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**HANCOCK SHAKER VILLAGE
CELEBRATES THE RETURN OF SUMMER IN THE BERKSHIRES
WITH LIVE MUSIC, THEATER, AND ART!**



PITTSFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS, June 8, 2021 – Hancock Shaker Village is bringing the arts to life this summer with the return of Back Porch Music, a new partnership with Chester Theater, and contemporary art.

BACK PORCH MUSIC

Celebrate the magic of summer in the Berkshires by gathering under the stars, sipping wine, and listening to the best in live music while surrounded by the splendor of Hancock Shaker Village. With the historic Laundry & Machine Shop as the stage, concerts in 2021 include three distinctive artists: **Sean Rowe**, **Paul Beaubrun**, and **The Nields**.

“Concerts on our farm are a step back in time,” says Jennifer Trainer Thompson, Director of Hancock Shaker Village, “Sitting on a blanket with the Berkshire evening air in the shadow of a round barn built in 1826, the night sky reveals its glory. You can see the silhouette of the wooden silos, knowing the animals are asleep in the ell just beyond, as the evening puts down roots in the music of your mind.”

NPR describes **Sean Rowe's** voice as a room-rattling baritone. No Depression calls it otherworldly, like some kind of mythical prophet. Sean Rowe sings stories that demand attention. He's recorded five full-length albums and several EPs. His music has been used widely throughout film and television, with notable examples including NBC's hit dramas *The Blacklist* and *Parenthood*. Rowe's song "To Leave Something Behind" was one of two non-score tracks to be featured in Ben Affleck's hit 2016 feature film *The Accountant* and has received nearly 4.5 million streams on Spotify.

New York based Haitian singer, songwriter, and multi-instrumentalist **Paul Beaubrun** weaves Haitian roots music with rock and roll and reggae, referring to it as “Roots/Blues” music. Having collaborated with artists like Jackson Browne, the Preservation Hall Jazz Band, Jenny Lewis and Arcade Fire, Beaubrun's music is a unique and transfixing sound, blending guitar, rich vocals, and cultural history together; all while performing a smooth mix of English, French and Creole.

"He seeks to conquer the world with gentleness, with music," notes Glide Magazine. "There is little need to dissect the message or the music – it is simple and it is indisputable. This is a human carrying the message of peace and beauty."

The Nields are part of an exciting new breed of contemporary folk-rockers, having appeared at many folk festivals and performed with artists such as Dar Williams, Moxy Früvous, 10,000 Maniacs, Ani DiFranco and Catie Curtis. In a recent review The Nields music is described as "equal parts Beatles, Cranberries and Joni Mitchell." Nerissa Nields' songs, sung by her sister, Katryna, successfully fuse intelligent lyrics with heartfelt sensitivity, while arrangements are kept at a feverish pitch. Sing Out! Magazine imagined that "if Natalie Merchant had a sister with an equally good voice singing perfect harmony with her" that would be The Nields.

CHESTER THEATER TO PERFORM LIVE THIS SUMMER AT HANCOCK

Hancock Shaker Village becomes a stage this summer when Chester Theatre presents its summer season of three thought-provoking plays outdoors under the tent. "The return to live theater is such a thrill to all of us in this culture-rich region of Massachusetts," said Director Jennifer Trainer Thompson, "and what better place than on a stage overlooking the fields and pastures of Richmond."

Known for intriguing, contemporary theater, Chester Theater Company was founded in 1990 by the former Artistic Director of Dublin's famed Abbey Theatre. With a reputation for producing the best in contemporary theatre, Chester Theater Company has consistently won top honors with critics and audiences, producing "some of the most adventurous theatre in the area," according to *The New Yorker*. WAMC highlighted Chester Theater for its upcoming season and the focus on BIPOC voices. This three-show series outdoors on the grounds of an historic village may be the season we've all been waiting for.

Echoed Daniel Elihu Kramer, Artistic Director of Chester: "The journey through these three plays is about our need to connect with one another, how difficult that can be to accomplish, and the deep satisfaction of how we sustain each other when we succeed."

The Berkshire premiere of Will Eno's *Title and Deed* opens the series. Directed by Keira Naughton, *The New York Times* calls *Title and Deed* "A haunting and often fiercely funny meditation on life." Will Eno's script – "skewed with humor" and with "deep lyrical pleasures," according to the *Times* -- bursts moments that are at once intriguing, amusing, and enigmatic. *Title and Deed* stars James Barry, known to Chester Theatre audiences for his work in *The Aliens*, *The Night Alive*, and *Sister Play*. Director Keira Naughton, daughter of acclaimed Tony

Award winner James Naughton and a Williamstown Theater Festival regular, was nominated for a Berkshire Theatre Critics' Award for 2019's *Curve of Departure*.

The season continues with *The Niceties* written by Eleanor Burgess. *The Washington Post* calls *The Niceties* "a barnburner of a play," and "one of the best plays I've seen about who gets to tell the story of America, and how." Zoe, a Black student at an elite liberal arts college, is called into her white professor's office to discuss her paper about slavery's effect on the American Revolution. What begins as a polite clash in perspectives explodes into an urgent debate about race, history, and power.

Written by Nia Vardalos and directed by Daniel Elihu Kramer, "*Tiny Beautiful Things* turns out be about the endangered art of listening to — and really hearing and responding to — other people" according to *The New York Times*. A celebration of the simple beauty of being human, based on the "Dear Sugar" column written by Cheryl Strayed (author of *Wild*), *Tiny Beautiful Things* offers affirmation of love and loss, of pain and pleasure, of deep loneliness and shared humanity. Adapted by Nia Vardalos (*My Big Fat Greek Wedding*), *Tiny Beautiful Things* is the story of what we can feel and learn when we open up to each other, and to hearing answers we can't figure out on our own.

NEW ART ON VIEW

Shaker style and aesthetic has remained relevant practically and artistically for more than two centuries and this summer Hancock Shaker Village welcomes the installations of several unique and prominent artists and designers. Their exhibits illustrate how their work has been influenced by the Shakers.

Artist **James Turrell** has a masterful understanding of human perception. His work across media—from two-dimensional artworks to site-specific installations—draws intrigue from the intersection of light and space. In this exhibition in an historical setting, *Lapsed Quaker Ware* represents a body of work that manifests a new perspective on light through its absence. This series of black basalt-ware ceramics was created in collaboration with Irish potter **Nicholas Mosse**.

A history-loving designer storyteller, **Gary Graham** is inspired by material culture that blend fictional characters with historical narratives. Blurring distinctions between past, present and future, his work offers a creative approach to the tactile and sensual attributes of textiles and the drama of contemporary historical interpretation. In a serene period room within the Brick Dwelling, Graham reimagines the Shaker cloak, once sewn and produced by loving hands.

One of the most influential fashion designers today, **Tory Burch** chose Hancock Shaker Village as the setting for her virtual Spring/Summer 2021 presentation in October 2020, finding inspiration in the museum's buildings and artifacts. With *Beauty Rests on Utility*, a Shaker maxim that reflects her mindset while designing during the pandemic, Burch curates here a very personal show, revealing the impact of Shaker design on her work.

HANCOCK SHAKER VILLAGE SUMMER 2021 SEASON AT A GLANCE

Saturday, June 12, 7pm (doors open at 6pm) **Back Porch concert** with singer-songwriter **Sean Rowe**. Concerts are on the lawn – bring a lawn chair or blanket and claim your favorite spot for the show; beer, wine, and food are available for purchase. Tickets \$25/day of (\$20/advance); kids 12 and under free. Reserve online or call 413.443.0188, ext 0.

June 16, 17, 18, 20, 23, 24, 25, and 27, **Chester Theatre Company** presents *Title and Deed*. All performances will be under a tent on the grounds of Hancock Shaker Village, the sides of the tent will be raised for ventilation, and CDC guidance will be followed. Performances are: Wednesdays at 3pm, Thursdays at 3pm and 7:30pm, Fridays at 7:30pm, Sundays at 3pm. Single Ticket, \$47.50. Call box office for information on Season Subscriptions and discounted ticket eligibility. Visitors to Hancock Shaker Village can show their receipt to receive \$5 off Chester@Hancock tickets the day of the show. Chester Theatre box office: chestertheatre.org or 413.354.7771

July 10, 18, 31, August 1, 8, 14, 10am, **Goat Yoga**. Bring your own mat a sense of adventure and an open mind. Tickets \$25/\$22.50 members.

July 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 21, 22, 23, 24, and 25, **Chester Theatre Company** presents *The Niceties*. All performances will be under a tent on the grounds of Hancock Shaker Village, the sides of the tent will be raised for ventilation, and CDC guidance will be followed. Performances are: Wednesdays at 3pm, Thursdays at 3pm and 7:30pm, Fridays at 7:30pm, Saturdays at 7:30pm, and Sundays at 3 pm. Single Ticket, \$47.50. Call box office for information on Season Subscriptions and discounted ticket eligibility. Visitors to Hancock Shaker Village can show their receipt to receive \$5 off Chester@Hancock tickets the day of the show. Chester Theatre box office: chestertheatre.org or 413.354.7771

Saturday, July 31, 7pm (doors open at 6pm) **Back Porch concert** with the roots/blues music of **Paul Beaubrun**. Concerts are on the lawn – bring a lawn chair or blanket and claim your favorite spot for the show; beer, wine, and food are available for purchase. Tickets \$25/day of (\$20/advance); kids 12 and under free. Reserve online or call 413.443.0188, ext 0.

August 18, 19, 20, 22, 25, 26, 27 and 29, **Chester Theatre Company** presents *Tiny Beautiful Things*. All performances will be under a tent on the grounds of Hancock Shaker Village, the sides of the tent will be raised for ventilation, and CDC guidance will be followed. Performances are: Wednesdays at 3pm, Thursdays at 3pm and 7:30pm, Fridays at 7:30pm, Sundays at 3pm. Single Ticket, \$47.50. Call box office for information on Season Subscriptions and discounted ticket eligibility. Visitors to Hancock Shaker Village can show their receipt to receive \$5 off Chester@Hancock tickets the day of the show. Chester Theatre box office: chestertheatre.org or 413.354.7771

Saturday, August 21, 7pm (doors open at 6pm) **Back Porch concert** with duo **The Nields**. Concerts are on the lawn – bring a lawn chair or blanket and claim your favorite spot for the

show; beer, wine, and food are available for purchase. Tickets \$25/day of (\$20/advance); kids 12 and under free. Reserve online or call 413.443.0188, ext 0.

ABOUT HANCOCK SHAKER VILLAGE

There's nothing quite like Hancock Shaker Village - a living history museum, a National Historic Landmark with twenty historic Shaker buildings dating back to 1783, the oldest working farm in the Berkshires, a nature preserve with hiking trails, and a space where design, art, and performances come to life.

The Shakers called their village the City of Peace and created a value-driven communal society that nurtured goals as far-ranging as gender and racial equality, social reform, sustainability, innovation, and pacifism. Today it is a site for the consideration of ideas and material culture and legacy of a bold utopian experiment. Hancock Shaker Village is a place to read, hike, drink coffee, see exquisite design, learn about history, watch a play, and be inspired.