

Looking Ahead:  
Be sure to join us for

*Rhythm Live! 2019*

Friday, February 22nd, 2019 7:30 PM

Harrison Opera House



## Sponsors

The *Rhythm Project* is supported in part by Bank of America, Batten Foundation, Capital Group Companies, Clark Nexsen, D. Baker Ames Charitable Foundation, Dollar Tree, Enterprise Holdings Foundation, Hampton Roads Community Foundation, Nordstrom, Old Dominion University Community Development Corporation, PRA Group, Ruth Brown Memorial Fund, SunTrust, USAA, Wells Fargo, and the following municipalities and/or their Arts and Humanities Commissions: Norfolk, Portsmouth, and Virginia Beach.



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## The Rhythm Project

The Rhythm Project is a world percussion ensemble dedicated to the nurturing of self-esteem through individual and cooperative achievement. Founded in 1996, the program was started in Portsmouth, VA by the Virginia Arts Festival. There are four elementary and three middle school Rhythm Project programs that feed the program's premiere performing ensemble, the All-Stars. The All-Stars is a year-round program for high school students that focuses on instilling discipline and dedication in students through performance and touring opportunities. Additionally, two high school programs complete the family of eleven Rhythm Project ensembles that serve the cities of Norfolk, Virginia Beach and Portsmouth.

The All-Stars, 2009 and 2010 Virginia International PANFest Grand Champions, have earned international acclaim and collaborated with many prominent artists. They have opened for Gladys Knight, shared the stage with pan artist Victor Provost and the Metropolitan Jazz Orchestra, and performed at the Royal Nova Scotia and Virginia International Tattoos. In May 2014, the group was featured on NPR's "From the Top" program showcasing outstanding talent in high school students.

[www.RhythmProject.org](http://www.RhythmProject.org)



## Virginia Arts Festival Rhythm Report

Volume 51

Fall 2018

## Greetings Rhythm Project Supporters—

It's time, once again, to update you all on the happenings of the Rhythm Project, and things have been perhaps even more busy than usual around here. As enrollment in the Rhythm Project soared to well over 200 students by the end of 2017, plans were made to allow for even **more** growth in the program. After a tremendous grant from the Batten Foundation, 2018 was the year to make it happen. Ambitious plans to add a 3rd Rhythm Project Director were made to help us accommodate 2 new schools that would be home to 3 new steel drum ensembles. After an exhaustive search throughout the summer, Mr. Austin Ferguson was the top choice, and agreed to join our team and get started teaching with the incredible Rhythm Project. He has since jumped in the fray and performed extremely well, taking on a large portion of the daily (and nightly) RP duties. Now, we as a team are more equipped than ever to meet the demand for pan here in Hampton Roads!

Dave Longfellow

RP Director (757) 282-2823

Paul Munzenrider

RP Associate Director

(757) 282-2815

Austin Ferguson

RP Assistant Director

(757) 605-3073

Robert W. Cross

VAF Executive Director

Scott Jackson

VAF General Manager

## Activity Calendar

- Saturday, November 17, 2018

Grand Illumination Parade  
Pre-Parade Entertainment  
RP All-Stars

Outside of Federal Building  
Downtown Norfolk  
5:30 - 6:30PM  
Free and open to  
Public

- Saturday, December 15, 2018

RP All-Stars @ Nordstrom's

MacArthur Center  
12:00 - 2:00 PM

- Tuesday, December 18, 2018

Larchmont Elementary  
Winter Program

Larchmont Elementary  
6PM  
Free and open to  
Larchmont families

Full Schedule at  
[www.RhythmProject.org](http://www.RhythmProject.org)





## Growing Our Team

The Rhythm Project Team would like to introduce our newest member, Austin Ferguson! Austin will function as our Assistant Director for the Rhythm Project as well as Operations Manager for The Virginia International PANFest. Since his arrival in September, We have hit the ground running working with Mr. Ferguson to get oriented with our many ensembles and to prepare them for the school year. We are excited to have Austin take the reigns over the director role for our Portsmouth and Virginia Beach Rising-Stars Steel Bands, as well as functioning as co-director for the Jacox Elementary Steel Band, Ingleside Elementary Steel Band, and the Rhythm Project All-Stars. As the year goes on we hope that many of you will get the chance to meet Mr. Ferguson. Below is a small bio of Austin, more info on him can be found on [Rhythmproject.org](http://Rhythmproject.org).

Austin Ferguson is originally from Akron, Ohio, where he studied Percussion Performance and became introduced to the steel pan. His studies at Akron introduced him to many friends of the Rhythm Project including Cliff Allexis, Yuko Asada, Tom Miller, Mia Gormandy, and many others. It also led me him to playing in The National Panorama Competition of Trinidad & Tobago in 2015 where he even met Mr. Munzenrider for the first time! Austin has experience and training in music pedagogy and is licensed to teach Instrumental Music in K – 12. He is excited to be a part of the Rhythm Project team and is ready to help make an already excellent organization even stronger!



## Expanding Our Footprint

This year we are excited to expand our reach in Norfolk with the addition of the Ingleside Elementary Steel Band. This ensemble complements our already thriving groups in Jacox, Tidewater Park, and Larchmont Elementary Schools. Fifth Grade Music students get to meet twice a week with Mr. Longfellow and Mr. Ferguson where they will develop further skills in music fundamentals, as well as the unique performance practice and history that accompanies the steel pan. We are thankful for the partnership we have created with Norfolk Public Schools and their willingness to work with the Rhythm Project as we further expand our reach. VAF and the Rhythm Project even received a Commendation of distinction recently from the NPS School Board at their October meeting. It was an important moment for our program that has been years in the making.

## Summer 2018 Review

The summer of 2018 was busy as usual for the Rhythm Project, filled with our normal lineup of performances as well as many preparations for the growth the program has undergone. The Teens with a Purpose summer steel drum program was another success this past June and July. Each year our partnership with Teens with a Purpose grows, and we see more and more familiar faces from summer and the academic school year alike. This year was a great one for Rhythm Project alumni, as they took on even more involvement in the summer program and were immensely helpful. With the constant growth throughout the RP program, this summer camp will offer more and more opportunities for RP All-Stars alums to jump in and get some valuable teaching experience.

The All-Stars had a great time once again on their trip to Morgantown, West Virginia for the Ellie Mannette Festival of Steel. The highlight for the kids this year was working on a very well-known piece of panorama music called "Coffee Street," and they got the chance to study it directly with the composer, Andy Narell. The final performance was outstanding and Coffee Street will be a mainstay of our repertoire for months. This year marked an unfortunate occasion as well, as it was the last time the kids will be able to see the great Dr. Ellie Mannette in person, as he passed away this fall. His contribution to the steel drum art form was monumental, and he will forever live on as a legend in the pan world. The RP instructors have known Dr. Mannette for many years and it is very sad to see him go. However it is also humbling and amazing to be able to pass on his legacy to the young pan students of today. Rest in Peace, Dr. Ellie Mannette (1927 – 2018).

## Steel Drums at Brickell Academy

The Rhythm Project expanded in many ways this fall, and a big part of that growth was in Virginia Beach with the addition of a steel band in Brickell Academy at Old Donation School! We are excited to be a part of such a quality school with top-notch students and facilities. This band will practice on Monday evenings after school and is comprised solely of Brickell Academy Students. They're already off to a strong start, and will fast become one of the many excellent programs at the Old Donation School. This is the 3rd Rhythm Project program in Virginia Beach, to complement our fantastic Salem HS group as well as the Virginia Beach Rising-Stars, comprised of Middle School students from all throughout Virginia Beach.

