



Contact: Vanessa Silberman
Senior Director of Communications
& Strategic Initiatives
310.275.5628
vanessa@levittpavilions.org

For Immediate Release

Playing For Change to Headline 2014 Levitt National Tour
World music sensation will stop at six Levitt locations this summer

"...a multimedia movement designed to break down global barriers and connect people of every race through the power of music. – CNN

"...demonstrates a global willingness to understand others and unite through the power of music."- World Café

"Few musicians play with more passion and conviction than the soulful folks who take to the sidewalks to share their music." – The New York Times

February 18, 2014—The acclaimed World music group Playing For Change will headline the first-ever Levitt National Tour, taking place over a three-week period this summer. The National Tour will stop at six Levitt locations—including Los Angeles and Pasadena, Calif.; Memphis; Arlington, Texas; Bethlehem, Pa; and Denver (where audiences will get a taste of what's to come when Levitt Denver opens in 2016). Levitt audiences across the country will be treated to Playing For Change's high-energy show while grooving to the band's soulful jams. In addition, audience members of all ages will be invited to join drum circles on the Levitt lawn before each concert and learn the Levitt signature beat, no experience required! Capping off each event, on-stage conversations with the musicians will give insight into the band's world movement for peace through music and the artists' inspiring personal journeys.



Co-founded by GRAMMY-winning producer and film director Mark Johnson, Raan Williams and Whitney Kroenke in 2004, Playing For Change was created from the belief that music has the power to break boundaries and overcome distances among people—regardless of their geographic, political, economic, spiritual or ideological backgrounds.

"Playing For Change aligns beautifully with the artistic vision of the Levitt program, which is all about inclusivity, diversity of programming, artistic excellence and using the arts as a change agent," says Sharon Yazowski, Executive Director of Levitt Pavilions. "We're incredibly excited to bring this stellar group of musicians to Levitt fans across the country, free of charge. Playing For Change's artistry, coupled with their meaningful message, are sure to resonate with Levitt audiences."

Playing For Change began with a small film crew and a mobile recording studio. Its breakthrough moment came in 2008, when its video of musicians from 10 countries (who had never met in person) performing the song "Stand by Me" went viral. In it, 35 musicians separated by thousands of miles across the world—in places like an L.A. street corner, Rio de Janeiro, African villages, even the Himalayan Mountains—were united through the shared experience of creating music. The video became an instant YouTube sensation, and to date, it's been viewed 60 million times. It was the first of many "Songs Around the World" posted on YouTube by Playing For Change that have attracted viewers in the millions.

From this online success, Playing For Change grew into a movement encompassing a nonprofit foundation that develops and operates music schools in five countries, including Nepal, South Africa, Ghana, Mali and Rwanda, as well as a touring band comprised of seasoned musicians from around the world performing a blend of World music traditions.

"Music transcends and unites us," said Raan Williams, who has managed the group for more than a decade. "The universal nature of music inspires our global movement to create world peace through music."

The genesis for the touring band was that "we wanted to see what happens when all these cultures from all over the world unite for a common purpose, on the stage, as a tangible example of the power of music and humanity," said Mark Johnson. "Together they are creating something where there's hope, a future for the planet, and people walk away from a concert with a feeling in their hearts that is a way to change the world."

The Levitt network was unanimous in its selection of Playing For Change as the band for the first Levitt National Tour. "I've been following Playing For Change for a number of years, attracted to their mission and their phenomenal musicianship," said Anne Pitts, executive director of Levitt Shell Memphis. "I'm grateful that the National Tour will make it feasible for us to bring them to the Levitt Shell and engage our diverse audiences."

Comprised of an international roster of acclaimed musicians from nine countries and representing four continents, Playing For Change possesses a unique, exhilarating sound that reflects its mission. The celebrated performers who make up Playing For Change hail from the Congo (Jason Tamba and Mermans Mosengo); New Orleans (street icon Grandpa Elliott); The Netherlands (Clarence Bekker); South Africa (Titi Tsira); Cuba (Orbe Ortiz); Israel (Tal Ben-Ari aka Tula); Italy (Roberto Luti); Los Angeles (Peter Bunetta); Japan (Keiko Komaki); and Zimbabwe (Louis Mhlanga).

The band is releasing its third CD/DVD set on June 17, 2014, titled "Playing For Change 3 'Songs Around the World.'"

About Levitt Pavilions

Levitt Pavilions is a national nonprofit organization that exists to strengthen the social fabric of America. We partner with cities to transform neglected public spaces into welcoming destinations where the power of free, live music brings people together and invigorates community life.

Levitt Pavilions is the only national network of outdoor music venues presenting free concert series. The Levitt program is six cities strong—in places as diverse as **Los Angeles** and **Pasadena**, California; **Westport**, Connecticut; **Bethlehem**, Pennsylvania; **Memphis**, Tennessee; and **Arlington**,

Texas—collectively serving more than half a million people annually through 300+ free, family-friendly concerts. Each Levitt venue is its own 501(c)(3) Friends of Levitt nonprofit organization, presenting 50 free concerts every year featuring acclaimed, emerging talent to seasoned, award-winning performers in all music genres.

Due to accelerating interest from cities and engaged citizens, the Levitt program is growing. Developing Levitt locations across the country include **Denver** (opening 2016) and **Houston** (opening 2017), amongst other cities.

To learn more, visit www.levittpavilions.org