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PRESS RELEASE

Three Guest Curators Develop Special Programs for The North Carolina Folk Festival

Programs feature Hip-Hop, Blues, and Gospel Performance Traditions

Greensboro, N.C., August 12, 2021 — Today festival organizers announced three programs developed by guest-curators as part of the 2021 North Carolina Folk Festival - a three-day weekend celebration of roots and heritage in downtown Greensboro, September 10-12. The three curators invited by the North Carolina Folk Festival include: Greensboro-based hip-hop artist Demeanor; the Piedmont Blues Preservation Society, producers of the annual Carolina Blues Festival; and a joint curation by the North Carolina Folklife Institute and the Center for Creative Vibrancy.

“We are excited to grow the partnerships we’ve developed over the years with the artists and organizations in our community that share our commitment to honoring and celebrating diverse cultural traditions through music and dance,” said Amy Grossmann, President and CEO of the North Carolina Folk Festival. “Through these three partnerships, we proudly share our stages to feature legendary and up-and-coming performers who are exemplars of tradition, creativity, and innovation in their respective fields.”

“North Carolina Hip-Hop: Rap is Folk” Curated by Greensboro-based hip-hop artist Justin “Demeanor” Harrington, this program will feature five performers in a three-hour program at the festival on Saturday, September 11. Performers include:

- **Antion Scales** (*Hip Hop/Rap*) - From Greensboro, NC

Antion Scales is an artist born and raised in Greensboro, North Carolina. By merging musical elements, such as: 90's Hip Hop, Rhythm & Blues and Gospel, his style can be viewed as "unorthodox" and "pleasantly versatile". The statement, "I don't rap, I sell advice" is a slogan Antion created, to reflect how his upbringing and experiences contribute to his storytelling as an artist, as well as a conscious approach to making music. His music bridges the gap between early 90's hip-hop lyricism, with today's melodic, ambient styles. As the founder of "Entitled Militia", Antion has found joy in uniting and inspiring other talented individuals within the community. As an artist, Antion Scales transforms both his sound and content, with each body of work he releases. His newest release, "Ya Thought" is an introspective project that sheds light on the environmental disadvantages of his personal upbringing and touches on the emotional uncertainty we as a nation, continue to experience as a result of the world's current events.

- **Lovey The Don** (*Hip Hop/Rap*) - From Greensboro, NC

Coming out of Greensboro, North Carolina, Lovey The Don channels a "Don" like mentality through her powerful ownership of both masculine and feminine energy. She made her musical debut in the Underground scene by dropping her first project, "The Futuristic EP". Lovey captivates with a raw, witty, and pleasantly odd lyrical ability which births from her diverse range of musical influences; from Wu-Tang Clan to Missy Elliot, Kendrick Lamar, Nicki Minaj, Kanye West, and many more. The Don's only mission is to show the world the beauty in Black Women's diversity to let other young Black girls know that they do not have to conform to society or anyone else's standards of "perfection".

- **Chris Meadows** (*Hip Hop/Rap*) - From Greensboro, NC

Chris Meadows, "the fallen angel turned pop star" is an artist, producer, director bringing you experiences from his larger than life, dark yet euphoric world. The only way to describe his music is cinematic. Every song puts the listener in their own movie, which makes sense seeing that Chris finds great inspiration &

influence from motion pictures. His latest single "The Price" is just a small look into his upcoming project "Hopes End". The sky's the limit is everything but a cliché for this young artist. Even in his dark world the future looks bright for Chris.

- **GATECITYCRAIG** (*Hip Hop/Rap*) - From Los Angeles, CA

GATECITYCRAIG is standing out among his rap peers by doing one simple thing: being himself. The newcomer's humble spirit combined with an effortless flow is the key formula to carving his own space in rap. Born in Pomona, the 25-year-old and his mother moved to Youngstown, Ohio and later Greensboro, North Carolina in 2005. The southern city is what GATECITYCRAIG credits for help shaping him. His mother being a dedicated churchgoer, the rapper's ear for music began in the church as he was drawn to playing the drums. His household was soundtracked by Christian music and '90s R&B groups like Dru Hill, but he drew to rappers like Ludacris, Eminem and 50 Cent. "I used to get those stereos for Christmas," the rapper recalls. "I was listening to Get Rich or Die Tryin' on repeat with headphones on when I went to sleep." "Everybody doesn't want to say whatever it is they're feeling, but I'm willing to say it at the expense of looking a little wild if that means someone else is feeling seen or heard," he says. "A lot of people try to hold an image and I'm not trying to do that. Take me for who I am."

- **Demeanor** (*Hip Hop/Rap*) - From Greensboro, NC

Justin "Demeanor" Harrington is an artist born in Greensboro, North Carolina. Merging Hip Hop and unorthodox folk elements, Harrington bridges the gap between contemporary and traditional cultural music. Professionally trained as an actor, he weaves storytelling and character to engage and inspire all around him.

Demeanor will also lead a series of live, in-person performances and workshops Saturday and Sunday, September 11 and 12, in Center City Park that will focus on found sound beat-making, DIY home recording, music production, and songwriting.

"Buckdance & Blues: Remembering Algia Mae Hinton & John Dee Holeman"

Curated by the Piedmont Blues Preservation Society (PBPS), this special program will

feature three performers as they pay tribute to legendary buckdancers and North Carolina blues musicians John Dee Holeman and Algia Mae Hinton, both of whom passed away in recent years. This program will be facilitated by Atiba Berkley, president of PBPS, and feature the following performers on Saturday (9/11) and Sunday (9/12):

- **Tad Walters** (*Blues*) - From Raleigh, NC

Tad Walters is a blues musician from Raleigh, NC. Tad Walter has been playing with Bob Margolin for around 25 years, off and on. He plays guitar, harmonica, and sings Blues, among other genres of music. He started his professional career at 17, and has played with many of legends of the Blues, including Bob Margolin, Pinetop Perkins, Billy Boy Arnold, Dave Myers, John Jackson, John D Holeman, Big Bill Morganfield, Willie Smith, Hubert Sumlin, Bullfrog Willard McGhee, and many others. Tad is quite adept at all of the different "styles" of traditional blues, and takes great pride in his own original songs. Tad leads his own band, and also plays solo and frequently in a duo or trio with Bob Margolin.

Born in Canton, Ohio, and raised in Raleigh, North Carolina, Tad Walters began playing the guitar at age 12. As he was developing his guitar skill, Tad picked up the harmonica at fourteen. He was influenced by the likes of Blind Boy Fuller, Robert Lockwood, Charlie Patton, Robert Nighthawk, and John Jackson, among others, and began his professional music career with the Bob Margolin Band in 1996. In that four year period he traveled the world with the band and played with musicians like Pinetop Perkins, Hubert Sumlin, Billy Boy Arnold, Cary Bell, and others. In 2001, Tad joined the Big Bill Morganfield band and stayed until 2004. Tad is now teaching guitar and harmonica lessons and concentrating on Piedmont blues and old-time jazz with Dave Andrews.

- **Lightnin' Wells** (*Blues*) - From Eastern NC

Mike "Lightnin'" Wells breathes new life into the vintage tunes of the 1920s and depression era America employing guitars, harmonica, ukulele, mandolin and banjo in a dynamic style, developed in over 50 years of studying and performing blues and traditional folk music. With his experience, knowledge and well-honed performance skills, Lightnin' Wells has established himself at the forefront of the

traditional blues revival. His musical style is personal and energetic yet remains true to the original root form. His goal is to entertain and educate using a variety of sources, influences and techniques to express his dedication, respect and pleasure in presenting this unique American art form.

Originally from West Virginia, he grew up in Eastern NC, immersing himself in the traditional folk music revival, and developing a strong interest in Piedmont and country blues. His style encompasses elements of the blues, country, gospel, old-time, bluegrass and folk. Mark Coltrain stated in *Living Blues* that, "You won't find a more versatile musician around – able to move deftly between country blues, old-time banjo, and novelty tunes with a single pluck." His many years of public performance began in Chapel Hill, NC in the early 1970s.

During the following decades he has presented his brand of acoustic blues throughout North Carolina, the United States and Europe. As part of his ongoing musical education, Wells sought out still living Piedmont performers, which led him later to produce the first commercial recordings of second-generation N.C. blues veterans Big Boy Henry, Algia Mae Hinton and George Higgs.

- **Bob Margolin** (*Blues*) - From Guilford County, NC

Boston native Bob Margolin was born in 1949, but now is a neighbor, living in Guilford County. Inspired by Chuck Berry, he started playing guitar at age 15 and immediately started performing in local rock and blues bands. Margolin was hired by Muddy Waters in 1973. Muddy's band toured the world and jammed with many great blues and rock musicians, "but the biggest thrill was playing Muddy's Blues with him." Muddy brought Margolin with him to special shows and recordings, when he sometimes didn't use his whole band, to give him a familiar sound when working with other musicians.

Standard bearers for the blues come in many forms, but no one has been more steadfast in promoting and performing the blues than Bob Margolin, the guitarist extraordinaire who spent seven years on the road with Muddy Waters and has playing the blues ever since. But Margolin's far more than a musician. He is a songwriter with a deep social conscience, he's an educator, author and label

owner, too, who works tirelessly to to keep the blues alive by promoting up-and-coming talent for future generations

“Carolina Gospel Sunday” Jointly curated by the North Carolina Folklife Institute and the Center for Cultural Vibrancy, this program will feature four performers who will fill the performance schedule at the festival’s Lawn Stage on Sunday, September 12 from 1pm to 6pm. Performers include:

- **Mangum and Company** (*Gospel Bass “Shout Band”*) - From Charlotte, NC

Led by soaring trombones with their slides pointed heavenward, Mangum & Company is a group of outstanding musicians representing many of Charlotte, North Carolina’s United House of Prayer congregations. Shout bands are all-brass, gospel-based trombone choirs that represent a sacred musical tradition unique to United House of Prayer churches, and are central to worship services, inspiring congregants with joyous sounds of praise. The inspiration for this distinctive musical style is Psalm 150: 3-6: “Praise him with the sound of the trumpet; praise him with the psaltery and harp. Praise him with the timbrel [tambourine] and dance; praise him with string instruments and organs. Praise him upon the loud cymbals; praise him upon the high-sounding cymbals. Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord.”

- **The Legendary Ingramettes** (*Gospel*) - From Richmond, VA

Widely celebrated as the “First Family of Gospel Music” in Richmond, Virginia, The Legendary Ingramettes have been blowing the roof off performance stages for nearly six decades. The Ingramettes were originally formed by Evangelist “Mama” Maggie Ingram, born July 4, 1930, on Mulholland’s Plantation in Coffee County, Georgia, where she would later work the cotton and tobacco fields with her parents. Maggie began playing the piano and singing at an early age, and developed a great love for the church and gospel music. In 1961 Maggie moved herself and her five children to Richmond, Virginia, and there created Maggie Ingram and the Ingramettes, a family singing group that became one of the most beloved groups in Richmond’s storied gospel tradition.

Maggie passed away in 2015 at the age of 84, but the group has continued to soar, led by the powerfully incomparable singing of her oldest daughter, Almeta

Ingram-Miller, who is joined by Maggie's granddaughter Cheryl Maroney-Yancey and daughter-in-law Carrie Jackson. Backed by their rock-solid house-shaking rhythm section, the Ingramettes continue to bring the electric energy and spirit of a Sunday morning service to the performance stage.

- **Jalessa Cade** (*Gospel*) - From Elizabethtown, NC

Jalessa Cade better known as "Songbird" is originally from Dunn, NC. She has been operating in her gifts since the humble age of 7 years old. She comes from a Gospel-inspired background; listening to the sounds of CeCe Winans, Daryl Coley, and John P. Kee, to name a few. Growing up, Jalessa's father was an Elder in the church. She was brought up in church singing in the choir. Upon graduating high school, she traveled locally and nationally spreading the good news of Jesus Christ through song. With the constant travel and being used by God, Jalessa never forgot where she came from. A strong love for praise and worship developed while being a faithful member of Gospel Tabernacle under the leadership of Pastor Ken Milliken. She was a part of the praise team, choir, and theatre arts program. Jalessa was molded under the direction of Pastor Danny Meads teaching her proper stage etiquette and diction; he is a heavy influence to her even today. Jalessa is now an active member of True Holiness in Elizabethtown, NC under the leadership of Pastor KC Smith where she's the Praise & Worship Leader and minister.

- **The Gospel Stars of Greensboro** (*Gospel*) - From Greensboro, NC

The Gospel Stars are a quartet group that has been traveling and spreading the gospel through song for over 70 years. Over the years they have lost some great pioneers of this ministry that gave many years of dedication. They thank God for continuously keeping and blessing them to reach others through His word in song.

- **J Pope** (*Gospel*) - From Baltimore, MD

J Pope fell in love with music in the church... "like a lot of people", she admits. The semi-regular Sunday morning appearances by The Fleming Sisters in J's

church inspired her to want to connect with people through musical performance, “the way they would perform, the emotion they would give, and the emotion it would evoke in the people who were there” made her want to become a performing artist. At home, her parent’s often played the records of classic soul artists like Curtis Mayfield, and Sam Cooke. As she grew up, she was greatly inspired by the quintessential DC Go-go artists like Chuck Brown, Rare Essence, and The Junkyard Band. All that said, when you watch and listen to J Pope, its hard to not connect her to trailblazing black female vocalists like Nina Simone, Sarah Vaughan, Lauryn Hill and fellow DC-area native, Me’shell Ndegeocello. “I think there is an internal rhythm and spirit that we all have inside... and that’s what brings us together as people”... it brought the members of J Pope and the HearNow together, and its what they hope brings the listeners of their music together, too.

The North Carolina Folk Festival schedule and final performer lineup will be available in the coming weeks. To learn more about these artists and their stories, please visit ncfolkfestival.com/lineup.

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About the North Carolina Folk Festival: The North Carolina Folk Festival is a 501c3 nonprofit whose mission is to honor, celebrate, and share the meaningful ways in which communities express their creativity and cultural traditions through music, dance, food, crafts and other folk arts to enhance appreciation of diverse traditions and contribute to community vibrancy and inclusivity. Our signature event, the annual North Carolina Folk Festival, is co-produced by the City of Greensboro and is one of the fastest-growing destination events in the Southeast, attracting over 156,000 people from across the U.S. to downtown Greensboro each September. The festival is a FREE admission, three-day event that continues the legacy of the National Folk Festival, which was held in Greensboro from 2015–2017. In the tradition of “The National,” the North Carolina Folk Festival features performing groups representing a diverse array of cultural traditions from around the world on multiple stages, including continuous music and dance performances, a makers marketplace, regional and ethnic foods, festival merchandise and more. The 2021 North Carolina Folk Festival will take place in

downtown Greensboro September 10 through 12. Additional information is available at www.ncfolkfestival.com.

About Demeanor: Justin “Demeanor” Harrington is an artist born in Greensboro, North Carolina. Merging Hip Hop and unorthodox folk elements, Harrington bridges the gap between contemporary and traditional cultural music. Professionally trained as an actor, he weaves storytelling and character to engage and inspire all around him. Learn more at <https://demeanormusic.org/>.

About the Piedmont Blues Preservation Society: The Piedmont Blues Preservation Society (PBPS) is a 501c3 charitable non-profit dedicated to the preservation and presentation of the culture & music known commonly as the Blues; this form of music having evolved historically from the culture & experiences of African-Americans including work songs and spirituals. Our organization documents and preserves both the African-American and North Carolina Blues traditions, and presents educational programs, seminars, and workshops meant to revive, maintain, and grow interest in Blues in our regional community. We represent Blues culture through educational programs, workshops, and with a focus on historic accuracy and cultural authenticity. We collaborate with other non-profits and with regional and global businesses to highlight the Piedmont as a place to not only live but a place to experience rich culture and history. Our services support public health issues, educational initiatives, and societal concerns while promoting local businesses, tourism, the Arts, and education. <https://piedmontblues.org/>.

About the Center for Cultural Vibrancy: The Center for Cultural Vibrancy (CCV) creates and cultivates opportunities for cultural connections that support living traditions and energize vibrant communities through dynamic programs that bring together master practitioners of traditional music, crafts, dance, cooking & other folkways from across the globe to transcend cultural barriers & share their cherished traditions with one another & the public. CCV seeks to create a more empathetic world—where people respect and celebrate one another’s cultural expressions—through the sharing of traditional arts, customs, and lore that promote cultural exchange, understanding, and honor artistic mastery. Learn more about CCV at www.culturalvibrancy.org.

About the NC Folklife Institute: The North Carolina Folklife Institute has been working with communities throughout the state for nearly 50 years to document, preserve, and promote their folk traditions. NCFI's Carolina Gospel Project is a multi-year effort to spotlight the faith-based musical traditions that are at the heart of so much of North Carolina's musical heritage. We are delighted to be partnering with the North Carolina Folk Festival and the Center for Cultural Vibrancy, and are grateful for the support of the National Endowment for the Arts that makes our participation possible.

<https://www.ncfolk.org/>