

Highmark Mann Center and Mural Arts Philadelphia Dedicate 'Echoes Beyond the Stage' Community-Inspired Mural Series

Twelve murals by artists Nile Livingston and De'von Downes transform the Highmark Mann Center entrance through community stories and history.

PHILADELPHIA, PA, UNITED STATES, July 12, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Highmark Mann Center for the Performing Arts and Mural Arts Philadelphia will officially dedicate "Echoes Beyond the Stage," a twelve-piece public art installation by Philadelphia artists [Nile Livingston](#) and De'von Downes, during a public ceremony on Friday, July 31, from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m. at the Highmark Mann Center for the Performing Arts in West Fairmount Park.

Installed along the venue's entrance gates, the murals invite visitors to experience the Highmark Mann Center long before they reach their seats.

Stretching across the arrival

experience, the installation explores how music extends beyond the stage and becomes woven into neighborhood life, personal memory, and the shared identity of a community.

Commissioned by the Highmark Mann Center through Mural Arts Philadelphia and managed by Conrad Benner of Streets Dept, the project began as a ten-mural commission before expanding to twelve works after stakeholders embraced the artists' vision for the series.

Unlike traditional public art commissions focused solely on architecture or notable performances, "Echoes Beyond the Stage" emerged from months of community engagement



Artists Nile Livingston and De'von Downes stand beside their "Echoes Beyond the Stage" mural installation at the Highmark Mann Center for the Performing Arts in Philadelphia

and historical research. Livingston and Downes met with Highmark Mann Center staff, neighborhood residents, historians, and community partners while studying *A Century of Music Under the Stars*, a recently published history documenting the institution's first fifty years.

"The neighborhood designed the murals," said artist Nile Livingston. "I simply listened to what people shared and drew upon decades of experience as an artist to translate those stories into mural designs the community could see itself in and feel proud of."

Those conversations revealed an institution that means something different depending on where you experience it. While many visitors know the Highmark Mann Center as one of the nation's premier outdoor performing arts venues, nearby

residents described hearing concerts from their front porches, gathering for backyard barbecues while music drifted through Fairmount Park, and watching children chase lightning bugs beneath summer skies illuminated by performances taking place just beyond the trees.



Artist Nile Livingston helps carry and install a mural panel for the "Echoes Beyond the Stage" public art installation at the Highmark Mann Center for the Performing Arts in Philadelphia

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The neighborhood designed the murals”

Nile Livingston

Those stories became the foundation of the artwork.

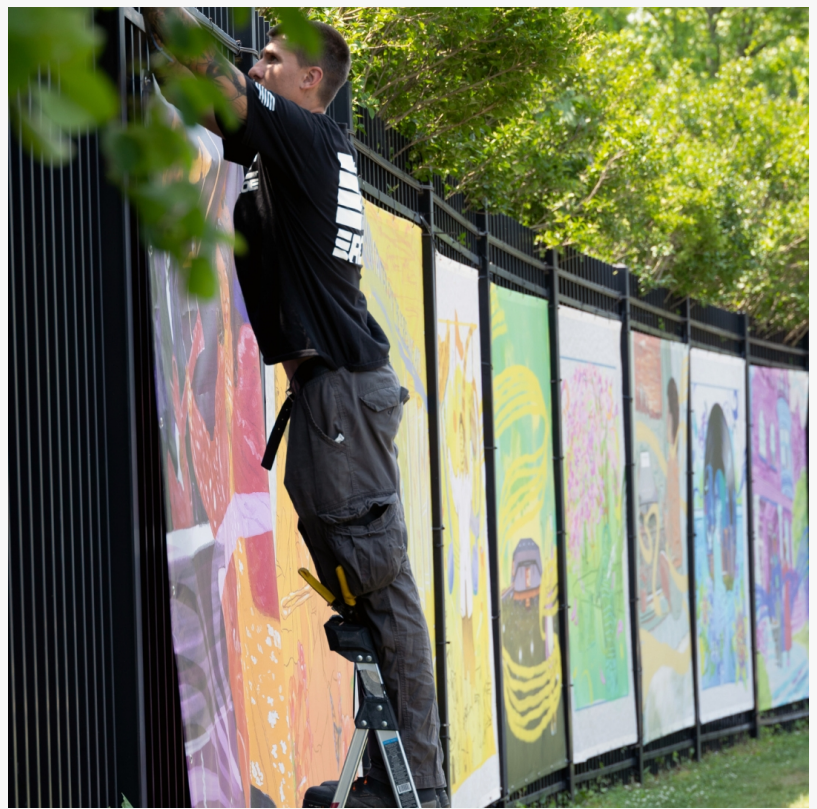
Across the twelve murals, visitors will encounter scenes inspired by real community memories, including neighbors listening to concerts from inside their homes, families

gathered outdoors on warm summer evenings, a tribute inspired by one of Aretha Franklin's final Philadelphia performances, childhood memories of lightning bugs transformed into symbols of audiences holding lights aloft during concerts, and a custodial employee joyfully playing a broom like a guitar in recognition of the often-unseen workers whose daily efforts make every performance possible.

Several works also imagine the future of the institution through surreal imagery that reflects possibility, creativity, and the evolving role of public cultural spaces.

Although each mural tells an individual story, the installation was intentionally designed as a single visual composition. The twelve works alternate across the entrance gates while gradually transitioning through a coordinated color palette from deep purples into greens, oranges, and yellows. Five flowing musical staff lines continue across every panel, visually connecting the stories as visitors move through the space.

Every artwork was illustrated digitally in Procreate using brushes that emulate charcoal, pastel, and pencil textures, preserving the warmth and character of traditional drawing while allowing the pieces to be reproduced at monumental scale. Photographs of the Highmark Mann Center were incorporated into each composition, ensuring the venue itself remains a recognizable anchor throughout the series.



Installation of the "Echoes Beyond the Stage" mural series on the entrance gates of the Highmark Mann Center for the Performing Arts in Philadelphia

For Livingston, a fourth-generation Philadelphian who grew up only minutes from the Highmark Mann Center, the commission carried personal significance.

"I've attended performances here, walked these grounds, and grown up understanding that the Mann has always been more than a concert venue," Livingston said. "This project reminded me that some of the most meaningful stories about a place don't come from the stage. They come from the people whose lives have unfolded alongside it."

Today, the Highmark Mann Center welcomes more than 400,000 visitors annually while serving more than 30,000 young people each year through education and community programs. The completed installation now becomes a permanent part of that visitor experience, inviting audiences to engage with stories of music, memory, labor, imagination, and community before entering the venue.

The dedication ceremony will bring together project partners, artists, civic leaders, and community members to celebrate the completion of the installation and recognize the collaborative process that shaped the work.

Event Details: Highmark Mann Center
Mural Dedication
Friday, [July 31, 2026](#)
3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Highmark Mann Center for the
Performing Arts
5201 Parkside Avenue, Philadelphia, PA
19131

About Nile Livingston:

Nile Livingston is a Philadelphia-based visual artist, Founder and Creative Director of [Creative Repute](#), and fourth-generation Philadelphian whose work explores community engagement, storytelling, branding, and large-scale public art. Her practice combines research, listening, and design to create visual experiences rooted in the lived experiences of the communities they serve.

About De'von Downes:

De'von Downes is a Philadelphia visual artist whose multidisciplinary practice explores culture, identity, and community through contemporary public art.

About the Highmark Mann Center for the Performing Arts:

The Highmark Mann Center for the Performing Arts is one of the nation's largest nonprofit outdoor performing arts centers, presenting world-class performances while advancing education, community engagement, and cultural access throughout Greater Philadelphia.

About Mural Arts Philadelphia

Mural Arts Philadelphia is the nation's largest public art program, working collaboratively with artists, communities, and organizations



Illustration by Nile Livingston of a young girl listening to music from the Highmark Mann Center through her bedroom window, inspired by neighbors who experienced concerts from home



The completed "Echoes Beyond the Stage" mural series by artists Nile Livingston and Devon Downes installed along the entrance gates of the Highmark Mann Center for the Performing Arts in Philadelphia.jpg

to create public art that inspires change, strengthens neighborhoods, and transforms public spaces.

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