

PRONK! Celebrates a Decade of Social Change

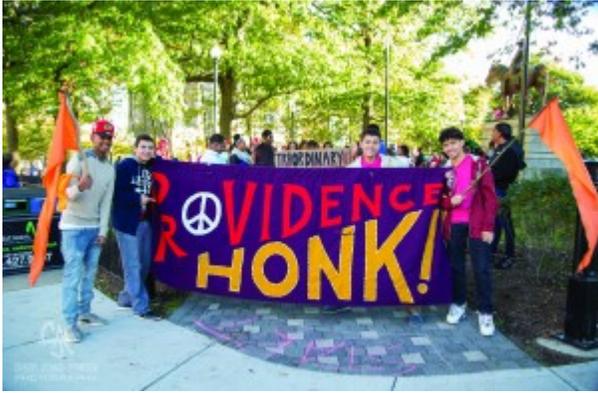
PRONK! is heading into its 10th year! Providence knows this festival as one heck of a fun street festival. But PRONK! is more than just a parade and a party; it is specifically organized to amplify voices of social change. PRONK!'s manifesto states many points, including encouraging interaction with music to promote social change, reclaiming public space, building relationships and sparking meaningful dialogue.



It's often easy for artists involved to understand exactly how they mean to promote social change, but it's not always easy for a potential audience to make the connection. The intent behind actions doesn't always equal the impact. The organizing committee behind PRONK! has worked hard to figure out how to put their mission into action. What began as a parade alternating marching bands with social justice organizations has developed into the purposeful development of formal relationships between community organizations and artists to collaborate and create art, lead workshops and teach-ins, and more. The goal is to use music and art to amplify the voices of both those who have been historically silenced and those who work tirelessly for justice, peace, education and a safer city. Avi David, one of PRONK!'s organizers, described it as a "pep rally for people doing the important work."

The organizing committee has made a commitment to listen to the voices of Providence in planning the event. David explained that it's a continual process of diversifying. The volunteer organizers actively seek out community input for which causes they should represent and how those causes should be represented. The goal of the committee is to listen to voices that demonstrate a broader representation of the makeup of Providence regarding race, culture, ethnicity, age, gender, orientation and physical ableness so they can collectively envision and create a more relevant and accessible festival. Over the last few years, the diversification has included the involvement of high school students, which has brought a different energy and feel to PRONK!. Students bring a different idea of what is "cool," and questions about what it means to create a safe space for younger people.

Questions of safety are important to ask for an event that seeks to reclaim public space. PRONK! happens every year on Indigenous People's Day for a specific reason. According to David, "There should not be a holiday celebrating Columbus. People have the power to create change. If we ignore our history and are silent about injustice, white supremacy, corporate greed, systemic racism, etc., people with power and money will make decisions that continue to oppress the most vulnerable members of our society. We strive to create somewhat of an alternate reality." To that end, the



committee has made the event completely non-commercial. PRONK! is held in the streets of Providence, and is free to all. There is no entry fee. There is nothing for sale. None of the bands use electricity. Everyone involved is a volunteer. It's created to be an ephemeral event with no footprint.

This year, PRONK! is doing things a little different. They are moving out of Burnside Park to set up along the Providence River, from South Water Street to Point Street. They will have four to five "stages" (which are really just marked areas so that audience members can be more involved with the music), and live active art-making stations (many of which will be youth-led). After the afternoon programming, PRONK! will parade down to the Hurricane Barrier and will continue with nighttime performances at Hot Club and around the barrier. The organizers are still working out details of scheduling, so keep your eyes peeled for more information. Visit providencehonkfest.org for updates.