



Community Planning and Economic Development Department

News Release

Contacts: Krista Bergert, Communications, (612) 673-5015; cell, (612) 360-8702

Aaron Hanauer, Preservation, (612) 673-2494

Sue Hunter Weir, Chair, Friends of the Cemetery, (612) 874-9233



Minneapolis City Goals: A Safe Place to Call Home ▫ Jobs & Economic Vitality ▫ Eco-Focused ▫ Livable Communities, Healthy Lives ▫ Many People, One Minneapolis ▫ A City That Works

First of its kind in Minneapolis: Concert at Pioneers and Soldier's Cemetery will aid in preservation efforts

Songs inspired by inhabitants of cemetery; public can "vote" to help preserve

September 27, 2011 (MINNEAPOLIS) – Two local rising stars of the indie music scene will perform a concert at Pioneers and Soldiers Cemetery. This concert will be the first of its kind held at a Minneapolis cemetery. The concert is one activity the Friends of the Cemetery is hosting during an open house, October 8 and 9, to raise awareness of Minneapolis' historic Pioneers and Soldiers Cemetery and raise funds for the restoration of its steel and limestone pillar fence that serves as the border of Lake Street and Cedar Avenue.

Open House Events

Jeremy Messersmith and Lucy Michelle and the Velvet Lapelles will perform a benefit concert on **Saturday, October 8** at the cemetery located at 2925 Cedar Avenue South. Proceeds from the performance will help support the restoration work underway. Gates open at 1:00 p.m., with Lucy Michelle and the Velvet Lapelles performing at 2:00 p.m. and Messersmith taking the stage at 4:00 p.m.

Messersmith's performance will include songs from his most recent album, *The Reluctant Graveyard*, which includes some songs inspired by inhabitants of the cemetery such as Toussant Grey. Grey was the first African-American child born in St. Anthony and the son of the only known African-American Territorial Pioneers in Minnesota. Other critically acclaimed albums are *Silver City* and *Alcatraz Kid*. Lucy Michelle and the Velvet Lapelles will perform songs from their most recent album, *Good of That* and their highly praised albums, *Special Party Time for Everybody* and *Orange Peels and Rattlesnakes*.

Hola Arepa and Chef Shack food trucks will sell food during the event. Bike parking will be provided by Dero Bike Racks. Limited edition concert posters created by Landland will be available for purchase at the show.

Arrive early and participate in a smartphone history hunt which will reveal highlights of the cemetery's rich legacy and its prominent place in local history. A kid-friendly version of the hunt will also be available.

Free parking is available on Saturday at the Greenway Office Building (2801 21st Avenue South) and the Community Education Services Building (2225 East Lake Street) parking lots. On-street parking is also available. No parking will be available within the cemetery on Saturday.

Tickets can be purchased at Electric Fetus, Hymie's Vintage Records, Treehouse Records, and online at www.friendsofthecemetery.org. Tickets are \$10 in advance and \$15 at the show. Tickets are limited, so advanced purchase is advised. Tickets are not required for children 12 years and under, however donations are accepted.

On **Sunday, October 9**, the cemetery will be open from 8:00 a.m. - 4:15 p.m. Self-guided walking tours as well as a smartphone history hunts for kids and adults will again be available. A formal guided tour will be offered at 1:00 p.m. Representatives of the Friends of the Cemetery organization will be available to provide a historical overview of the cemetery. Parking will be available in the cemetery on Sunday.

“Vote” for Preservation

The Pioneers and Soldiers Cemetery was named one of 25 historic places in the Minneapolis-Saint Paul area, competing for \$1 million from the **Partners in Preservation** program. The public can vote for the cemetery in this preservation contest, post personal stories and share photos. The winner of the most popular votes will receive \$125,000 dollars for its preservation efforts. The online voting contest is held at Facebook.com/PartnersinPreservation and is sponsored by American Express and the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

Pioneers and Soldiers Cemetery, established in 1853, is the oldest cemetery in Minneapolis. It is also a Minneapolis landmark and the only cemetery in Minnesota that is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It is the final resting place of nearly 20,000 pioneers, veterans and immigrants. It contains the graves of some of the first settlers of the city, many of whom made major contributions to local history; soldiers and veterans of the War of 1812, the Dakota Conflict, the Civil War, the Mexican American War, the Spanish-American War, and World War I; mid to late nineteenth century European immigrants, early African American citizens and abolitionists. Notable individuals buried in the cemetery include Philander Prescott, Charles W. Christmas, and William Goodridge. In 1925, a group began to organize to save Layman's Cemetery for its historical importance. The group's effort is recognized as an early, local attempt at historic preservation.

One of the Ten Most Endangered Historic Places

In 2008, to raise awareness about the challenges of maintaining this landmark, the Preservation Alliance of Minnesota placed the cemetery on its “Ten Most Endangered Historic Places” list. Today, the cemetery is in need of substantial capital improvements. The most immediate of those is the restoration of the historic fence that lines the cemetery on Lake Street and Cedar Avenue. The steel

fence is 1,953 linear feet and contains 3,510 pickets within 66 sections. Phase I and Phase II of the fence restoration project were completed in May 2011. The restoration included rehabilitation of the Cedar Avenue main gates and Lake Street gates as well as 12 other sections of fencing (see [before and after images](#)). Additional money is needed to restore the remaining 44 sections that are still in need of repair. The fence restoration project is estimated to cost \$1.4 million. For more about the fence restoration project, visit www.friendsofthecemetery.org.

About Jeremy Messersmith & *The Reluctant Graveyard*

Singer-songwriter Jeremy Messersmith has become a prominent fixture of the Minneapolis music scene in the past decade. His third album, *The Reluctant Graveyard* (2010), tackles end-of-life issues and tells stories inspired by the inhabitants of Minneapolis' Pioneers and Soldiers Cemetery (including [Toussant Grey](#), the subject of one of the album's songs). *Star Tribune* music critic, Chris Riemenschneider, said of the album "Despite its dark themes, *The Reluctant Graveyard* is a surprisingly upbeat, melodic, and sunny album. Where the light approach to dark themes truly works like a charm (*Star Tribune*)." *The Reluctant Graveyard* was named as one of the top ten albums of 2010 by National Public Radio's "[All Songs Considered](#)," and best local album by the *Star Tribune*. For more about Jeremy Messersmith, visit www.jeremymessersmith.com.

About Lucy Michelle and the Velvet Lapelles

Lucy Michelle and the Velvet Lapelles are a Minneapolis-Saint Paul based sextet with a unique sound that combines Americana with hot club jazz and a hint of mountain gypsy. The band's fiery live performances have charmed audiences and critics alike from coast to coast. In addition to being named *City Pages* "Best New Band" in 2008 and releasing three critically acclaimed albums (*Orange Peels & Rattlesnakes*, *Special Party Time for Everybody* and *Good of That*) in three years, the band has had their songs tapped for the award winning *Minnesota Beatle Project Vol. 1* (2009), a featured TED documentary (2010) and an international ad campaign for Macy's (2011). The Velvet Lapelles are currently working on their fourth full length album, set for release in the Spring of 2012, at Vacation Island Recording Studios in Brooklyn with acclaimed Producer Matt Boynton (MGMT, Beirut, Norah Jones). For more about Lucy Michelle and the Velvet Lapelles, visit <http://lapelles.com/>.

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