

Funda Fest Returns to RI

It's story time once again as Rhode Island Black Storytellers puts on their 17th annual family festival, Funda Fest. FUNDA, meaning to teach and to learn in Zulu and KiSwahili, is a Rhode Island tradition showcasing favorite local storytellers, such as Ramona Bass Kolobe, Raffini and Len Cabral, and importing award-winning talent from across the country.

The 17th Annual FUNDA FEST: A Celebration of Black Storytelling, goes from Jan 18-25 to provide an entire week of the best cultural arts programming across the state.

This year's special guests include a well-loved reoccurring traveling griot, Teju Ologboni, from Milwaukee; master storyteller Derek Burrows, who specializes in Afro-Caribbean and African Diaspora tales including his own compositions, "Itinerate African Bard;" Temujin Ekunfeo; and presenting her "Suki Lue Ambers" character (a blueswoman who tells the stories behind the blues songs), Deborah Asante.

"We are excited about many things this year," said festival director, Valerie Tutson. "For one, we will have our ever-popular Liar's Contest at the Local 121 in Providence on Friday night where folks can come in for a fun night of hilarity. You can sign up to tell your biggest lie before a panel of judges. It is a great night out."

There are many all-ages events that provide family fun. From Temujin's workshop on beads and stories, where he helps participants create beads to tell their stories, to the Family Storytelling Concert, which will include the locals as well as RIBS members, to a Storytelling Concert at the Mt Pleasant branch of Providence Community Library, this year's Funda promises to give more than just entertainment, but a full array of emotion, love, laughter and stories you are going to want to tell yourself.

"We are also very excited to be back at the RISD Auditorium for our Saturday Night Storytelling Concert for Adults," says Valerie. "We are thrilled for the partnership with RISD and to be back in the wonderful theater. That night will feature our invited guests. Derek Burrows is a wonderful musician and storyteller, Temujin also drums and tells, and, very exciting, is Deborah Asante."

For Full Festival Information, join Rhode Island Black Storytellers on Facebook or check the website at ribsfest.org.