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FMU to open Performing Arts Center

FLORENCE – Francis Marion University will celebrate the grand opening of its Performing Arts Center in downtown Florence September 9-12.

The gala events include an array of performances beginning with a formal evening of rhythm and blues with the legendary Roberta Flack on Friday, Sept. 9. On Saturday night, guests are invited to a casual evening with award-winning folk artist Judy Collins.

The four-day gala event will showcase regional and local talent including performances by local theatre and dance troupes on Saturday as part of a community day.

On Sunday, the Charleston Symphony Orchestra Spiritual Ensemble will provide an inspirational afternoon for the community. The events will culminate with the Florence Symphony Orchestra featuring pianist Paolo Gualdi performing on Monday evening.

The FMU Performing Arts Center is designated to become a venue for concerts, theatre productions, lectures and assemblies, enhancing FMU's role as a cultural center and community gathering place.

Recently completed, the FMU Performing Arts Center provides unparalleled performance venues for the region. Featuring national, regional and local performing artists, the center hosts a myriad of performing arts including theatre, music, and dance.

The 61,000-square-foot center can seat 850 in the Mainstage Auditorium and 125 in the Black Box Theatre. As an educational facility, the center houses classrooms and office space for the FMU Department of Fine Arts. In addition, the building houses offices for the Florence Symphony, the Masterworks Choir and the Drs. Bruce & Lee Foundation.

Development and construction of the FMU Performing Arts Center was made possible by the generosity of the Drs. Bruce & Lee Foundation, the state of South Carolina, the city of Florence and several private benefactors including BB&T, McLeod Health, Adele Kassab and others throughout the community.

"After a decade of planning and half a decade of fundraising and construction, the Center is finally here," said FMU President Fred Carter. "It's a wonderful facility, and the University will strive to insure that the programming is distinctive and diverse. I hope that the residents of Florence and the Pee Dee are pleased."

Tickets will be available to purchase on July 25 online at www.fmupac.org, via telephone at (843) 661-4444, and at the FMU Performing Arts Center Box Office. Telephone and personal ticket sales are available Monday through Thursday between 12-5 p.m. Subject to availability, tickets may be available for purchase at the door.

A Formal Evening with Roberta Flack

Friday, September 9, 2011
Pre-concert reception: 6:30 p.m.
Concert: 8:00 pm
Attire: Black-Tie Optional

An Evening with Judy Collins

Saturday, September 10, 2011
Concert: 7:30 pm
Attire: Casual

An Inspirational Afternoon with the Charleston Symphony Orchestra Spiritual Ensemble

Sunday, September 11, 2011
Concert: 2:00 pm
Attire: Casual

Additional performances include the following general admission (no ticket required) acts:

Shakespeare Showcase by the FMU Theatre Program

Saturday, September 10, 2011
Show times: 1:00 pm & 4:00 pm
Black Box Theatre
Attire: Casual

Dance Recitals Featuring Regional Dance Companies

Saturday, September 10, 2011
Show times: 11:00 am & 2:00 pm
BB&T Amphitheatre