



MEDIA RELEASE

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Together again! First Six Artists Announced for 80th National Folk Festival

SALISBURY, MD (May 18, 2021) – The first six performers have been announced for the 80th National Folk Festival. The festival returns to Downtown Salisbury September 10-12, 2021, with performances, special family and Maryland folklife programming, diverse food and beverage offerings, and more—all presented free to the public on three outdoor stages. This year's event will mark the celebration of the 80th National Folk Festival as well as the third year of the National's residency in Salisbury.

"These artists hint at the extraordinary diversity of cultural traditions that will be featured at this year's National Folk Festival—the event's 80th anniversary—and each represents the highest level of achievement and excellence," said Lora Bottinelli, NCTA Executive Director. "There are no repeats from 2018 or 2019, and it's all free!"

A wide variety of artists, dancers, storytellers, and tradition bearers will take part in the National Folk Festival. From a forward-thinking bluegrass legend who has expanded musical boundaries to the reigning Queen of Chicago blues and the keeper of a West African tradition nearly a millennium old, this is a collection of artists befitting the 80th National Folk Festival, the nation's oldest multicultural celebration of traditional arts.

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, Asian, Appalachian, Latino, Eastern European, African, and Pacific Island cultures, among others. The six artists announced today include:

[Balla Kouyaté & Famoro Dioubaté](#) (Boston, Massachusetts, and New York, New York) – balafon masters

Two masters of the ancient West African balafon explore new musical terrain together, treating audiences to heights of virtuosity and the thrill of the unexpected.

[The Del McCoury Band](#) (Nashville, Tennessee) – bluegrass

Both an icon of bluegrass music's past and architect of its future, this visionary "high lonesome" tenor keeps it in the family with his adventurous, eponymous band.

[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.

[Savoy Family Cajun Band](#) (Eunice, Louisiana) – Cajun

One of Cajun music's most recognizable families shares an infectious passion for their culture, from accordion-driven house party two-steps to timeless French ballads and twin fiddles.

[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 National Folk Festival debuted in Salisbury in 2018, and the city's tenure as host city was scheduled to conclude in 2020, until the 80th National was postponed to 2021 due to the coronavirus.

To learn more about these artists and their stories, please visit nationalfolkfestival.com/performers.

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

More performers will be announced as they are confirmed.

Performer photos may be downloaded here:

<https://bit.ly/3hro527>

Photo credits should be listed and can be found in image file names.

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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, a polka band, 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. <https://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 7,000 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://www.ncta-usa.org>

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>