



Newark Symphony Hall

Newark Symphony Hall Announces #EmbraceNewark Creative Team

July 7, 2020, NEWARK, NJ—As the nation continues to struggle with the ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and worldwide calls for justice sparked by the killing of George Floyd at the hands of police, Newark Symphony Hall announced the creative team behind #EmbraceNewark, its artist-activated recovery and wellness initiative. At the helm of the effort is Jasmine Mans, multidisciplinary artist, and author of the forthcoming poetry collection “Black Girl, Call Home.” This project is supported by a grant to Newark Symphony Hall from the City of Newark’s Creative Catalyst Fund (CCF).

As #EmbraceNewark’s creative director Mans has assembled a group of gifted and accomplished photographers, poets, journalists, and essayists who have banded together in a joint effort to make a bold public statement about the times.

“Faced as we are today with the crises of a global pandemic, economic collapse, and civil rights turmoil, the artists of #EmbraceNewark are speaking truth and resistance,” said Taneshia Nash Laird, President & CEO of Newark Symphony Hall. “Artistic voices have always been a powerful force in times of great turbulence, and #EmbraceNewark is carrying them forward in this venerated tradition.”

Nash Laird described each member of this collective as a formidable presence in his or her own right. In gathering them together for the Newark Symphony Hall, Mans earnestly stated their purpose: “Our goal is to chronicle the COVID-19 pandemic and racial unrest by way of the storyteller. By collaborating with the most brilliant and innovative photographers and poets in Newark, we will create a platform for artists to project the true Newark Narrative, rendered to the most vulnerable human experience”. This cohort of artists include photographers Chrystofer Davis and Joseph Moore, authors K. Desiree’ Milword, Laquan Ford, Bimpe Fageyimbo, Maisy Card, Kristen Owens, and Jasmine Mans herself, plus multidisciplinary artists Jillian M. Rock and Dr. Antoinette Ellis.

Mans added that the Symphony of Survival campaign will engage the artists of #EmbraceNewark as they chronicle their lives in quarantine from their individual personal spaces. The group will build a sweeping compendium of historical storytelling utilizing poetry, photography, documentary self-discussion, and video journalism. With this transformative, collective effort, #EmbraceNewark seeks to bring forth a healing of our souls through the rich tapestry of their words, images, and thoughts.

The full project is currently housed on www.symphonyofsurvival.com and will continue rolling out through the summer months. Mans is also using Newark Symphony Hall as a canvas, by taking excerpts of photos and poetry from the project and curating a public exhibition in the Hall’s Broad Street windows

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- beginning July 15, this ground level display will facilitate the community's social distancing needs. It will also be available on multiple online and social media platforms.

Additionally, The President's Coterie - a friends group helmed by Lauren Wells, PhD, the president of the board of trustees at Newark Public Library - has committed to a subsequent exhibition of the work at the library's main branch.

To discover more about the #EmbraceNewark, Symphony of Survival, and the participating artists log onto symphonyofsurvival.com.

About #EmbraceNewark

#EmbraceNewark was born at the height of the early COVID-19 plague in late March of this year, when a trove of personal protective equipment (PPE) was discovered at Newark Symphony Hall, cached in the theater during the years following the terrorist attacks against the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. On April 2, Newark Symphony Hall turned over to the City of Newark tens of thousands of these PPE materials - including 9,000 N95 masks that were critically needed at the time - as the virus tightened its deadly grip on the city.

About Newark Symphony Hall

First opened in 1925 as the Salaam Temple built by the Shriners, an order of the Masons, Newark Symphony Hall has been the home of almost a century of arts and culture in what is now New Jersey's oldest arts and entertainment venue.

About the Creative Catalyst Fund

Mayor Ras J. Baraka, via Arts and Cultural Affairs Director fayemi shakur, deployed the city's newly-created Creative Catalyst Fund (CCF) to support long-term sustainability and assist Newark-based artists and small to mid-sized arts and cultural organizations impacted by COVID-19. On June 22, the city's Division of Arts and Cultural Affairs, the Department of Economic and Housing Development, and Newark Arts, announced the CCF had awarded \$750,000 in grants to 120 artists and arts organizations.

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