

## **PERFORMER BIOS**

### **Alakazam "The Human Knot"**

*Boston, Massachusetts*

Can you even touch your toes? If you're one of those people who struggles to cross your legs while seated, your jaw will drop in awe upon seeing Alakazam. Al is coming back to the Festival of Fools and he's one of our original performers, having been a good friend of the Festival since its beginning eleven years ago. He's been in knots with it ever since and hasn't been back since 2013.

Born in Sydney, Australia, Al is literally a human knot and has performed his one-person show in 36 countries over the past 20 years. Through body contortions, truckloads of Aussie charm and daredevil feats, you'll marvel at Al's fast-paced and hilarious show and see why he's considered one of the world's best buskers. One of the world's best here on Church Street.

### **Cate Great**

*Boston, Massachusetts*

The Festival of Fools is pleased to welcome back Boston's Cate Great. Least seen gracing our streets in 2015, Cate skillfully and insanely combines comedy, acrobatics and athletic prowess to the delight of her fans. She blends high-end circus with her unique brand of comedy. You will be charmed by her wit and astounded by her skill. Whether she is precariously balanced on her rollabolla or defying gravity balanced on her hands, you will be thrilled and amazed. "Rolla bolla" you say? Come check her out.

Trained at The Quebec Circus School, Cate is a seventeen-year veteran of circus stage and street. She's performed all over - in eleven different countries including Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and Dubai as well as most of the United States and Canada. She's charming; she's talented—she's not just great, she's Cate Great!

### **Chris Gethard**

*New York City, New York*

Festival of Fools is pleased to partner with the Vermont Comedy Club again this year. Too much time outside on the street? Get your tickets and save your seat in Vermont's top-rated comedy venue. Foolishness rolls downhill, right to the doors of VCC where you'll find Chris Gethard!

Chris Gethard is the host and star of Funny or Die's "The Chris Gethard Show" on TruTV and the host of the popular Earwolf podcast "Beautiful Stories from Anonymous People." Chris recently starred in the Mike Birbiglia film, "Don't Think Twice" and can be seen as 'Todd' on Comedy Central's "Broad City."

Other credits include Comedy Central's "Inside Amy Schumer," NBC's "Parks and Recreation," "The Office" and the film "The Heat." Chris is the author of the book "A Bad Idea I'm About to Do" and his first stand-up album ("My Comedy Album") debuted at # 2 on Billboard's Heatseekers chart in 2014.

Chris's one-man show, "Career Suicide" (produced by Judd Apatow) just premiered on HBO after completing a successful off-broadway run at The Lynn Redgrave Theatre in NYC. This is your chance to catch Chris on the Vermont Comedy Club's Stage. Also featured will be Fools and Sam Adam's inspired drinks, crafted by VCC's award-winning staff.

### **FLiP**

*Québec, Canada*

The fearless foursome family of fools is returning to the Festival of Fools after their fantastic performances last summer. This year, these Canadian imports are bringing their 15' trampoline for added height and insanity. If you see someone flying through the air above the crowds, it must be FLiP!

The sassy flavor of this candy-coated performance artistry offers acrobatic prowess and impeccable

physical timing wrapped in a hilarious crinkly wrapper. A real treat that's sure to please!

Martin Varallo and Dominique Major have performed and toured with Cirque du Soleil, Teatro Zinzanni, Pomp, Duck & Circum-stanceas well as the world's major Festivals. They have a circus school for young performers in Quebec, called FLiP!

### **Flor de Toloache**

*New York City, New York*

Mariachi music on Church Street? Played and sung by Grammy Award winners? It must be the Festival of Fools weekend! We are incredibly lucky to have the four members of New York's Flor de Toloache with us all weekend. Catch them performing on the street and on our City Hall Park Stage. Unique and remarkable, seeing them up close and un-mic'd on the Marketplace is an experience you won't soon forget.

These Latin Grammy winners made New York City history as its' First and Only All-Women Mariachi Group. Founded in 2008, Flor de Toloache is lead by singers Mireya I. Ramos & Shae Fiol. Reminiscent of the early days of mariachi the group started as a trio. Today, Flor De Toloache performs as a full Mariachi ensemble. The members hail from diverse cultural backgrounds such as Mexico, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, Cuba, Colombia, Germany, Italy and the United States. This defines their unique flavor and sound. The result of this cultural bouquet is an edgy, versatile and fresh take on traditional Mexican music. While working to preserve centuries-old traditions of Mariachi, their melange of the traditional and the modern push the boundaries of the genre and brings Mariachi music to new audiences.

The group's live performances are praised by Rolling Stone, Billboard Magazine, The New Yorker, GQ Magazine, The New York Times. Following a highly praised NPR's "Tiny Desk Concert," their collaboration with rock supergroup The Arcs landed them on the Late Show with Stephen Colbert, and BBC 2's Later with Jools Holland. And now, you can see them perform on the street and on the stage throughout the Festival weekend – for free! Not to be missed.

### **Just for Kicks**

*Burlington, Vermont*

Get the Festival weekend started with some swing in your step! Join us for our noon performance with Burlington's Just For Kicks on the BCA Plaza, part of the Summer Concert Series. Watch this troupe's moves as they perform their classic routines right on the concrete of City Hall Park!

Just For Kicks extends their raw energy and joy on the wings of the 1920s, 30s and 40s authentic jazz. And they wear the clothes to match! The hour-long show will be both a performance and an opportunity for the audience to work on their moves and get some informal instruction. Come watch and learn!

### **Kif Kif**

*Québec, Canada*

Flying bunnies, speeding French fries! The twins from the North have returned! Back by popular demand after their hilariously quirky debut in 2017, these identical twins fight giant pink monsters, practice the art of snacking and ensure the triumph of the umbilical cord. The Kif-Kif Sisters mix surprising comedy and audience interaction with enough happiness to make vegetables explode. These sisters have been inseparable since the womb and have many years of street performing all over the world, from the Americas to Asia. Their primary sources of inspiration are tenderness and riots.

"Kif-Kif" means "same same" in French. They are a young duo formed by two identical twins that spread their creations in Quebec City (Canada) and around the world. Humor, twinship and saturated colors are at the heart of their performances. They're charming and unique, and we're so pleased to have them return to the Festival.

**Mal Maiz**

*Burlington, Vermont*

Costa Rican gypsy devil Maiz Vargas Sandoval and his Afro-Latino Orchestra are returning to the Festival of Fools! This is becoming a habit! Last year they put on a fantastic and exciting show in City Hall Park, the middle of Main Street and a never-to-be-repeated fire show in front of City Hall. This year this hot dance band will be rocking out on our City Hall Park Saturday night with both traditional and modern flair.

Based out of Burlington, Mal Maiz blends traditional cumbia, latin, reggae, and afro-Caribbean sounds. The band features John Thompson-Figuroa, Mike Hartigan, Colin Henkel, Graham Thompson and others. We'll see you in City Hall Park for this free party!

**Marco Benevento**

*Saugerties, New York*

Ok – Marco Benevento fans listen up: Marco will be here for the Festival for ONE AMAZING, FREE performance. ONE. He's going to be popping up and doing a solo acoustic set in the middle of Bank Street. We're as excited as you are! And if we can't stop the traffic, we know he will. Check back later or follow us socially for exact time and location details. It's a Festival first.

And then for those of you who don't know, for more than a decade pianist Marco Benevento has been amassing an extensive body of work. His studio albums and live performances set forth a vision that connects the dots in the vast space between LCD Soundsystem and Leon Russell, pulsating with dance rock energy, but with smart, earthy songwriting to match. It has led to numerous high profile appearances, ranging from Carnegie Hall to Pickathon, Mountain Jam to Treefort Festival, while headlining shows coast to coast.

Marco Benevento's latest studio LP, *The Story of Fred Short*, and its companion live release, *The Woodstock Sessions*, is some of his most beautiful and most adventurous work to date—a maestro making “bold indie rock” says Brooklyn Vegan, while the LA Times raves, “Benevento continues to straighten his twisted sound into the guise of an indie-rock singer-songwriter, harnessing his inventive sonic palette into rewardingly bite-size pop songs that touch on disco and soul.” Honing his psych rock and late-night dance party sensibilities, the recordings find the pianist citing everything from Harry Nilsson, Manu Chau, and Gorillaz as inspiration.

As anybody who's seen Marco Benevento perform can attest, with eyes closed, smile wide across his face and fingers free-flowing across the keys, he's a satellite to the muse. With a devout and growing fan-base, Benevento is an artist whose story is only beginning to unfold.

Okay, we said you only had one chance to see him. While's he's only with us for one performance; the good news is you can also catch Marco with our friends at Club Metronome for the Fools After Parties presented by Signal Kitchen and Lost Nation Brewery.

**Michael Trautman**

*Portland, Maine*

What are all of these ping pong balls on Church Street? Oh, it's Michael Trautman! He's back, and we're thrilled! Michael Trautman began studying mime in 1976, and in 1977 was invited to become a founding member of MIMEWOCK, a Kansas City-based school, and performing company. He went on to train with Tony Montanaro at Celebration Barn, working with Tony for over twenty years. In 1987, Michael trained with Jacques Lecoq at Ecole Jacques Lecoq. Throughout his 40+ years as a performing artist, he has been having fun traveling throughout the world and has achieved a very high level of fulfillment from providing comic relief to those in need.

Variouly identified as a visual comic, performance artist, new vaudevillian, mime (gasp), physical comedian, storyteller, magician, and a fool, he claims only to be a clown...and not a very traditional clown at that. He has appeared in the New York International Festival of Clown Theater, Festival D'Ete in

Quebec, the Just For Laughs Festival, and The Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. He was featured on WOW! The Most Awesome Acts On Earth, The Statler Brothers Show, CCTV in Beijing, China, and Le Plus Grande Cabaret du Monde on France 2 TV.

He has little discretion. In the 1999-2000 season, Michael was the star clown in the national tour of OOPS! The Big Apple Circus Stage Show directed by Tony Walton. From 2006 until 2010 Michael has had the pleasure of working with Mr. Walton on the Broadway-bound production of Busker Alley starring Jim Dale and Glenn Close. From April 2016 until April 2018, Michael joined the staff at MAINE CIRCUS ACADEMY, in Portland, ME where he served as the Artistic Director of the Youth Performance Troupe.

### **Mr. Chris & Friends**

*Burlington, Vermont*

You've seen him on Vermont PBS. You've seen him at Burger Night. Your kids know the lyrics to his catchy and smart tunes. Your whole family knows the dance moves to Let's Grow Kids' brilliant 'Something Beautiful.' Now catch Mister Chris & Friends as they headline our Kids Rock The Park day! Families young and old gather in City Hall Park on Sunday, August 5 for this fun and foolish family day from 2-5 p.m.

Mister Chris & Friends is a musical project focused on the pure beauty of childhood, parenthood, and community. Singer-songwriter and educator, Chris Dorman, writes, records, and performs thoughtful and tender songs that captivate multi-generational audiences. These original songs are written with the most sensitive ears in mind and are the foundation for the music and movement program, Music For Sprouts, as well as a new children's television show called Mister Chris and Friends, created by Chris and produced by Vermont PBS. Chris lives with his family on their community farm, Bread & Butter Farm, in Shelburne/South Burlington.

Playing the Festival of Fool is a first for Mister Chris & Friends, and we couldn't be happier. "Jump, jump, jump all around. Jump until your feet hit the ground."

### **Nicole and Natalie**

*Burlington, Vermont*

There's something in the air! There's something in the sky! Local performing artists and aerial masters Natalie Cronin and Nicole Dagesse will showcase sultry solos and dazzling duets; incorporating exhilarating drops, innovative fabric manipulation, and creative ground dance. We'll be setting up their aerial rig on the Top Block of Church Street on Friday and then in City Hall Park on Saturday and Sunday. You know, just a regular weekend in Burlington

Nicole Dagesse, artistic director of Murmurations Dance and World Tree Yoga, teaches classes in aerial dance, improvisation, and choreography (North End Studios) and aerial yoga (Sangha Studio) to both children and adults. Natalie Cronin is the advanced aerial teacher at World Tree and specializes in creative sequencing and rigorous conditioning for aerial silks. All ages and levels are encouraged to experience aerial dance to develop increased strength, flexibility, and creativity in a collaborative and supportive environment. Come and get a taste of what they can do with their free shows in the Festival of Fools. We're pleased to be presenting local talent!

### **Spirit Family Reunion**

*New York City, New York*

From the street to the stage, and with the Festival of Fools, back to the street! We're pleased to welcome Spirit Family Reunion to our unique weekend here in Burlington. Spirit Family began singing together on the street corners of New York City in 2009. Since that time they have traveled the highways of America delivering raw, high energy, honest music. They have shared the stage with musical heroes such as Pete Seeger and Levon Helm, and have given notable performances at festivals including Stage Coach, Austin City Limits, Hardly Strictly Bluegrass, and the legendary Newport Folk Festival three times.

The band has self-produced and self-released two full-length studio albums – “No Separation” (2012) and “Hands Together” (2015) – along with multiple songbooks and other collections of recordings. They are currently working on a new record and are taking time to come and have fun.

Catch them on our City Hall Park Stage during the Farmers Market on Saturday and then look for them doing unique acoustic sets on Church Street on Saturday and Sunday.

You can also catch them on Saturday night (August 4) at Club Metronome for the Fools After Party, presented by Signal Kitchen and Lost Nation Brewery.

### **USA Breakdancers**

*Tampa, Florida*

We’re importing this pair from Tampa so they can break it down on the bricks on the Marketplace all weekend. The USA Break dancers are an award-winning street show and are considered one of the top streetacts in the world. Julio “Klown” Santiago is the founder of The USA Breakdancers. He is a 32-year veteran street performer and legendary street dancer. He is a former cast member of Micheal Jackson “The Immortal World Tour” by Cirque Du Soleil and had the honor of meeting The Jackson’s. Joining him is Justin “Animal” Scott a topB-boy and former cast member of the legendary Harlem Globetrotters Trotters. Together this odd couple will perform a high energy, interactive, family fun show that will have you begging for more.

As you stroll the Marketplace, listen for their beats and look for their impressive moves. We’re pleased they’re joining us for their premiere at the Festival of Fools!

### **Vermont Mozart Festival Opera**

*Burlington, Vermont*

Oh Festival of Fools, you never stay in your lane! Why not stage a family opera on Sunday morning? We figure a fair number of you will be still getting your day going, but the families – we know you’re up and looking for something to do! We’re excited to partner with the Vermont Mozart Festival to present a semi-staged Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart one-act opera comedy, Bastien und Bastienne, on Sunday, August 5 on the BCA Plaza in City Hall Park at 10 a.m. Free and family ready. And we’ll have coffee.

Sung in English, the roles will be sung by Vermont’s favorite singers including Sarah Cullins (soprano), Adam Hall (tenor) and Erik Kroncke (bass), in collaboration with the Vermont Mozart Festival Orchestra. This songful and light Mozart opera combines the brilliance of music written at the age of 12 with a story about a Shepherd, Shepherdess, and a Soothsayer or Magician. This production is especially appropriate for audiences of young children, families, and neighbors, who may be interested in enjoying breakfast or lunch together in town on the square before or after the short performance.

This event supports the Vermont Mozart Festival Opera mission to provide affordable listening experiences to Vermonters of all ages, offer innovative examples to our participating Fellows to develop career projects which strengthen community, and, develop new audiences for classical music as a nurturing and memorable experience while discovering the genius and beauty of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart’s music. Bring a chair or blanket, a picnic basket, and we will see you at the opera!

### **What Cheer? Brigade**

*Providence, Rhode Island*

The Festival of Fools always thrives with an excellent brass group. We scored this year and are thrilled to present What Cheer? Brigade for three high-energy days in Burlington. The Brigade is a 20-piece brass band hailing from Providence, RI. They quickly prove that great parties need no electricity. We talked to them about what mics and stage size they need for their stage show – all the standard questions. They wrote back and said they don’t need mics and don’t like stages. They want to party with the people. Perfect.

“Thrillingly competent, with undimmable energy...an explosion of good cheer.”-The New York Times  
“They never actually took a stage, but Providence, RI’s What Cheer? dominated the Newport Folk Fest like a headliner.”-SPIN Since 2005, the band has been as likely to appear at community benefits as at all-night parties, playing bars, clubs, streets, libraries, cemeteries, weddings, bus stops, and playgrounds, and now Church Street. In 2010, they joined Anchor Brain Records to re-release their second CD; *We Blow, You Suck and Classy: Live in Pawtucket* in 2011.

They’ve played with Blondie, Dan Deacon, Man Man, Japanther, Dengue Fever, Okkervil River, Lightning Bolt, Ninjasonik, Mika Miko, Wolf Parade, Matt and Kim, Slavic Soul Party, Javelin, Sage Francis, and Chain and the Gang. We’ve appeared at Lollapalooza, The Newport Folk Festival, Aarhus Festuge (Denmark), Sziget (Hungary), and Guca (Serbia), offering mobile moments of intense entertainment.

Look for them popping up all over the Church Street all weekend and then see them (in front of) or City Hall Park stage on Saturday evening. They will also lead our Festival Parade down Church Street on Friday at 5:30 p.m.

### **Yo-Yo Guy**

*Amherst, Massachusetts*

Last year we had a great time introducing you all to Yo-Yo mastery with Mark Hayward. This year, join us as our collective jaws drop while watching John Higby, the Yo-Yo Guy! John presents a high-energy, high skill comedy show that has been seen in 26 countries. He has five Guinness World Records under his belt and was recently featured at the Melbourne Comedy Festival in Australia and the Gong Show on ABC. We’re talking about a guy with Yo-Yo’s, right? That got us wondering what he’s all about too! Come out and see the Yo-Yo Guy perform on Church Street all weekend. Not to be missed.

### **Zipcode Man**

*Boulder, Colorado*

Zip codes. Those tricky five-digit numbers are hard to remember for most of us. BUT not for the very memorable, Zipcode Man! New to the Festival, Boulder, Colorado’s David Rosdeitcher began as a touring street performer presenting more traditional fair. As he toured, he started memorizing zip codes. He soon realized his potential – he could become ZIPCODEMAN ... nailed it.

Zipcode man has memorized thousands of zip codes–Thousands. He can even tell you something about the locale – like the restaurant on the corner across from the train station. With this arsenal, he’s traveled the world and interviewed by NPR. We can’t wait to see you try to stump him!

### **MC Shoehorn**

*Portland, Oregon*

A one, a two, a one two three four! Ok, just one. MC Shoehorn is a one-of-a-kind one-man band that will blow your socks off. A performance artist who creates music with his feet and dances with his horn, Michael "Shoehorn" Conley (Shoehorn, get it?) combines body rhythms and sophisticated jazz forms into an entertaining spectacle. While specializing in sax and tap dance, he is a multi-instrumentalist, arranger, and composer, utilizing a variety of wind and percussion instruments, classic and original songs, and an ear for music from around the world. We’re pleased to bring him from the Northwest to the Northeast to busk his foolish talents on Church Street. He’s a shoe-in for the Festival of Fools!