



MEDIA ALERT
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MEDIA ALERT

September 15, 2022

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**City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs
and the
Friends of the Watts Towers Arts Center
Celebrate
100 Years of Nuestro Pueblo – The Watts Towers of Simon Rodia,
the
40th Annual Watts Towers Day of the Drum Festival
Saturday, September 24, 2022,
and the
45th Annual Simon Rodia Watts Towers Jazz Festival
Sunday, September 25, 2022
at the
Watts Towers Arts Center Campus**

Los Angeles - The Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA) celebrates **100 Years of Nuestro Pueblo – The Watts Towers of Simon Rodia**, the 40th anniversary of the Annual **Watts Towers Day of the Drum Festival**, and the 45th anniversary of the Annual **Simon Rodia Watts Towers Jazz Festival**. This historic occasion is being commemorated by DCA’s Community Arts Division with numerous virtual events honoring the 100-year history of the Watts Towers and the Watts Towers Arts Center Campus (WTACC). DCA and the Friends of Watts Towers Arts Center will host multicultural dance and music performances at the 40th Annual Watts Towers Day of the Drum Festival on Saturday, September 24, 2022 and the 45th Annual Simon Rodia Watts Towers Jazz Festival on Sunday, September 25, 2022 to continue these festivities.

“The Watts Towers Arts Center Campus originated from the creative inspiration of Simon Rodia, an Italian immigrant from Serino, Italy who started building his towers in 1921,” said **Daniel Tarica, DCA Interim General Manager**. “The Watts Towers, originally named “Nuestro Pueblo” or “Our Town,” celebrates 100 years of his sculptural masterpiece and the world’s largest single construction created by one individual over a period of 33 years. The Watts Towers Arts Center Campus serves as a beacon for creativity, empowerment, and determination. We invite everyone to join in the celebration of this historic moment.”

"We are thrilled to invite everyone to gather again in person to celebrate our **Centennial Anniversary** at the Watts Towers Arts Center Campus," remarked **Rosie Lee Hooks, DCA Acting Community Arts Division Director**. "We look forward to welcoming friends – familiar and new – to enjoy activities and programs for everyone throughout the campus. The WTACC has provided thousands of young people and their families with creative inspiration and opportunities to develop their skills in museum and arts education."

"As someone who was proudly born and raised in the Watts community, I am excited to have secured a historic \$4 million in the state budget for the Watts Towers Arts Center Campus," said **Assemblymember Mike A. Gipson**. "This funding will double the area's current park acreage, which will dramatically increase recreational opportunities while bringing new arts and cultural opportunities to the community. This green project will include new interactive art elements, a looped walking path, shade, and seating – this will create a more open and inviting Watts Towers Arts Center Campus for our children and families. It will also expand the Campus and create more useable space for community events, which will help build and further the social fabric that defines safe and connected communities. I will continue to advocate for more resources for my District, especially in historically underfunded communities like Watts, and throughout the State of California."

An all-star line-up of international recording artists, local jazz greats, percussionists, and dancers will come together over two days, from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., for an unbelievable drum and jazz festival experience under the artistic direction of Rosie Lee Hooks, Patrice Rushen, and Munyungo Jackson. Presented by DCA and the Friends of Watts Towers Arts Center, the two-day festival is free and open to the public.

Saturday's Day of the Drum Festival, hosted by Masters of Ceremonies James Janisse and Torrence Brandon Reese will kick off with Xochipilli, Aztec traditional dancing featuring Huehuetl and Teponaxtle drums. 1+1 Duo will carry the sound of world percussion from the Middle East and then hand off the rhythms to TaikoProject, one of Los Angeles's leading taiko groups. La Bamba Collective will perform an Afro-Puerto Rican ensemble, bringing culture through Puerto Rican drums and dance. A tribute to "the Hit Maker," James Gadson, will feature Munyungo Jackson, Clayton Cameron, Ronald Bruner Sr., Kenny Sara, and Kenny Elliot with Sherwood Sledge and Lynne Fiddmont, celebrating an artist who, "...recorded more hits than any drummer in town." The program will conclude with Kouman Kele West African Dance Company performing an exciting traditional West African Musical Experience.

Janisse and Reese will return for Sunday's Jazz Festival which will begin with a Yoruba ground blessing by Alaadun to unite all cultures. Watts Willowbrook Strings will provide musical performances followed with an artful blend of Italian jazz and West Coast soul performances by Jasmine Tommaso. With the sun just moving past high noon, Dr. Hoover will offer a demonstration of Tai Chi Chuan. Additional live musical performances will include Windy Barnes and the Influentials, the JMP All Stars featuring Patrice Rushen, Munyungo Jackson, and others. The Pan-Afrikan Peoples Arkestra will perform and conclude the Jazz Festival.

The festivals' activities are complemented by exhibitions at the Noah Purifoy and Charles Mingus Galleries including, "I Wanted To Do Something Big," an exhibition from the archives recording the building, conservation, and preservation of the Watts Towers; and an installation of musical instruments from around the world at the Dr. Joseph and Bootsie Howard Gallery. The festivals will also feature a drum pavilion and universal drum circle led by Matt Gibson III. Supervised children's activities will take place from 12:00 p.m. to

4:30 p.m. Food and beverages, along with arts and crafts, will be available for sale throughout the day. Guided tours of Nuestro Pueblo, the Watts Towers of Simon Rodia, will be available in addition to tiling and gardening activities at the Garden Studio Gallery.

Both festivals take place at the DCA's Watts Towers Arts Center Campus at 1727 East 107th Street, Los Angeles, CA 90002. For more information, please call 213.847.4646, or visit wattstowers.org.

Festival Schedules:

40th Annual Watts Towers Day of the Drum Festival
Saturday, September 24, 2022 | 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
Masters of Ceremonies: James Janisse and Torrence Brandon Reese

11:00 a.m. - **Xochipilli**

Aztec traditional dancing with Huehuetl and Teponaztle drums

12:00 p.m. - **1+1 Duo**

World percussion

1:00 p.m. - **TAIKOPROJECT**

Based in Little Tokyo, one of LA's leading taiko groups

1:00 – 1:15 p.m. – **Assemblymember Mike A. Gipson** presents a \$4 million state budget check for the Watts Towers Arts Center Campus

2:00 p.m. - **La Bamba Collective**

Afro Puerto Rican ensemble bringing the culture through Puerto Rican drums and dance

3:00 p.m. - **Tribute to James Gadson, "The Hit Maker"**

Featuring Munyungo Jackson, Clayton Cameron, Ronald Bruner Sr., Kenny Sara, and Kenny Elliott with Sherwood Sledge

4:00 p.m. - **Kouman Kele West African Dance Company**

An exciting traditional West African musical experience

45th Annual Simon Rodia Watts Towers Jazz Festival
Sunday, September 25, 2022 | 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
Masters of Ceremonies: James Janisse and Torrence Brandon Reese

11:00 a.m. - **Alaadun**

Yoruba ground blessing uniting all cultures based on common themes and principles

11:30 a.m. - **Watts Willowbrook Strings**

Spiritually connected

12:30 p.m. - **Jasmine Tommaso**

Guitar and vocals–jazz duo revisit the classics, Lorenzo Grassi, guitarist

1:45 p.m. - **Tai Chi Chuan**

School of Healing Martial Arts with Dr. Daniel Hoover, Instructor

2:00 p.m. - **Windy Barnes and The Influentials**

Her sultry, impeccable voice stylings set a new standard with her all-star musicians on the jazz scene

3:15 p.m. - **JMP All Stars featuring Patrice Rushen, Munyungo Jackson, Clayton Cameron, Dr. Bobby Rodriguez, Edwin Livingston, and more**

Straight Ahead Jazz

4:30 p.m. - **Pan-Afrikan Peoples Arkestra**

A community cultural institution that encompasses the creative arts, established in 1961, with multi-generations of artists

All Day Activities at the Festivals:

Drum Pavilion: Universal Drum Circle

Led by Matt Gibson III

"I Wanted To Do Something Big"

We celebrate our centennial with this exhibition, focusing on the history of Watts Towers with an emphasis on current and past efforts to preserve Rodia's monumental architectural sculpture: 1921 to 2021, co-curators Mark Gilberg, Rosie Lee Hooks, and Rebeca Guerrero Noah Purifoy & Charles Mingus Galleries

International Musical Instruments

Permanent Exhibition

Dr. Joseph & Bootsie Howard Gallery

Supervised Children's Activities

Charles Mingus Youth Arts Center

Tiling and Garden Activities, Turtle Pond, and African Sulcata Tortoise Dwelling

Garden Studio Gallery

Food Court

Watts Towers Amphitheatre

Festival Posters Visual Art:

Michael Massenburg / Aiseborn / Mr. B. Baby

Additional Sponsors:

DCA's **Watts Towers Day of the Drum Festival**, **Simon Rodia Watts Towers Jazz Festival**, and **"I Wanted To Do Something Big"** exhibition are sponsored in part by:

- **Friends of the Watts Towers Arts Center;**
- **The City of Los Angeles 15th Council District / Councilmember Joe Buscaino;**
- **Watts Towers Community Action Council;**

- **GRoW @ Annenberg TM**, a philanthropic initiative dedicated to supporting humanitarian efforts across the globe as well as innovative projects in health, education, and the arts and civic and cultural life;
- **Los Angeles City Department of Recreation and Parks.**

Directions:

Watts Towers Arts Center Campus

1727 East 107th Street
 Los Angeles, CA 90002
 213.847.4646

wattstowers.org

The Campus is easily accessible from:

1. the 105 East Freeway at Wilmington Avenue by taking Exit #10;
2. via the 108th Street Bus Stop, 55 Route (North/South),
3. via the 103rd Street / Graham Bus Stop, 117 Route (East/West)
4. the 103rd Street / Watts Towers Station via Metro A Line (Blue)
5. the 110 Freeway, Century Boulevard exit (Southbound) Imperial Highway exit (Northbound)

Self-parking and valet parking are free. ADA: Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request.

About the City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA)

As a leading, progressive arts and cultural agency, DCA empowers Los Angeles’s vibrant communities by supporting and providing access to quality visual, design, literary, musical, performing, and educational arts programming; managing vital cultural centers; preserving historic sites; creating public art; and funding services provided by arts organizations and individual artists.

Formed in 1925, DCA promotes arts and culture as a way to ignite a powerful dialogue, engage LA’s residents and visitors, and ensure LA’s varied cultures are recognized, acknowledged, and experienced. DCA’s mission is to strengthen the quality of life in Los Angeles by stimulating and supporting arts and cultural activities, ensuring public access to the arts for residents and visitors alike.

DCA advances the social and economic impact of arts and culture through grantmaking, public art, community arts, performing arts, and strategic marketing, development, design, and digital research. DCA creates and supports arts programming, maximizing relationships with other city agencies, artists, and arts and cultural nonprofit organizations to provide excellent service in neighborhoods throughout Los Angeles.

For more information, please visit wattstowers.org or culturela.org or follow us on Facebook at [facebook.com/culturela](https://www.facebook.com/culturela), Instagram [@culture_la](https://www.instagram.com/culture_la), and Twitter [@culture_la](https://twitter.com/culture_la).

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