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V.I./PR Friendship Day Marks 60th Anniversary with Cultural Festivities

Organizers host a series of events from October 10-13, including the VIPR Village in St. Croix and a special concert in St. Thomas

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A collage of USVI-PR Friendship's final Village Night on Oct. 8 at the Agricultural Fair Grounds for the 2023 event. By. V.I. CONSORTIUM

The V.I./PR Friendship Day is celebrating its 60th anniversary this year, and organizers are planning a series of cultural events to mark this milestone from October 10 to 13.

The highlight of the celebrations will be the grand VIPR Village held at St. Croix's Agricultural Grounds. This annual observance, first established by the Virgin Islands Legislature in 1964 through Bill 2019 Act #1075, speaks to the long-lasting connection between the people of the

Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico as relatives, neighbors, and partners.

The festivities began last Friday with a Gospel night at Sol De Justicia, Iglesia De Dios in Estate Carlton, St. Croix, bringing the community together for a night of worship and unity. The multi-day event features various activities showcasing the cultural ties between the two regions, including musical performances, traditional food stalls, and art exhibits highlighting shared heritage.

On St. Thomas, the Virgin Islands/Puerto Rico Friendship Committee, in collaboration with the Office of the Governor, will present a special concert titled A Musical Embrace (Un Abrazo Musical) on Sunday, October 13 at Prior Jollek Hall on the Antilles School campus. The 90-minute concert will feature the Virgin Islands/Puerto Rico Friendship Chamber Orchestra, co-hosted by the Antilles School Band and 309 Live!, offering an array of international and regional music cherished by both communities.

Dr. Leroy Trotman will narrate the concert, while Maestro Gylchris Sprauve will conduct and lead the evening's events. The concert will showcase talents from both islands, including flutist Gerald Walters, saxophonists Sherwein Williams and Shecoy Jones, trombonist Urbane Chinnery, and percussionists Eljhaie Brathwaite and Carlton Rogers. The performances will be accompanied by the artistry of Louis Taylor.

The event organizers said the concert symbolizes the merging of musical traditions from both regions, celebrating a shared history and cultural unity. Maestro Sprauve expressed excitement about bringing together some of the best talents from the islands, saying, "The orchestra's strength lies in merging musical forces between our islands as we narrate our shared musical history."

The public is invited to attend the concert on October 13 at Prior Jollek Hall to experience the sense of camaraderie and celebration that the V.I./PR Friendship Day fosters. Admission to the event is free.