

Make Music Day Makes it to RI

On Wednesday, June 21, Rhode Island will become a stage. Inspired by the French holiday *Fête De La Musique*, Make Music Rhode Island is a free day of music and performances hosted by more than 20 outdoor venues around the state. Last year, more than 750 cities in 120 countries worldwide participated in this tradition, and now, Rhode Island has become the 39th US state to join the fun!

"I'm sorry that Rhode Island waited to be the 39th state," said Make Music Rhode Island (MMRI) promoter and organizer Olin Thompson, reflecting on the worldwide recognition of the French Summer Solstice celebration. When asked why he wanted to participate, his enthusiasm for community and music shone through immediately. "We got excited about it and wanted to share our love for music across the state. What's better than getting people out to hear free live music?"

Rhode Island is a very musical state with an abundant, diverse scene that always seems to make its way under the radar. Thompson and his team want to bring the state's musicians to the forefront; students, amateurs and professional musicians alike are all encouraged to play, no matter their skill level or age. "It's like a widespread open mic," explained Thompson. "I can always wish we had more music makers and venues signed up, but I'm proud of what we have for the first year."

This may be the first year for Rhode Island, but there are those within the state who have been celebrating *Fête De La Musique* for a long time. Alliance Française de Providence has signed up to be an enthusiastic contributor for MMRI, but they have been loyal participants in the holiday for the past 10 years. This year, they will be hosting a potluck from 5 to 9pm, featuring numerous musical acts including the La Chorale de L'Alliance Française, Diane Carey, Neo Retro Band, Magnolia and many more.

When asked to elaborate on specific events he was personally looking forward to, Thompson began discussing the happenings that were scheduled outside of the designated 4 to 10pm window. "Many people will be coming out to Pawtucket Hope Artiste Village at lunch time, especially kids. The Arcade Providence will also be hosting acts to cater to their afternoon crowd." He added later that he plans to head down to Waterplace Park for the majority of the evening. "It's my kind of music down there, and I think that's where most of the action will be in the evening."

With about 50 acts signed up and 20 venues ready to go, it's evident that MMRI is taking off quickly, but Thompson is hoping that the spirit will inspire more cities, venues, patrons and music makers to participate in years to come. "I've talked to organizers in other cities who have been doing this longer, like New York. Yamaha actually donated 100 pianos to the cause just so people could come out and play for it! To me, that's the spirit of the festival. That's what we're striving for."

Although they are proud of what they have accomplished this year, organizers like Mr. Thompson are always wishing for more participants, more venues and more music. This is only Rhode Island's first year, and there is already a tremendous turnout. In the years to come, will the remaining 11 US states jump on board? Will Make Music Day ever become a national holiday? It is up to us, the residents of Rhode Island to see that something like this is met with patronage and excitement so word of its success can spread. Go to makemusicday.org/rhodeisland to find out how you can get involved.