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ODETTA TO OPEN 2008 ELMA LEWIS PLAYHOUSE IN THE PARK JULY 8

AMERICAN LEGEND FIRST PERFORMED AT THE PLAYHOUSE IN 1968

(BOSTON - April, 3, 2008) The Franklin Park Coalition announces that legendary folk artist and activist Odetta will open the season for the 2008 Elma Lewis Playhouse in the Park on Tuesday, July 8, with a show that begins at 6 pm. This FREE, outdoor performance takes place at Valley Gates, next to The Playstead, the big field in Franklin Park between White Stadium and the rear entrance of the Zoo, not far from where the original Playhouse stood. Rain location TBA. For more information, call (617) 282-2881 or visit www.franklinparkcoalition.org.

Odetta first performed at the Playhouse in the Park 40 years ago, on Aug. 31, 1968 - the last weekend of a tumultuous summer in Boston and throughout the country.

The 2008 series will feature shows every Tuesday morning and evening, through Aug. 19. The morning shows, starting at 10:30 am, are geared toward camps and daycare centers. The evening shows are for the whole family. The complete summer lineup, which features national and local music and dance, will be announced in the coming weeks.

The Franklin Park Coalition (FPC) has partnered with the National Center for Afro-American Artists (NCAAA) and the Boston Parks and Recreation Department's ParkARTS Program to present a performing arts series named for the founder and director of the Elma Lewis School of Fine Arts. Lewis, a beloved Boston icon, established Playhouse in the Park in 1966, and presented artists like Duke Ellington, Olatunji, Billy Taylor, and the Boston Ballet. In its original inception, it ran through 1978.

Four years ago, the FPC, NCAAA, and ParkARTS began their effort to re-establish the Elma Lewis Playhouse in the Park as an exciting multicultural summer performance venue.

The Elma Lewis Playhouse in the Park is produced by First Night, in cooperation with the City of Boston, Mayor Thomas M. Menino; the Boston Parks and Recreation Department, Antonia Pollak, Commissioner; ParkARTS and the National Center for Afro-American Artists, with support from The Boston Foundation, Clipper Ship Foundation, A. C. Ratshesky Foundation, Mabel Louise Riley Foundation, an anonymous donor, and many local Franklin Park supporters. *EI*

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