



MEDIA RELEASE

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80th National Folk Festival Announces First Eight Performers Theme for Maryland Folklife Area & Stage also Revealed

SALISBURY, MD (March 2, 2020) – The National Folk Festival announced today the first eight performers who will be featured at the 80th National Folk Festival, which will return to downtown Salisbury, September 11-13, 2020. In addition, festival organizers also revealed the theme for this year's Maryland Folklife Area & Stage: ***Mountain Maryland*** will explore western Maryland's rich cultural landscape. This year will mark the National's 80th anniversary, and will be the third year of the event's three-year residency in Salisbury.

On hand at the announcement were government leaders and planners for the event—including Lora Bottinelli, Executive Director, National Council for the Traditional Arts (NCTA); Blaine Waide, Associate Director, NCTA; Mayor Jake Day, City of Salisbury; and Caroline O'Hare, Local Manager, National Folk Festival.

"These eight artists attest to the incredible diversity of cultural traditions that will be celebrated at this year's National Folk Festival—the 80th anniversary of the event!—and it is entirely free," said Lora Bottinelli, NCTA Executive Director.

Approximately 350 artists—musicians, dancers, storytellers, and craftspeople—will take part in the National Folk Festival, with more than 35 different musical groups performing on 7 outdoor stages throughout downtown Salisbury.

The National Folk Festival strives to present the nation's very finest traditional artists. Music and dance traditions from every part of the country are represented—blues, rockabilly, gospel, jazz, polka, tamburitza, cowboy, bluegrass, klezmer, R&B, old-time, Cajun, rhythm and blues, mariachi, beatbox, breakin', western swing, honky-tonk and zydeco, as well as traditional music and dance from Native American, Celtic, Acadian, Middle Eastern, Caribbean, East Asian, Appalachian, Latino, Eastern European, West African, and Pacific Island cultures, among others. The eight artists announced today include:

Grupo Rebolú (Queens, New York) – Colombian

The foremost Afro-Colombian ensemble in the United States plays the rich, rhythmic, and undeniably danceable music of Colombia's Caribbean coast.

Héctor Del Curto's Tango Quartet (New York, New York) – Argentine tango

The elegant, subtle, and intensely passionate Argentine music and dance called tango could find no higher expression than the superb artistry of this bandoneónist and his ensemble.

Petroloukas Halkias & Vasilis Kostas (Boston, Massachusetts, and Epirus, Greece) – traditional music from Epirus

This groundbreaking intergenerational collaboration between a *clarino* (clarinet) legend and a rising star on the *laouto* is redefining the relationship between these instruments.



Shemekia Copeland (Chicago, Illinois) – blues

Schooled in the blues by her Texas bluesman father, this powerhouse singer is heir to the rich tradition of blues divas blazed by such greats as Ruth Brown, Etta James, and Koko Taylor.

Sri Lankan Dance Academy of NY (Staten Island, New York) – traditional Sri Lankan dance

Staten Island’s vibrant Sri Lankan community is home to this accomplished ensemble that is introducing the nation to the fascinating traditions of Kandyan dance.

The Alt (New York, North Carolina, and Ireland) – Irish

Three acclaimed masters of Irish music celebrate the traditional songs, tunes, and spirit at the heart of the tradition.

Walter “Wolfman” Washington & the Roadmasters (New Orleans, Louisiana) – funk and R&B

The Crescent City’s preeminent funk master is another in that city’s long line of singular musical personalities, adding touches of soul and jazz to his distinctive rhythm and blues sound.

Wylie & the Wild West (Conrad, Montana) – cowboy and western music

This world-class yodeler and cowboy singer is one of America’s most popular western entertainers who still lives the life of a working rancher and cutting-horse champion.

Over a dozen people of different backgrounds, and with a deep knowledge of music and art forms, came together from across Delmarva to serve as the local Musical Programming Advisory Committee. This committee’s role is to consider—and help the [NCTA](#) select—the artists who will perform at the National Folk Festival each year. To learn more about these artists and their stories, please visit nationalfolkfestival.com/performers.

The National Folk Festival will feature each of these artists on Facebook (facebook.com/NFFMaryland), Twitter (twitter.com/NFFMaryland), and Instagram (Instagram.com/nffmaryland) throughout the next month.

The Maryland Folklife Area & Stage celebrates and showcases the rich, living traditions of Maryland—from its Atlantic beaches to the Appalachian Mountains. With a different theme each year, the Folklife Area will shine the spotlight on the distinctive music, rituals, crafts, occupations, foodways, and other traditions at the heart of Maryland heritage, expressing both the state’s deep history and its evolving character.

Supported by Maryland Traditions, the state folklife program of the Maryland State Arts Council, *Mountain Maryland* will highlight traditions influenced and inspired by western Maryland’s mountainous terrain.

“The National Folk Festival is proud to renew our partnership with Maryland Traditions in presenting the Maryland Folklife Area & Stage,” continued Bottinelli. “We are excited at the opportunity to showcase the best traditional artists from the mountainside communities of western Maryland on the Chesapeake’s Eastern Shore.”

More festival performers as well as the full program for the Maryland Folklife Area & Stage will be announced throughout the spring and summer of 2020.

Performer photos may be downloaded here:

<https://bit.ly/32eoRpt>

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About the National Folk Festival

Since it was first presented in St. Louis in 1934, the National Folk Festival, the National Council for the Traditional Arts' (NCTA) flagship event, has celebrated the roots, richness, and variety of American culture. Championed in its early years by Eleanor Roosevelt, it was the first event of national stature to present the arts of many nations, races, and languages on equal footing. It was also the first to present to the public musical forms such as the blues, Cajun music, polka, Tex-Mex conjunto, Peking Opera, and many others. Today, the National is an exuberant traveling festival, produced by the NCTA in partnership with communities around the country, that embraces the diverse cultural expressions that define us as a people in the 21st century.

<http://www.nationalfolkfestival.com/>

About the National Council for the Traditional Arts (NCTA)

A leading non-profit in the field, the National Council for the Traditional Arts (NCTA) is dedicated to the presentation and documentation of folk and traditional arts in the U.S. Stressing excellence and authenticity, the NCTA presents the nation's finest traditional artists in major festivals, tours, concerts, workshops, demonstrations, exhibitions, media productions, school programs, cross-cultural exchanges, and other activities. It works in partnership with American communities to establish new, sustainable traditional arts events that deliver lasting social, cultural, and economic benefits. Over 10,000 hours of the NCTA's archival audio recordings dating from the 1930s are permanently housed at the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress. The NCTA champions the interests of folk and traditional artists and organizations in the arena of public policy. <http://ncta-usa.org/>

About Maryland State Arts Council and Maryland Traditions

Founded in 1967, the Maryland State Arts Council (MSAC) is an agency of the State of Maryland Department of Commerce, Division of Tourism, Film and the Arts, and encourages and invests in the advancement of the arts for all Marylanders. Its grants and programs support artists and arts organizations in their pursuit of artistic excellence, ensure the accessibility of the arts to all citizens, and promote statewide awareness of arts resources and opportunities. MSAC awards grants to not-for-profit, tax-exempt organizations and individual artists, and provides technical and advisory assistance to individuals and groups. The agency is funded by an annual appropriation from the State of Maryland and a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. MSAC may also receive contributions from private, non-governmental sources. Maryland Traditions is the folklife program of the Maryland State Arts Council. Since 1974, state-employed folklorists have worked to identify, document, support, and present Maryland folklife through grants, awards, festivals, and other programming. For more information about Maryland Traditions, go to www.msac.org/programs/maryland-traditions.

About the City of Salisbury, Maryland

Founded in 1732, Salisbury is the county seat of Wicomico County, a place where John Smith touched land in 1608 during his exploration of the Chesapeake Bay. Situated on Maryland's historic Eastern Shore at the crossroads of the Delmarva Peninsula, Salisbury is now one of the region's largest cities, and serves as the capital of the Eastern Shore, a rural area defined by its agricultural and maritime traditions, landscapes and industries. The Chesapeake Bay is central to this distinctive identity. Though a relatively small city, Salisbury is the geographic and economic hub of one of the nation's fastest-growing Metropolitan Statistical Areas. Led by a dynamic mayor, the City of Salisbury is working to build its reputation as an arts and culture destination, and is aligning its downtown development and revitalization efforts with the arts. Salisbury believes hosting the National Folk Festival is the perfect catalyst to further a cultural renaissance and urban renewal. <http://www.salisbury.md/http://www.salisbury.md/>