embedded as part of the Spring semester music curriculum at KIPP DuBois Collegiate Academy. Select vocal and instrumental students will learn the song and serve as core performers for a special performance during the festival. Youth groups throughout the city will be invited to participate in this special performance.

#### ***Star Party***

**April 28, 2017**

*Location: Global Leadership Academy West*

7:30-10:30 p.m.

The Mann will host a Star Party as part of the Philadelphia Science Festival, a yearly citywide festival curated by The Franklin Institute. This stargazing event will connect attendees to celestial objects in the night sky including stars, planets and nebulae telescopes. The event gives participants a hands-on astronomy lesson using telescopes provided by The Franklin Institute and will include music, activities and star gazing (weather permitting). This event will be held at the festival partner school, Global Leadership Academy (GLA).

*Star Party is presented in partnership with The Franklin Institute and Global Leadership Academy.*

**FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC** (Registration encouraged)

#### ***Connecting Arts-N-Schools: Gravity Gabbing and Grooving***

**May 3-4, 2017**

*Location: Various partner schools*

The Mann is bringing its **Connecting Arts-N-Schools** (CANS) initiative to Festival partner schools. The *New Frontiers* CANS assembly (45 minutes) will feature a NASA astronaut as guest speaker and the performance of a commissioned festival dance by The Rock School for Dance Education. The new dance will honor Bluford and celebrate the themes of ambitious exploration and discovery. To date, CANS has reached more than 60,000 students citywide through a series of multidisciplinary programs in music, dance and theater.

**THIS IS A PRIVATE EVENT**

**Star Rhapsody**

**June 6-7, 2017**

*Location: Fels Planetarium, The Franklin Institute*

The Mann will curate special musical performances at The Franklin Institute's Fels Planetarium for participating schools. This event will take the planetarium experience to a new level with two days of live music programming featuring Philadelphia Performing Arts: A String Theory Charter School Concert Choir (June 6) and the Clef Club Ambassadors Big Band (June 7). Each group will perform musical sets synced with breathtaking visuals, immersing attending students in an out-of-this-world experience.

*Star Rhapsody is presented in partnership with The Franklin Institute, The Philadelphia Clef Club of Jazz and String Theory Charter School.*

**THIS IS A PRIVATE EVENT**

### ***The Heavens are Telling with The Philadelphia Orchestra***

**July 25, 2017**

*Location: the Mann*

8-10 p.m.

This signature festival concert is a tribute to Bluford and will feature The Philadelphia Orchestra, conducted by Cristian Măcelaru, and the Mann Center Festival Choir drawn from The Clayton White Singers, Intermezzo, The Mendelssohn Club of Philadelphia, Sounds of Joy, and the St. Thomas Chancel Choir, performing a mixed program of space-themed and space-inspired music. This tribute concert will be highlighted with the world premiere of Nolan Williams, Jr.'s "Hold Fast to Dreams," a newly commissioned work for orchestra, choir, soloists and spoken word. Chief Astronomer and Planetarium Director for The Franklin Institute, Derrick Pitts, will narrate the evening. Bluford, who will be in attendance, will be honored for his important contributions to history.

*Tickets available at [MannCenter.org](http://MannCenter.org). Doors open at 6 p.m. Picnics welcome.*

### ***Super Solar Saturday Family, Friends & Arts Day***

**August 19, 2017**

*Location: the Mann*

12:30-9:30 p.m.

Don't miss this free community day at the Mann with fun and entertainment for the whole family. Highlights will include curated performances by local artists on multiple stages (beginning at 1 p.m.) and the Please Touch Museum's Space Shuttle traveling exhibition. The Mann's campus will also be transformed into a miniature space theme park with a moon bounce, face painting, Star Wars™ characters, space maze, Big Dipper slide, space-related science experiments and much more. The day will conclude with a free screening of the Golden Globe-winning and Academy Award-nominated film *Hidden Figures*, the untold story of three African American women who worked behind the scenes at NASA to help launch astronaut John Glenn into space (screening at 7 p.m.).

*Picnics welcome.*

**FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**

For more information on the Mann's *New Frontiers* festival and schedule of events, please visit <http://www.manncenter.org/NewFrontiers>. Artists, repertoire and activities are subject to change.

***Editor's Note: Digital photos of all major participants available upon request.***

### **About the Mann**

The Mann Center for the Performing Arts' Education & Community Engagement Program reaches 30,000 young people annually and more than 550,000 since 1997. The Mann's Connecting Arts-N-Schools program offers city-wide schools a wide array of multicultural performances in music, theater and dance. This gives thousands of students the opportunity to experience the sights, sounds and rhythms of live performances – often for the very first time.

As one of the foremost outdoor music centers in the country, the Mann has a historical legacy of artistic excellence as a world-class entertainment destination presenting premier artists in association with AEG Live. Each summer season, renowned symphony orchestras, iconic rock stars and the latest touring artists in indie rock, hip hop, R&B and pop take the stage here. The Mann is the summer home of The Philadelphia Orchestra and presented critically acclaimed performers in every decade since the 1930s. Located in the heart of Philadelphia's Fairmount Park, the Mann hosts more than 200,000 visitors annually. Signature concert experiences are surrounded by Philadelphia's stunning skyline and include seats beneath the Mann's acoustically

acclaimed pavilion; picnics, blankets and music under the stars on its great lawn; and dining in Crescendo, the venue's spectacular tented restaurant. For more information, visit [www.MannCenter.org](http://www.MannCenter.org).

### **About NEWorks Productions**

As one of the country's premiere producers of inspirational-arts programming, NEWorks Productions partners with leading humanitarian, educational, arts, and renowned institutions to present curatorial festivals, concert productions, special events, and other signature projects, that leverage the power of music and the arts for community engagement and social good. Past and present partners include: The Mann Center for the Performing Arts, the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Washington National Opera, the American Cancer Society, the Susan G. Komen Foundation, Georgetown University, Oberlin College, the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Memorial Project Foundation, the Embassy of India, the Embassy of the Republic of South Africa, the Amalfi Coast Music and Arts Festival, the National Symphony Orchestra, and the world class Philadelphia Orchestra. [www.NEWorksProductions.com](http://www.NEWorksProductions.com)

### **About The Philadelphia Orchestra**

The Philadelphia Orchestra is one of the preeminent orchestras in the world, renowned for its distinctive sound, desired for its keen ability to capture the hearts and imaginations of audiences, and admired for a legacy of innovation in music-making. The Orchestra is inspiring the future and transforming its rich tradition of achievement, sustaining the highest level of artistic quality, but also challenging—and exceeding—that level, by creating powerful musical experiences for audiences at home and around the world. Yannick Nézet-Séguin continues his inspired leadership as the eighth music director of The Philadelphia Orchestra, which began in the fall of 2012. His highly collaborative style, deeply-rooted musical curiosity, and boundless enthusiasm, paired with a fresh approach to orchestral programming, have been heralded by critics and audiences alike. Musician-led initiatives shine a spotlight on the Orchestra's musicians, as they spread out from the stage into the community, and the Orchestra's numerous education and community partnership initiatives are an important focus of the organization's offerings. For more information on The Philadelphia Orchestra, please visit [www.philorch.org](http://www.philorch.org).

### **About The Franklin Institute**

Located in the heart of Philadelphia, The Franklin Institute is a renowned and innovative leader in the field of science and technology learning, as well as a dynamic center of activity. Pennsylvania's most visited museum, it is dedicated to creating a passion for learning about science by offering access to hands-on science education. For more information, visit [www.fi.edu](http://www.fi.edu).

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