



**NEWS RELEASE**

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**Michelle Obama recognizes Community MusicWorks as one of the best youth arts programs in the nation at White House ceremony**

*Community MusicWorks students perform civil rights-inspired Anthem on the National Mall during one-day tour of Washington, DC*

PROVIDENCE, RI – For its effectiveness in developing creativity and fostering academic success by engaging young people in the arts and humanities, Community MusicWorks (CMW) of Providence will be recognized with a prestigious national award by Michelle Obama at a White House ceremony on **Wednesday morning, October 20.**

Following the ceremony, 25 CMW student and professional musicians (visiting DC for the day) will travel to the Martin Luther King Memorial site on the National Mall to perform *Anthem*, a **civil rights-inspired work commissioned by CMW in November 2008 in response to the presidential election.** *Anthem* was composed by Jessie Montgomery, a former CMW teaching artist, with lyrics written by Fidelia Vasquez, an 18-year-old recent graduate of the program.

Back in Rhode Island on **Friday, October 22**, CMW students, teachers, families, and neighbors will gather in the street in front of the CMW storefront office in Providence’s West End at 5 pm to make music together in celebration of the award. Providence Mayor David Cicilline will make remarks while eastbound traffic on Westminster Street is diverted for one hour. This improvisatory musical block party has been playfully dubbed a “Traffic Jam.”

On **Saturday, October 23**, CMW will present a “Community Day” at Providence’s West End Community Center, showcasing various aspects of its nationally recognized programming. The public is invited to observe students in action (10 am to 12 pm), eat lunch (12-1 pm), and enjoy a performance of *Anthem* by CMW students and teachers, along with a performance by the



Providence String Quartet, CMW's resident ensemble, from 1-2 pm in the West End Gym.

As is almost always the case at CMW, all events are free and open to the public. Event details—and high-resolution photos—are posted online at [www.communitymusicworks.org](http://www.communitymusicworks.org)

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### **President's Committee Award**

Chosen from a pool of more than 400 nominations and 50 finalists, CMW was one of 15 after-school and out-of-school programs across the country to receive the **2010 National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award**, the highest honor such programs can receive in the United States. The awards are administered by the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities (PCAH), in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), and the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). The award honors community-based arts and humanities programs that make a marked difference in the lives of their participants by improving academic scores and graduation rates, enhancing life skills, and developing positive relationships with peers and adults.

CMW was recognized by Mrs. Obama for using engagement in the arts to empower children to become engaged citizens of the world. Founded in 1997, CMW was created to "create a cohesive urban community through music education and performance that transforms the lives of children, families, and musicians." In a community where 50% of the kids don't complete high school, **100% of CMW's graduates—many of whom have grown up in the program—go on to attend college**. Featured in 2006 in the *The New Yorker*, CMW is "a **revolutionary organization** in which the distinction between performing and teaching disappears."

Accepting the award from Mrs. Obama on behalf of CMW was Fidelia Vasquez, an 18-year old CMW graduate, now a freshman at Smith College, who was accompanied to the White House by Sebastian Ruth, CMW's founder and recipient of a **2010 MacArthur Foundation "genius" grant**.



According to Sebastian Ruth, CMW’s Founder & Artistic Director, “We're a group of professional musicians who operate out of a street front studio in one of Providence's challenged neighborhoods. We provide free after-school programming for 100 kids every year, using music education and performance to empower them to become **engaged citizens of the world.**”

According to Michael Reynolds, Muir String Quartet cellist and a CMW adviser, “If I were to envision the ideal program that introduces kids in the inner city to the wonders and benefits of music, CMW would embody it. **I've never before seen this level of personal interaction, care, quality of instruction, and encouragement of family involvement in a program serving kids and the arts.** I can only hope that other communities can draw from this inspiring example the kind of musical learning environment that their young people need and deserve.”

In addition to the national recognition bestowed by receipt of the prestigious award, CMW will also receive \$10,000 to support its programming. “We hope this award will draw attention to the fact that programs like ours are **essential investments in the lives of our young people**, and in our community, as well,” said Heath Marlow, CMW’s Managing Director.

The **National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award** is the nation’s highest honor for after-school arts and humanities programs, particularly those that reach underserved children and youth. The awards recognize and support outstanding programs that lay new pathways to creativity, expression, and achievement outside of the regular school day. These programs excite and engage a range of students, cultivating imagination, collaboration, discipline and academic success, with demonstrable results. They also provide safe harbors after school, on weekends and evenings for children and youth in some of our country’s most at-risk urban and rural settings. For more information, visit [www.pcah.gov](http://www.pcah.gov).

More information about CMW, including hi-res photos, at [www.communitymusicworks.org](http://www.communitymusicworks.org)