



Curt Columbus, Artistic Director • Michael Gennaro, Executive Director
201 Washington Street • Providence • Rhode Island 02903 • www.trinityrep.com

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CONTACT: Jennifer Salcido, Asst. Dir of Marketing & PR (401) 521-1100 ext. 268 • jsalcido@trinityrep.com

VIOLA DAVIS, ELAINE FOSTER PERRY, RUTH J. SIMMONS AND J.L. “LYNN” SINGLETON TO RECEIVE HONORS AT 2012 PELL AWARDS

Annual awards celebration comes home to Trinity Repertory Company on May 21, 2012

PROVIDENCE, RI – Trinity Repertory Company announced today that Rhode Island’s own Academy Award-nominated actress, **Viola Davis**, will be honored with the 2012 Pell Award for Lifetime Achievement in the Arts at the 16th annual Pell Awards next month. Theater educator **Elaine Foster Perry** will receive the Charles Sullivan Award for Distinguished Service in the Arts, Brown University President **Ruth J. Simmons** will receive the Pell Award For Leadership in Arts Education, and **J.L. “Lynn” Singleton**, President of the Providence Performing Arts Center and Professional Facilities Management, will be honored as the recipient of the Pell Award for Outstanding Leadership in the Arts. All awardees are past or current Rhode Islanders.

The Pell Awards celebration will be held on **Monday evening, May 21, 2012 from 5:00PM to 9:00PM** at Trinity Repertory Company’s Dowling Theater and Pell Chafee Performance Center. The annual fundraising event will be co-chaired by Academy Award-nominee and former Trinity Rep Artistic Director **Richard Jenkins** and his wife **Sharon Jenkins**; **Tony Award-winning set designer Eugene Lee** and his wife **Brooke Lee**; and Trinity Rep board member **Kibbe Reilly** and husband **Tom Reilly**. **Mrs. Nuala Pell** will serve as the event’s honorary chair. Individual tickets to the full event (which includes a VIP cocktail reception as well as a post-ceremony reception featuring hors d’oeuvres, desserts, and an open bar) are \$500; a limited number of individual tickets to the ceremony and post-show reception are \$250, and corporate sponsorships are available. Proceeds from ticket sales benefit Trinity Rep’s artistic and educational programs. Together with business, political and social leaders, guests at this fun and fabulous cocktail affair will mix, mingle, and enjoy delicious food and desserts provided by **Russell Morin Fine Catering**. **For more information and reservations, contact Trinity Rep at (401) 453-9235.**

Artistic Director **Curt Columbus** said, “I’m so proud that we’ll be able to offer a sort of homecoming for the stunning and brilliant Viola Davis, and that she’ll be joining us to accept the Pell Award for Lifetime Achievement in the Arts on the very stage where she began her career. For us to be able to count a talent like Ms. Davis among the names who have walked the boards here at Trinity Repertory Company over the years is an honor. To have her back in Providence for this special evening will be nothing less than a delight.”

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Columbus is also thrilled to bestow the Charles Sullivan Award for Distinguished Service in the Arts on Elaine Foster Perry, an arts educator and advocate beyond compare. “One of the core values of Trinity Repertory Company’s mission is its commitment to education – particularly education in our own community,” said Columbus. “Elaine Foster Perry exemplifies this in a way that few others can – a celebrated force in arts education for over 40 years in Rhode Island and on the national theater scene, her impact continues to be felt on stages near and far. It’s particularly special that we are able to honor her at this year’s Pell Awards, as Lifetime Achievement Award-winner Viola Davis was one of her students.”

Curt Columbus describes Brown University President and winner of the Pell Award for Leadership in Arts Education as “an invaluable asset” to educating the next generation of artists and arts patrons. “Ruth’s outstanding commitment to education, first as a much-lauded student, then teacher, and now university administrator, has been a lifelong passion from which we’ve all benefitted. We are certainly not the first institution to count Ruth among those we’ve been able to honor – and we are so lucky to have counted her among our many supporters in Rhode Island over her tenure at Brown, particularly in helping to launch the Brown/Trinity Rep MFA Programs and bring them to the prestige they enjoy today.”

J.L. “Lynn” Singleton, winner of the Pell Award for Outstanding Leadership in the Arts, is a “wonderful friend and colleague to all Rhode Islanders, but especially those of us in the downtown arts district,” said Columbus. “I can’t think of a better neighbor to have in downtown Providence than the Providence Performing Arts Center, and I’m so pleased to be able to count Lynn, the man at its helm, among the many distinguished leaders of the arts movement in Rhode Island. His tireless work to bring world-renowned performing artists to downtown Providence is part of what makes this city – and this state – such a vibrant, thrilling place to live.”

Now in their second decade, the Pell Awards were established to honor **Senator Claiborne Pell** and recognize artistic excellence in Rhode Island and on the national level. Pell, who passed away in 2009, worked throughout his career to support the arts and provide new opportunities for artists. He sponsored the landmark legislation that established the National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities in 1965, and chaired the Senate Education and Arts subcommittee. He also served a four-year term on the board of Trinity Repertory Company. “Senator Claiborne Pell was a democrat in the truest sense of the word, in that he believed that everyone should have access to arts, education, and culture. While he is sorely missed, we are honored to be able to keep his memory alive through the Pell Awards,” stated Curt Columbus.

Previous Pell Award honorees include **Adrian Hall, Amy Morton, Liza Minnelli, Kevin Spacey, Jason Robards, Arthur Miller, Beverly Sills, Stephen Sondheim, Toni Morrison, Robert Redford, Maurice Sendak, Jane Alexander, Ruby Dee and Ossie Davis, Chita Rivera, Olympia Dukakis, and Trinity Rep’s resident acting company.** Since the inception of the Pell Awards in 1997, there have been forty New England and Rhode Island winners, including **Senator Pell, Lowry Marshall, Steven Weinberg, Umberto “Bert” Crenca, George Wein, Peter Geisser, Consuelo Sherba, Roger**

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Mandle, Howard Ben Tré, Dorothy Jungels, Chris Van Allsburg, Paula Vogel, Eugene Lee, David MacCaulay, Rose Weaver, Thomas Sgouros, Dave McKenna, Maria Spacagna, William Warner, Brian Dennehy, Barbara Meek, Ruth Frisch Dealy, Gretchen Dow Simpson, Dan Butterworth, Virginia Lynch, Toots Zynsky, George Kent, Bob Colonna and Duke Robillard.



http://www.trinityrep.com/DownloadDocs/Viola_Davis.jpg

Viola Davis. Photo credit: Art Streiber.

Viola Davis is a critically revered actress of film, television and theater and has won rave reviews for her intriguingly diverse roles.

In March, Davis will begin production in New Orleans on Richard LaGravenese's "Beautiful Creatures" opposite Emma Thompson and Jack O'Connell. The LaGravenese-penned adaptation of the Margaret Stohl and Kami Garcia novel follows two teens who must confront a curse that has haunted the girl's family for generations. Davis plays a librarian and friend of the teenage boy's deceased mother who loves him like a son and will do whatever she can to protect him. Warner Bros. and Alcon are producing. Also this year, Davis signed on to Summit Entertainment's "Ender's Game." Set in Earth's future, this story follows a genius strategist recruited by the government to help destroy an insect-like alien race. Davis will play a military psychologist who oversees the emotional welfare of young trainees. Gavin Hood will direct, and the film also stars Asa Butterfield, Hailee Steinfeld, Abigail Breslin and Harrison Ford. Hood penned the adaptation of Orson Scott Card's novel.

Davis can next be seen alongside Maggie Gyllenhaal and Holly Hunter in the feature film "Won't Back Down" for director Daniel Barnz. The film focuses on two women who are compelled to help make a difference at a local school. Walden Media is producing and Fox will release the film on September 28, 2012.

Davis costars with Tom Hanks and Sandra Bullock in the Stephen Daldry picture "Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close." This film tells the story about a boy in search of a mysterious key left by his father when he was killed in the September 11th attacks. Warner Bros. and Paramount Pictures released the film on January 20, 2012.

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In August 2011, Davis captivated audiences and critics alike with her portrayal of 'Aibileen Clark.' Set in Jackson, Mississippi, during the 1960s, "The Help" chronicles the relationship between three different and extraordinary women who build an unlikely friendship around a secret writing project that breaks societal rules and puts them all at risk. Emma Stone, Bryce Dallas Howard and Octavia Spencer also star. Davis earned a *Screen Actors Guild Award* for "Outstanding Performances by a Female in a Leading Role" and a *Critics' Choice Award* for "Best Actress" for her performance as 'Aibileen Clark.' She was also nominated for *Academy Award*, *Golden Globe Award* and *British Academy Film Award*. The film won a *Screen Actors Guild Award* for "Outstanding Performance by a Cast in a Motion Picture" and a *Critics' Choice Award* for "Best Acting Ensemble."

In 2010, Davis returned to Broadway in the highly anticipated revival of August Wilson's *Fences* alongside Denzel Washington. Davis' portrayal of 'Rose Maxson' garnered her a *Tony Award*, as well as *Drama Critics' Circle Award*, *Outer Critics Circle Award* and *Drama Desk Award*. "Fences" was also honored with the *Tony Award* for "Best Play Revival" and was the most profitable theatre production of the year.

Also in 2010, Davis was seen in a six-episode arc in Showtime's hit series "United States of Tara," written by Academy-Award winner Diablo Cody. Davis portrays 'Lynda P. Frazier,' a wildly eccentric artist and friend to 'Tara' (Toni Collette). The second season premiered on March 22.

On June 25, 2010, Davis appeared in the 20th Century Fox action-comedy "Knight and Day" directed by James Mangold. The film centers around a fugitive couple (Tom Cruise and Cameron Diaz) on a glamorous and sometimes deadly adventure across the globe. Following "Knight and Day," on August 13, 2010, Davis was seen opposite Julia Roberts in the Sony Pictures film "Eat, Pray, Love" in which she plays Roberts' best friend in the role of 'Delia.' On October 8, 2010, Davis starred alongside Emma Roberts, Lauren Graham and Zach Galifianakis in the Focus Features' drama, "It's Kind of a Funny Story."

In 2008, Davis starred in the critically revered film "Doubt" based on the *Tony Award* winning play, where she portrayed 'Mrs. Miller,' the mother of a young boy who piques the fascination of a Catholic priest. Davis shares the screen alongside Meryl Streep, Amy Adams and Phillip Seymour Hoffman. Davis was nominated for a *Golden Globe Award*, *Screen Actors Guild Award* and an *Academy Award* for "Best Supporting Actress." The National Board of Review recognized Davis with the *Breakthrough Award* and she was also honored by the Santa Barbara Film Festival as a *Virtuoso*.

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That same year, Davis shared the big screen with Diane Lane, Richard Gere and James Franco in the drama “Nights in Rodanthe,” directed by George C. Wolfe. Based on the novel of the same name, the film centers around a woman (Lane) who retreats to the tiny North Carolina coastal town of Rodanthe to watch over a friend’s (Davis) inn for the weekend. There she meets a male guest (Gere) who is seeking shelter from a pending storm and their lives subsequently begin to intertwine. The film was released by Warner Brothers on September 26, 2008.

Additional film credits include the highly revered drama “Antwone Fisher,” where her performance earned her an *Independent Spirit Award* for “Best Supporting Female,” additional appearances in feature films “Madea Goes to Jail,” “State of Play” and “Law Abiding Citizen;” a supporting role in “Disturbia” starring Shia LeBeouf for director D.J. Caruso. Davis was also seen in the independent film, “The Architect” opposite Anthony LaPaglia; Jim Sheridan’s “Get Rich or Die Tryin’” opposite 50 Cent; “Syriana” starring George Clooney, directed by Stephen Gaghan and produced by Steven Soderbergh (Davis’ fourth collaboration with the Oscar winning director); “Far from Heaven” with Dennis Quaid and Julianne Moore; and “Solaris,” “Traffic” and “Out of Sight.”

Davis’ television credits include a co-starring role in the A&E mini-series “The Andromeda Strain” with a cast that includes Benjamin Bratt, Eric McCormack and Rick Schroeder; a recurring role on “Law & Order: SVU;” a recurring role in the CBS mini-series franchise “Jesse Stone” opposite Tom Selleck; a starring role as ‘Diane Barrino’ in “Life is Not a Fairytale: The Fantasia Barrino Story” for Lifetime; a starring role in ABC’s “Traveler” playing Agent Jan Marlow; CBS’ “Century City,” “Lefty,” and the Steven Bochco series, “City of Angels.” Additionally, she had roles in Oprah Winfrey’s “Amy and Isabelle,” and Hallmark Hall of Fame’s “Grace and Glorie.”

In 2004, Davis lit up the stage in the Roundabout Theatre Company’s production of Lynn Nottage’s play, *Intimate Apparel* directed by Tony Award-winning director Daniel Sullivan. She garnered the highest honors for an off-Broadway play, including “Best Actress” awards from the *Drama Desk*, the *Drama League*, the *Obie* and the *Audelco Award*. Davis was nominated for the *Lucille Lortel Award* as well. She reprised her role at the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles where she was recognized with the *Ovation*, *Los Angeles Drama Critics* and the *Garland Awards*. In 2001, Davis was awarded a Tony for “Best Performance by a Featured Actress in a Play” for her portrayal of Tonya in *King Hedley II*. She commanded the attention of critics and audiences alike for her portrayal of ‘Tonya,’ a 35-year old woman who is forced to fight for the right to abort an unwanted pregnancy. Davis also received a *Drama Desk Award* in recognition of her work.

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Davis is a graduate of The Julliard School and holds an Honorary Doctorate of Fine Arts Degree from her alma mater, Rhode Island College. Davis resides in Los Angeles with her husband and daughter.



http://www.trinityrep.com/DownloadDocs/Elaine_Perry.jpg

Elaine Foster Perry. Photo credit: Mark Turek.

Elaine Foster Perry has been an active force in arts education for over 40 years. She joined the faculty of Rhode Island College's Department of Theatre and Dance in 1968, teaching courses in oral interpretation, voice and articulation, and ensemble performance. This year's Pell Award winner for Lifetime Achievement, Viola Davis, was one of her students. Perry retired from RIC in 1995 as an Associate Professor Emerita. She earned her B.A. in Speech and Theatre Education from Russell Sage College in 1956 and her M.A. in Speech/Oral Interpretation from the University of Illinois in 1957, and has since continued her professional development in various arts management, Shakespeare, and community development programs around the country. She has served on the boards of Trinity Repertory Company, Music Festival of Rhode Island, and Looking Glass Theatre, and has been active with the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival (KCACTF) since the early 1970s. She chaired the New England region of KCACTF, sitting on the National Committee in Washington, DC, and was elected the first Vice President of its Distinguished Alumni group, going on to become chair of the National Partners of American Theatre (NAPAT), as the group is now known, on whose executive committee she currently serves. Perry has directed theatrical productions for RIC, Syracuse University, and the Kennedy Center, in conjunction with the American College Theatre Festival's 25th Anniversary. In 1993, she arranged and moderated a symposium with playwrights Wendy Wasserstein, Paula Vogel, and Maria Irene Fornes entitled "Women Behind the Curtain: Issues and Images," in conjunction with RIC's Arts Month, which she calls "one of the best days of her life." Perry presently serves on RIC's Ridgeway F. Shinn, Jr. Study Abroad Committee, supporting undergraduates in planned study outside the United States, where students in the fields of theater and dance are designated Elaine Foster Perry scholars. She lives in Cranston with her husband, Gene, and is the proud mother of James and Lynn Alison.

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<http://www.trinityrep.com/DownloadDocs/ruthsimmons.jpg>

Ruth J. Simmons. Photo credit: Brown University.

Ruth J. Simmons was sworn in as the 18th president of Brown University on July 3, 2001.

Under her leadership, Brown is making new investments to secure its standing as one of the world's finest research universities.

A French professor before entering university administration, President Simmons also holds an appointment as a professor of comparative literature and of Africana Studies at Brown. She graduated from Dillard University in New Orleans and completed her Ph.D. in Romance languages and literatures at Harvard. She served in various administrative roles at the University of Southern California, Princeton University, and Spelman College before becoming president of Smith College, the largest women's college in the United States. At Smith, she launched a number of initiatives including an engineering program, the first at an American women's college.

Simmons is the recipient of many honors, including a Fulbright Fellowship, the 2001 President's Award from the United Negro College Fund, the 2002 Fulbright Lifetime Achievement Medal, the 2004 Eleanor Roosevelt Val-Kill Medal, the 2010 Ellis Island Medal of Honor, and the 2010 Foreign Policy Association award. She has been a featured speaker in many public venues, including the White House, the World Economic Forum, the National Press Club, the American Council on Education, and the Phi Beta Kappa Lecture at Harvard University. She serves on a number of boards, including the Dillard University Board of Trustees, the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture, and Texas Instruments, and has been awarded numerous honorary degrees. She was also appointed by President Obama as a member of the President's Commission on White House Fellowships.



http://www.trinityrep.com/DownloadDocs/Lynn_Singleton.jpg

J.L. "Lynn" Singleton. Photo credit: Falcone Design.

In 1983, J. L. “Lynn” Singleton joined the Providence Performing Arts Center (PPAC) as President and reversed the theatre’s financial situation from near bankruptcy. Since 1984, PPAC is considered one of the most successful, not-for-profit theatres in North America. Under his direction, attendance at PPAC has increased from 57,000 in 1983 to nearly 500,000 this year, and the number of events has tripled, resulting in PPAC twice being voted by *Performance Magazine* the top 3,000-seat theatre in the nation.

Lynn initiated and completed PPAC’s \$8 million stage expansion and \$5 million historically-accurate restoration of the Grand Lobby, Arcade, Auditorium, and electronic marquee/vertical sign. These improvements allowed the presentation of blockbuster shows such as *The Phantom of the Opera*, *Disney’s Beauty & the Beast*, *The Lion King*, *Wicked*, and *Jersey Boys*. In recognition, Lynn became the first recipient of the City of Providence Renaissance Award for Highest Achievement in the Arts. Lynn sits on the Government Relations Committee of the Broadway League and is a voting member for the Tony Awards. In 2004, he received the League’s Samuel J. L’Hommedieu Award for Outstanding Achievement in Presenter Management.

In 1988, Lynn was co-founder of Professional Facilities Management, Inc. (PFM) and serves as President and CEO. PFM is a wholly owned for-profit subsidiary of Providence Performing Arts Center and has management/booking contracts with twelve facilities in nine states.

Lynn is a member of the Board and Treasurer of the Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation. He also serves on the boards of the Rhode Island Hospitality Association and the Rhode Island College Foundation.

In 2011, Lynn was named as one of the 25 “driving forces” in the Rhode Island business community over the past 25 years by *Providence Business News (PBN)*.

DETAILS AT-A-GLANCE

- WHAT:** The 2012 Pell Awards
- WHEN:** Monday evening, May 21, 2012
5:00 PM – VIP reception in the Chace Theater lobby at Trinity Rep
6:00 PM – Awards Ceremony in the Dowling Theater at Trinity Rep
7 – 9:00PM – Cocktail reception featuring hors d’oeuvres and desserts at the Pell Chafee Performance Center, 87 Empire St., Providence, RI
- WHERE:** Trinity Repertory Company, 201 Washington St., Providence, RI
- HONOREES:**
Viola Davis – 2012 Pell Award for Lifetime Achievement in the Arts

Elaine Foster Perry – 2012 Charles Sullivan Award for Distinguished Service in the Arts
Ruth J. Simmons – 2012 Pell Award for Leadership in Arts Education
J.L. “Lynn” Singleton – 2012 Pell Award for Outstanding Leadership in the Arts

SUMMARY: The Pell Awards celebrates national and local excellence in the arts. Together with business, political and social leaders, guests at this stylish and smashing cocktail party will mingle and enjoy scrumptious small bites, an open bar, and the company of some truly distinguished artists.

TICKETS: Full event including VIP reception: \$500
Ceremony and post-show reception only: \$250 (limited availability)
Corporate sponsorships are also available.

MORE INFO: www.trinityrep.com or by phone at (401) 453-9235.