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VAF PRESS CONTACT:

Alli Focke

afocke@vafest.org

757-282-2804



ROBERT W. CROSS
PERRY ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Virginia Arts Festival selected as a “50 for 50 Arts Inspiration” by the Virginia Commission for the Arts

November 15, 2017 (Norfolk, VA) - From an original pool of over 350 nominees, the Virginia Commission for the Arts (VCA), the state arts agency, has selected the Virginia Arts Festival to receive one of its prestigious “50 for 50 Arts Inspiration Awards” in the category of Bedrock Institutions.

The “50 for 50 Arts Inspiration Awards” were conceived and designed by the Commission as a 50th anniversary tribute to programs, individuals, and organizations vital to the arts in Virginia. The designated “Arts Inspirations” may have played a critical role in the last 50 years, serve as today’s leaders and exemplars, or may be tomorrow’s visionaries, leading the way to a culturally vibrant future. The Commission was established by law in 1968 to promote awareness of and access to the arts across the state and to support a broad range of artists, arts organizations, and arts educators.

Following a statewide call for nominations, nominees for the awards in all categories were accepted in spring 2017. A panel comprised of former commissioners and arts leaders reviewed the nominations and recommended a slate to the full Board which adopted the final roster in the fall. To ensure impartiality, no former commissioners and no state-elected officials were selected for the roster.

“We are indeed fortunate in Virginia to have an abundant and diverse roster of outstanding artists and organizations and their supporters spanning disciplines and decades,” said Margaret Vanderhyye, the Commission’s executive director. “The 50 selected winners are representative of the best, but this list is far from definitive. Every day in communities across the Commonwealth, thousands of people benefit from the creative energies and pursuit of excellence that characterize Virginia artists and arts organizations,” she concluded.

VCA Commissioner and 50th Anniversary Co-Chair Jo Hodgkin (Annandale) stated: “These awardees carry the banner for countless arts workers and supporters who use the arts to build a strong Virginia. We believe the arts are essential for a creative 21st century workforce, economically dynamic communities, and a culture based on wellness and accessibility.”

“We are thrilled to be recognized among outstanding arts leaders state-wide,” said Robert W. Cross, Perry Artistic Director for the Virginia Arts Festival. “This award is directly aligned with

the mission of the Virginia Arts Festival to make a tangible difference in Hampton Roads and across Virginia through regional partnerships and cultural tourism. As we launch our 22nd season, this acknowledgement from the Virginia Commission for the Arts helps us celebrate where we've been, and continues to drive us forward."

Award recipients were honored with other state arts leaders and supporters at a special reception this fall for a Celebration of the Arts reception at the Executive Mansion with Governor Terry McAuliffe and First Lady Dorothy McAuliffe.

On Wednesday, January 31, 2018 from 1:00-5:00 p.m. the Commission will hold a 50th Anniversary Program, where the Virginia Arts Festival will be recognized along with other awardees at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts.

Each of the five nomination categories represents a different element of the arts. For the **Bedrock Institutions** category awarded to the Virginia Arts Festival, criteria was outlined as follows:

Bedrock Institutions: Winners have been in existence more than ten years, have demonstrated a benefit to the economic health and or tourism in the community, exhibit artistic excellence, celebrate diversity and showcase Virginia as a cultural destination.

For more information about the Virginia Commission for the Arts, visit www.arts.virginia.gov.

About the Virginia Arts Festival

Since 1997, the Virginia Arts Festival has transformed the cultural scene in southeastern Virginia, presenting great performers from around the world to local audiences and making this historic, recreation-rich region a cultural destination for visitors from across the United States and around the world. The Festival has presented numerous U.S. and regional premieres, and regularly commissions new works of music, dance, and theater from some of today's most influential composers, choreographers and playwrights. The Festival's arts education programs reach tens of thousands of area schoolchildren each year through student matinees, in-school performances, artists' residencies, master classes and demonstrations. ###

For more information about the Virginia Arts Festival, visit www.vafest.org.