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news release

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Ann Arbor Summer Festival Announces 25th Season

Featuring Legendary Artists, International Superstars, and Emerging Young Talent

**Highlights include Willie Nelson, KT Tunstall, Garrison Keillor,
Gilberto Gil, The Manhattan Transfer, John Hiatt,
Mandy Patinkin and The Funk Brothers**

Event to be held from Friday, June 13 through Sunday, July 6, 2008

ANN ARBOR – The Ann Arbor Summer Festival promises another gathering of world-class performers as part of its 2008 season that runs June 13 through July 6. The Festival launches into its silver anniversary year with a lineup that includes country music legends, pop superstars, Broadway showstoppers, Motown hitmakers, and Lake Wobegon storytellers. Tickets go on sale through the ticket office and online beginning **Monday, April 21 at 9:00 a.m.**

Now celebrating its 25th season, the Ann Arbor Summer Festival is a three-week celebration of performing arts, outdoor entertainment, and community spirit. The event offers dozens of performances, activities, exhibitions, screenings, parties and more, with eclectic music, dance, theater, film, visual arts, and family fun.

The 24-day Festival will feature a wide variety of entertainment as part of its Mainstage Series: contemporary pop artist **KT Tunstall** with special guest **Paddy Casey**; a live broadcast of **"A Prairie Home Companion"** with **Garrison Keillor**; daredevil dance performance **STREB vs. GRAVITY**; renowned Brazilian artist **Gilberto Gil and Broad Band**; country music legend **Willie Nelson** with special guest **James Hunter**; vocal jazz quartet **The Manhattan Transfer**; acrobatic spectacle **Cirque D'Or featuring the Golden Dragon Acrobats**; Aussie folk trio **The Waifs** with special guest **Matthew Santos**; singer-songwriter **John Hiatt**; Broadway, film, and television star **Mandy Patinkin in Concert**; comedy favorites **Reduced Shakespeare Company** in **"The Complete History of America (abridged)"**; frisky cabaret diva **Meow Meow** in **"Beyond Glamour: The Absinthe Tour"**; fiddling phenoms **Natalie MacMaster and Donnell Leahy**; political satirists **The Capitol Steps**; and Motown classics **The Funk Brothers**.

"In this anniversary year, we wanted to give a nod to the past, but also focus on the future," said Festival Director Robb Woulfe. "The season offers return engagements by longtime festival favorites as well as debut performances from up-and-coming artists. Our goal is to provide an eclectic program that is as

diverse as the community we serve.”

The Festival’s Mainstage Series takes place in Power Center for the Performing Arts and Hill Auditorium on the campus of the University of Michigan. The Festival’s admission-free nightly event, Top of the Park, takes place outside the performance venues, and features local bands, popular movies, and a variety of food vendors.

As announced earlier this year, Top of the Park activities for 2008 will continue to place on beautiful Ingalls Mall, located directly in front of the Horace H. Rackham School of Graduate Studies on Washington Street near the Burton Memorial Tower.

This year’s Festival will also feature a variety of special programs taking place both indoors and outdoors, including free education and outreach opportunities, Family Day activities, Global Parties, a classical music organ series, and a weekend of admission-free outdoor performances by renowned British aerial troupe, The Dream Engine.

As part of its silver season celebration, the Festival will be launching a number of special initiatives to commemorate its 25th year:

- A specially commissioned piece of artwork by local artist WC Burgard has been created to commemorate the Festival’s landmark anniversary. Burgard’s multiple medium and collage work has been featured in many of the Festival season posters since 1984. The artwork will be on display throughout the season, and reproduced into a limited run poster available for purchase.
- A virtual guestbook will be hosted online by the Ann Arbor News and Mlive.com as a way for the community to post and share favorite Festival memories from the past 25 years.
- A 25th Anniversary Gala will be held on Wednesday, June 25 from 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. at Rackham Graduate School. This special event will honor the history of the event as well as support new organizational initiatives.

In addition, the lobby of Power Center will feature an exhibit by photographer Myra Klarman entitled *outside.IN*. The collection of large-scale prints captures the energy, vibrant color, and joyful spirit of last summer’s Festival activities. Myra Klarman is a portrait photographer who lives and works in Ann Arbor. The exhibit will be on display for the duration of the Festival.

The Ann Arbor Summer Festival’s mission is to provide a widely accessible, high quality summer program representing a variety of the performing arts for the cultural enrichment and entertainment of a regional audience in a festive atmosphere. Started in 1983, the Festival attracts more than 60,000 people each year from the local community and throughout Southeast Michigan. The Festival’s 25th Season runs from June 13 through July 6, 2008.

The Ann Arbor Summer Festival is made possible with the support of the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs, a partner agency of the National Endowment for the Arts.

A detailed schedule of ticketed events and other featured programs follows. The Top of the Park schedule will be announced on the Festival website in late May.

Festival Ticket Information:

In Person: Michigan League Ticket Office, 911 N. University Avenue, Ann Arbor

By Phone: (734) 764-2538

Online: www.annarborsummerfestival.org

Festival Venue Information:

Power Center for the Performing Arts 121 Fletcher Street, Ann Arbor

Hill Auditorium 825 N. University Avenue, Ann Arbor

EDITOR'S NOTE: Downloadable digital images of Festival artists will be available on April 20 at:
http://www.annarborsummerfestival.com/media_photos.shtml

SCHEDULE OF MAINSTAGE PERFORMANCES

KT TUNSTALL

With Special Guest Paddy Casey
"The Campfire Tour"

Saturday, May 17, 8:00 p.m.
Power Center
\$40, \$35, \$30

Scottish-born singer-songwriter KT Tunstall brings her "Campfire Tour" to Ann Arbor as a special pre-season festival engagement in support of her latest album, *Drastic Fantastic*. The intimate tour will be a close-up, personal affair, with the multi-platinum artist on acoustic guitar while the rest of her band plays other unplugged instruments. Opening the concert is singer-songwriter Paddy Casey, whose debut album, *Living*, went double platinum in Ireland. Casey's latest album, *Addicted to Company*, was released last fall to critical acclaim.

"A delicious blend of acoustic guitar, raw grooves, and sublime melodies." –
Billboard

"Music as shiny and happy as Paddy Casey's latest is a rarity." –Irish Times

A PRAIRIE HOME COMPANION

With Garrison Keillor

Saturday, June 14, 5:45 p.m.
Broadcast Live from Hill Auditorium
\$65, \$55, \$45, \$35, \$25
Co-presented by Ann Arbor Summer Festival and Michigan Radio

A Prairie Home Companion is a live radio variety show created and hosted by Garrison Keillor. The program is known for its musical guests, especially folk and traditional musicians, as well as Keillor's storytelling segment, "News from Lake Wobegon." Wildly popular on NPR, *A Prairie Home Companion* has also been featured as a major motion picture.

"A dry, ironic sense of humor, a good manner and a reticence to talk about personal matters are what you get with Mr. Keillor." –The New York Times

STREB vs. GRAVITY

Tuesday, June 17, 8:00 p.m.
Power Center
\$52, \$48, \$44, \$38

POW! It's ballet in a mosh pit. THUMP! Boot camp under the big top. WHAM! Smash-mouth football on a tumble mat. Traditional dance takes heavy collateral damage as STREB declares all-out war on gravity in this award-winning show. Powerful bodies fly, carom, and splat in an artfully dangerous, action-packed program of extreme sports meets slapstick gymnastics. Let the action begin!

"With their sweaty athleticism and high wire daring, STREB's dancers may well be the Flying Wallendas of dance." –The Wall Street Journal

"Gravity be damned." –Los Angeles Times

GILBERTO GIL AND BROAD BAND

Wednesday, June 18, 8:00 p.m.
Power Center
\$48, \$44, \$40, \$36

WORLD MUSIC| AFRO-BRAZILIAN

Brazilian superstar Gilberto Gil brings his trademark fusion of samba, salsa, bossa nova, rock, and folk music to Ann Arbor for one night only. With 50 albums released, 12 gold records, 5 platinum albums, 7 Grammy Awards, and more than 4 million records sold, Gil has developed one of the most relevant and renowned careers as a singer, composer, and guitar-player in both world and pop music.

"Rarely do the worlds of politics and the arts converge as unconventionally as in the person of Mr. Gil..." – The New York Times

"On a spare set, Gil is all you need" –The Boston Globe

WILLIE NELSON

With Special Guest James Hunter

Thursday, June 19, 8:00 p.m.

Hill Auditorium

\$70, \$65, \$55, \$45, \$35

Willie Nelson is an American icon. Widely viewed as one of the most beloved country music singers in the world and a seven-time Grammy winner, including the Lifetime Achievement Award, Willie has produced legendary hit records in every one of the last five decades. He continues to be a presence in popular culture through his music, movie appearances, and controversial stances. Opening the concert is singer-guitarist James Hunter, whose locomotive bluesy-soul grooves stir up hardened gig-goers and young-hipsters alike.

"Willie Nelson's cracked-leather voice is a national treasure." –Rolling Stone

"James [Hunter] is one of the best voices, and best kept secrets, in British R&B and soul." –Van Morrison

THE MANHATTAN TRANSFER

Saturday, June 21, 8:00 p.m.

Power Center

\$52, \$48, \$44, \$38

The Manhattan Transfer's stunningly tight-knit harmonies make a versatile palette for numerous styles of music. With their mix of jazz, pop, be-bop, doo-wop, and swing, the four talented singers from The Manhattan Transfer have been providing first-rate vocal entertainment for more than 40 years. Over their career, the quartet has produced 25 albums and won nine Grammy Awards.

"Sparkling song stylizations and prodigious vocal talents." –Los Angeles Times

"Easily the most popular jazz vocal group of their era..." –All Music Guide

CIRQUE D'OR

Featuring the Golden Dragon Acrobats

Sunday, June 22, 5:00 p.m.

Power Center

\$46, \$42, \$36, \$28 | Family Friendly

Representing the best of the time-honored folk tradition of Chinese acrobatics, the Golden Dragon Acrobats present a show of breathtaking skill and spellbinding beauty. In *Cirque d'Or*, elements of contemporary circus combine with death-defying acrobatics, explosive choreography, and spectacular costumes to create a must-see performance for the whole family.

"Good old-fashioned razzle-dazzle..." –Dallas Morning News

"There is a precision and beauty about everything these performers do." –The Washington Post

THE WAIFS

With Special Guest Matthew Santos

Tuesday, June 24, 8:00 p.m.

Power Center

\$38, \$32, \$26, \$18

Indie-folk Australian trio, The Waifs, return to the states this summer in support of their newest release, *SunDirtWater*. Featuring warm vocal harmonies, guitar, and harmonica, these Aussies play bluesy, roots rock that is unmistakably Americana. Opening the concert is Chicago-based singer-songwriter Matthew Santos, an emerging talent from the Windy City's music scene, and more widely known for his collaborations with recording artist Lupe Fiasco.

"The country/honky-tonk folk rock trio from Australia possesses sheer instrumental virtuosity." – Associated Press

"A young, frisky Australian band in love with older American music." –The New York Times

JOHN HIATT

Thursday, June 26, 8:00 p.m.

Power Center

\$52, \$48, \$44, \$38

Eleven-time Grammy nominee John Hiatt melds rock, acoustic, folk, new wave and Mississippi Delta blues into songs recorded by some three-dozen artists over the last three decades, from Eric Clapton to Bob Dylan. With his whiskey-soaked vocals and rowdy guitar-fueled blues-rock, John Hiatt is a powerful singer, guitarist, and songwriter delivering well-crafted music and exciting moments onstage.

"Seasoned smart roots-rocker at the top of his game." –Detroit Free Press

"Give John Hiatt a stage and you're generally assured of a good time." –Billboard

REDUCED SHAKESPEARE COMPANY

In "The Complete History of America (abridged)"

Sunday, June 29, 8:00 p.m.

Power Center

\$48, \$42, \$36, \$28

600 years of history is covered in 6,000 seconds! From Washington to Watergate, from the Bering Straits to Baghdad, from New World to New World Order, the three cultural guerillas of the Reduced Shakespeare Company will take audiences on a ninety-minute roller coaster ride through the glorious quagmire that is American History. An election year special edition performance!

"What the *Daily Show* might be like if it were hosted by the Marx Brothers." –Boston Herald

"Breathlessly paced, slapstick merriment." –The New York Times

MANDY PATINKIN IN CONCERT

With Paul Ford on piano

Saturday, June 28, 8:00 p.m.

Power Center

\$62, \$54, \$46, \$38

Whichever role you know him for, Mandy Patinkin's favorite is reaching out to live audiences with the power and the passion of popular song. He belongs to the special breed of singer who doesn't merely dramatize songs, but incorporates them into his very being. And the result is nothing short of electrifying. His interpretations of popular standards come straight from the heart, mesmerizing audiences from coast

to coast. From Rodgers and Hammerstein to Stephen Sondheim, Harry Chapin, and back to Irving Berlin and Cole Porter.

"The greatest entertainer on Broadway today." –New York Post

"Mandy Patinkin is in the business of show-stopping." –The New Yorker

MEOW MEOW
In **"Beyond Glamour: The Absinthe Tour"**

Wednesday, July 2, 8:00 p.m.

Power Center

\$42, \$36, \$30, \$24 | Mature Audiences

Stranded somewhere between the Middle Ages, 1930s Shanghai show tunes, '60s French pop and witty, wicked Weimar, international singing sensation Meow Meow brings trashy glamour to a whole new level. The darling of the Euro jet set brings us a quixotic cocktail of kamikaze cabaret, performance art exotica and karaoke splendor... Piazzolla, Brecht and Dolly Parton all rolled into one. Meow Meow arrives in Ann Arbor direct from sell-out seasons around the world, including David Bowie's High Line Festival in New York. Mature audiences.

"A deconstructive tour de force that turns cabaret inside out... Her shows blaze a wild trail." –Preview Magazine

"Meow's parody of glitz is part of a package that also includes physical comedy, social commentary and a brilliantly eclectic repertoire." –Time Out New York

NATALIE MacMASTER AND DONNELL LEAHY

Thursday, July 3, 8:00 p.m.

Power Center

\$48, \$42, \$36, \$28

Natalie MacMaster is one of the most versatile and exciting musicians on the Celtic music scene. Hailing from Cape Breton, MacMaster's live performances are a testament to her incandescent musicianship and boundless energy, featuring foot-tapping rave-ups, heart-rending ballads, and world-class step dancing. Joining Natalie MacMaster is her husband Donnell Leahy, the fiddling dynamo that fronts the popular Celtic group, Leahy.

"A grand performance with radiant joy." –Boston Globe

"No one can touch her when it comes to playing the fiddle." –Winnipeg Free Press

THE CAPITOL STEPS

Friday, July 4, 5:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m.

Power Center

\$42, \$38, \$34, \$28

Back by popular demand, these former Congressional staffers' brilliant song parodies and hilarious sketches are up-to-the-minute send-ups of all things political – satirizing issues, events, and personalities from both sides of the aisle. No matter who makes the headlines, the Steps are equal opportunity offenders. A not-to-be-missed performance in this election year!

"Genuine political satire." –New York Post

"The Capitol Steps make it easier to leave public life." –Former President George H. W. Bush

THE FUNK BROTHERS

Saturday, July 5, 8:00 p.m.

Power Center

\$48, \$42, \$36, \$28

Groove to the original sound of Motown with the legendary Funk Brothers from Detroit. Working as the studio band on countless Motown records, the Funk Brothers were featured in the documentary film, *Standing in the Shadows of Motown*. These iconic musicians recorded more #1 hits than The Beatles, The Beach Boys, The Rolling Stones, and Elvis Presley combined.

“Motown's sophisticated, urbane brand of R&B certainly would have been difficult to achieve without the extensive jazz training that many of the Funk Brothers brought to the table.” –All Music Guide

“The Funk Brothers themselves play like they’ve just emerged from a particularly exhilarating Hitsville session.” –New York Press

OTHER FEATURED PROGRAMS

Activity: Special Outdoor Attraction

Artist: **THE DREAM ENGINE**

Dates: Wednesday, June 25 through Sunday, June 28

Program: “Heliosphere” (June 25, June 27)
“Conedancers” (June 26, June 28)

Times: 6:30 p.m. and 9:30 p.m. (15-minute performances)

Admission: Free, No Tickets Required

Location: Top of the Park, Ingall Mall

Description: The Dream Engine sends its performers into the sky, suspended as aerialists beneath large helium balloons and oversized, inflatable structures. Floating and gliding, they tumble and turn with balletic grace to the sound of wistful music, exploiting the uncharted spaces between street and rooftops. This spectacle is sure to inspire, mystify, and enchant audiences of all ages. The Dream Engine will perform “Heliosphere” and “Conedancers” on alternating evenings at Top of the Park.

Activity: **25th ANNIVERSARY GALA**

Date: Wednesday, June 25, 2008, 7:00-10:00 pm

Location: Rackham Graduate School, Fourth Floor Assembly Hall and Balcony
915 E. Washington Street, Ann Arbor

Cost: \$125 per person

Description: With the theme “Up, Up, and Away,” the festivities will include live entertainment, eclectic wining and dining, music under the stars, and a panoramic balcony view of a spectacular outdoor performance by British aerial troupe, The Dream Engine. A portion of the proceeds from this special event will support the Festival's purchase of a new inflatable movie screen and projection tower for Top of the Park. To receive an invitation or purchase tickets, please call (734) 994-5999.

Activity: Visual Arts Exhibit

Title: **outside.IN**

A photo exhibit by Myra Klarman

Date: June 17 through July 6, 2008

Location: Power Center Lobby

Description: In this collection of images, photographer Myra Klarman captures the energy, vibrant color, and glee of Top of the Park – the “outside” – and brings all that into the Power Center lobby — the “IN.” The photos, created during last year's Festival, portray electrifying performing artists, enthusiastic spectators young and old, and the joyous spirit of the three-week event. Myra Klarman is a portrait photographer who lives and works in Ann Arbor, Michigan.