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PRESS RELEASE

North Carolina Folk Festival Releases Performance Schedule and Festival Map; Announces Remaining Performers

Greensboro, N.C., August 27, 2021 — Today festival organizers released the performance schedule, festival map, and remaining performers for the 2021 North Carolina Folk Festival - a three-day weekend celebration of roots and heritage in downtown Greensboro, September 10-12.

Four main stages will frame the festival footprint throughout the weekend, with one special additional stage presentation on Saturday evening in downtown Greensboro near the 9/11 Sculpture. Between the stages, audiences can eat, drink, and shop at festival food courts, beverage tents, and at the NC Makers Marketplace, a juried market of traditional and contemporary hand-made items by regional craftspeople.

Three of the main stage locations will be familiar to returning audiences - the Lawn Stage, the TowneBank Stage at LeBauer Park, and the Lee Wrangler Stage that will assume the location occupied in previous years by the festival's "CityStage" at the corner of Davie Street and Friendly Avenue. The fourth main stage, the Old Courthouse Stage, will be new to the festival footprint and will be positioned on West Market Street near the corner of John Wesley Way. The special presentation on the #DGSO Stage at South Elm Street and Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive on Saturday, September 11 is co-produced with the City of Greensboro and Downtown Greensboro, Inc. and will include a special 9/11 commemoration ceremony followed by performances.

Opening Remarks for the festival will kick off the weekend at 5:30 p.m. on Friday, September 10 at the Lee Wrangler Stage followed immediately by a participatory “Festival Community Jam” sponsored by the UNCG Old-Time Ensemble. The song list will be published in advance, and audience members are encouraged to bring their instruments to join in!

Several performers have been added to complete the 2021 festival lineup, including:

- **UNCG Old-Time Ensemble**, old-time music ensemble from UNC Greensboro
- **Quraishi Roya**, an Afghan rubâb player from New York City
- **The Leela School of Dance**, a troupe of South Indian Bharata Natyam dancers from Fayetteville, NC led by NC Heritage Award Honoree Asha Balasubramanian
- **Kembe X**, a hip-hop artist from Los Angeles, CA
- **Cora Harvey Armstrong**, a gospel singer from Newton, VA
- **Doby**, a funk/soul group from Greensboro, NC

The North Carolina Folk Festival is also very proud to announce the return of “**Songs of Hope & Justice**” - a popular annual multi-performer presentation focused on themes of freedom and justice, and curated by singer/songwriter Laurelyn Dossett. The 2021 program will be the inaugural performance on the new “Old Courthouse Stage” on Friday, September 10 and will feature instrumentalists, singers, songwriters, and poets. Participating artists include Laurelyn Dossett, Molly McGinn, Demeanor, Lalenja Harrington, Alice Gerrard, Charly Lowry, Sam Frazier, J. Scott Hinkle, DaShawn Hickman, Wendy Hickman, Alex Bingham, and George Sluppick, and a special appearance by North Carolina Poet Laureate Jaki Shelton Green.

“We feel that our community needs festivals now – to celebrate our cultural and artistic roots, and to start to heal from the past 18 months. We are proud to work with our entire lineup of amazing artists and musicians to create a festival that honors our multicultural roots and neighbors” said Amy Grossmann, President and CEO of the North Carolina Folk Festival.

The North Carolina Folk Festival has been working closely with the City of Greensboro and the Guilford County Health Department to implement health and safety protocols

designed to create a safe environment for audiences and participants – including partnering with Cone Health to offer free vaccinations during the event. The Festival's COVID-19 Health and Safety Guidelines are available at www.ncfolkfestival.com/covid-protocols and will be updated as needed, and as circumstances change.

More details about the 2021 performance schedule, map, and lineup can be found at www.ncfolkfestival.com.

Festival Hours:

- Friday, September 10, from 6:00 p.m. to 10:15 p.m.
- Saturday, September 11, from 8:30 a.m. to 10:15 p.m.
- Sunday, September 12, from 12:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Performers announced today include:

- **UNCG Old Time Ensemble** (*Old Time*) - From Greensboro, NC

The UNCG Old Time Ensemble performs American folk music, focusing on the string band traditions of the North Carolina Piedmont and Southern Appalachia. During the festival this year, they will lead an Old Time community jam. The Old Time Ensemble's mission is to give students an opportunity to learn songs and tunes that have been part of North Carolina's culture for generations. Members of the Old Time Ensemble include students and faculty members spanning a broad range of musical backgrounds, although for many students, this is their first experience playing folk music. Old Time Ensemble is based on the idea that oral traditions should be part of every musician's education, so the group learns all its music by ear, through careful listening and repetition, the way traditional American music has been learned for centuries.

- **Quraishi Roya** (*Afghan rubâb, tabla, and dhol*) - From New York City, NY

Quraishi is a world-class Afghan-American rubab player. His father made him his first rubab, an ancient instrument belonging to the short-necked lute family, and

indeed, his family lineage and earliest influences include instrument makers and musicians. Growing up in Kabul, self-taught Quraishi quickly became well-versed in the folk-styles and regional genres of numerous ethnic groups, including Pashtun, Uzbek and Tajik. Quraishi also immersed himself in the principles of classical Hindustani music theory that constitute the foundation of Afghanistan's traditional music. Since immigrating to the U.S., Quraishi has established a significant presence for the rich tradition of classical Afghan court music in the U.S. Quraishi has performed throughout the U.S., headlining concerts at Lincoln Center, The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and The Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

- **Leela School of Dance** (*South Indian Bharata Natyam*) - From Fayetteville, NC

Recipient of the 2018 North Carolina Heritage Award, for her contributions to the cultural heritage of the state, Asha Bala is deeply committed to using the transformative power of dance to touch as many lives as possible. She believes that dance and dancers with their tremendous powers to communicate can be dynamic agents of change. The strength and beauty of Bharata Natyam that she teaches, makes it a powerful weapon of change. Asha trained at some of the most reputed institutions of dance in India and the U.S. With a firm grasp of technique and a deep understanding of dance history and philosophy, she has created a school where instruction in Bharata Natyam combines in-depth instruction in technique, music and theory.

- **KembeX** (*Hip Hop*) - From Los Angeles, CA

Hailing from South Holland, IL, rapper Kembe X represents the kids who are proud to be themselves, even if that means not fitting in. First breaking onto the scene in 2011 with his first mixtape *Self Rule*, featuring fellow IL rising stars Alex Wiley and Chance The Rapper, showing Kembe's promise on the mic with his combination of social observations, introspective thought, and witty humor. In October 2019, Kembe released his critically acclaimed sophomore album, *I Was Depressed Until I Made This*. Exploring themes of mental illness, addiction, and the lingering effects of childhood trauma - Kembe found his voice and story by

stripping away all the notions of who he should be. Kembe X will be featured in the “North Carolina Hip-Hop: Rap is Folk” program on Saturday (9/11) on the TowneBank Stage at LeBauer Park.

- **Cora Harvey Armstrong** (*Gospel*) - From Newtown, VA

Cora Harvey Armstrong is a gospel singer, piano player, songwriter, choir director, and bandleader born and raised in King and Queen County, Virginia. Richmond-born musician and producer Bill McGee has described her as “Aretha Franklin on piano, Mahalia Jackson with her voice, and Shirley Caesar with her style.” Armstrong began taking piano lessons at the age of five. She had a gift for playing by ear and soon learned to read music as well. Cora and her sisters Clara and Virginia sang for many years with their mother, the late Eva Elizabeth Harvey, as The Harvey Family. After the death of their parents, the sisters and Cora’s nieces, Clarissa and Ruthy, continue singing and praising God. Cora majored in music at Virginia State University, where she directed the internationally acclaimed VSU Gospel Chorale. For more than forty years she has been a favorite Gospel Music performer at festivals and celebrations around the country and abroad. She has toured and lectured on Gospel Music in Japan and Europe, and is a sought after artist, pianist, psalmist and preacher. Cora will be featured in the “Carolina Gospel Sunday” program on Sunday (9/12) on the Lawn Stage.

- **Doby** (*Funk/Soul*) - from Greensboro, NC

What if Tina Turner had a sonic baby with Lenny Kravitz (instead of dealing with Ike)? They'd probably call it doby! doby, a Funk/Soul outfit from NC, has the groove to get the crowd to move! Whether you want an energetic original band or you need a fun cover band with an extensive. popular song list, doby is bound to get the party started. Sensational vocalist Robin Easter fronts the band with her grace and electric stage presence; she can get anybody to shake it! The groove is established by formidable rhythm section Jonathan Wilson - Drums and Leo Kishore -Bass. Jeff Yetter - Keys provides the vintage Hammond/Fender/Clav sounds to set your mind dancing. Finally, on the guitar laying down the funk and rip-roaring electric leads is Bon Lozaga - Guitar &

Vocals. Doby will be featured on the #DGSO Stage in downtown Greensboro on Saturday (9/11).

“Songs of Hope & Justice” Participants:

- **Laurelyn Dossett** (Singer-Songwriter) - From Stokes County, NC
Laurelyn is an award-winning singer-songwriter based in Stokes County, NC. She is best known for her work with the Americana band Polecat Creek, regional theatres Triad Stage and Playmakers Repertory, and the NC Symphony. She has also written several songs addressing environmental and social justice issues of our times.
- **Jaki Shelton Green** (Poet Laureate of North Carolina)
Jaki Shelton Green teaches Documentary Poetry at Duke University Center for Documentary Studies and the 2021 Frank B. Hanes Writer in Residence at UNC Chapel Hill. Additionally, she received the George School Outstanding Alumni Award in 2021. Juneteenth 2020, she released her first LP, poetry album, *The River Speaks of Thirst*, produced by Soul City Sounds and Clearly Records and released a CD, *i want to undie you* in 2021.
- **Molly McGinn** (Singer-Songwriter) - From Greensboro, NC
Molly McGinn is an award-winning writer and songwriter, collaborating with musicians in a variety of musical genres. From EDM artists to Americana musicians, she takes a journalist's approach to songwriting and fuses the history with the myth to create her songs. She's a founding member of the Americana trio *Amelia's Mechanics* and *Wurlitzer Prize*. She lives near Danbury, North Carolina with her dog, Maggie May.
- **Lalenja Harrington** (Singer and Educator) - Greensboro, NC
Dr. Harrington is a beloved North Carolina singer and educator. Co-founder of *Bending Tree Creative Collective*, she is also known for many Triad theatrical

roles, including Lady Day, as well as her performances and recordings with the Giddens Sisters.

- **Alice Gerrard** (Singer-Songwriter) -

Alice Gerrard is a legendary singer, songwriter, and documentarian -- both a creator and keeper of the folk flame. She founded and was editor-in-chief of The Old Time Herald from 1987 to 2000. Well known for her work with "Hazel and Alice" -- her duo with Hazel Dickens, Alice has collaborated with musicians from Mike Seeger to Mike Taylor of Hiss Golden Messenger. Her song "Calling Me Home" has recently been covered by both Kathy Mattea and Rhiannon Giddens. The Alice Gerrard Collection (1954–2000) is located in the Southern Folklife Collection of the Wilson Library of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

- **Charly Lowry** (Singer-Songwriter) - From Pembroke, NC

Charly Lowry, a musical powerhouse from Pembroke, NC, is proud to be an Indigenous woman belonging to the Lumbee/Tuscarora Tribes. She is passionate about raising awareness around issues that plague underdeveloped and under-served communities. Since her teenage years, Charly has established a career as a professional singer-songwriter with unique passion and voice. In addition to performing solo, for 10+ years Charly has been the front-woman for the multi award-winning band, "Dark Water Rising". Most recently, Charly and the members of her newest project "Charly & The Sunshine" were selected by the U.S. Department of State and American Music Aboard to participate in the 2021-2022 American Music Abroad Virtual Season.

- **Sam Frazier** (Guitarist, Singer-Songwriter) - From Greensboro, NC

Sam Frazier is a guitarist, singer and songwriter, teacher and multi-instrumentalist based in and loved by Greensboro, NC. He has released two solo CDs of original songs (Half a Million Years and Sam Frazier). He has performed with countless local and national acts, and has inspired and taught so many more.

- **J. Scott Hinkle** (Singer-Songwriter, Multi-Instrumentalist) - From Haywood County, NC

Singer-songwriter and multi-instrumentalist J. Scott Hinkle is a native of Nashville, TN, now living in Haywood County, NC. Dr. Hinkle has spent much of his career advocating for mental health services for the “never served.” He is a songwriting finalist at both Flatrock Music Festival and Telluride Bluegrass Festival. He has released two CD of original songs (Blue Ridge Martini and Far From Close Enough).
- **DaShawn Hickman** (Pedal Steel Guitarist) - From Mt. Airy, NC

DaShawn is a virtuoso of the pedal steel guitar. He came up in the Sacred Steel tradition, first taught by his mother. He founded the Allen Boys and performs with a variety of musicians including Riley Baugus, Anya Hinkle, and more. He lives in Mt. Airy, NC.
- **Wendy Hickman** (Singer) - From Mt. Airy, NC

Wendy Hickman is a singer, born in Asheboro, NC and now based in Mt. Airy, NC. She is known for her work with DaShawn Hickman, the Allen Boys, Anya Hinkle, Riley Baugus, and was recently featured on “Lift Your Voice, Bow Your Heads -- Bluegrass Music at the Crossroads.”
- **Alex Bingham** (Bassist) - From Durham, NC

Bassist Alex Bingham is currently touring with Hiss Golden Messenger. Raised in Roanoke, trained in the jazz program at UNCG and now based out of Durham, Alex is producer and engineer with his own studio, Bedtown Studios.
- **George Sluppick** (Drummer) - From Greensboro, NC

George Sluppick is an American drummer born in Memphis, specializing in blues, funk, soul and R&B. At 19, he toured with blues guitarist Albert King, thus beginning an illustrious music career. As a touring drummer for more than 35 years, he’s traveled the world and backed up Macy Gray, Charlie Hunter, Phil Lesh, Bob Weir, Morgan James, Chris Robinson, Alvin Youngblood Hart and JJ Grey, just to name a few.

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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.