

North Carolina Folk Festival to host free experiential training to elevate the safety, accessibility, sustainability and community engagement of events

Arts administrators, artists, emergency professionals & event organizers are invited to attend

Greensboro, NC - Performing arts and live entertainment events are catalysts for culture and community-building. How can they also drive meaningful social transformation, equitable emergency response, and increased economic resilience for arts and events workers? What do our events look like when safety, equity, accessibility, and sustainability are conscientiously placed at their center?

These are a few of the ideas behind **The Art of Mass Gatherings**, an experiential learning event to be hosted by [Majestic Collaborations](#), [North Carolina Folk Festival](#), the [City of Asheville](#),

[North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources](#), and [Performing Arts Readiness](#), in collaboration with a variety of partnering organizations this September 10th from 1:00-5:30pm, with optional networking time to follow. [Registration is free and open to arts and events producers](#) through Tuesday, September 7th. The event will take place at Triad Stage and adjacent to the grounds of the North Carolina Folk Festival (NCF), which opens that evening for its annual three-day celebration of cultural heritage through music, dance, handmade crafts, food, and family fun.

Amy Grossmann, President and CEO of the North Carolina Folk Festival, reflects, “The North Carolina Folk Festival is proud to bring this unique training opportunity to our community, and to engage local event producers in meaningful conversations about how we build safety, sustainability, and accessibility practices into the culture of our event planning. As festival and event professionals reflect on and rebuild their processes in a changing environment, we are excited for this program to amplify emergency preparedness across the cultural landscape of Greensboro.”

Jon Fillman, Community Event Manager and Economic Development Specialist with the City of Asheville, adds:

With over 300 permitted special use occasions each year, Asheville has long relied on the power of special events as a tool to stimulate economic development, as a mechanism to engage in measures that contribute to a high quality of life, as a means to advance neighborhood identities, and more. But when faced with challenges that have impacted the industry so greatly, Asheville, like many other communities, must learn new ways to build resilience and purpose into the event production model. By activating and repurposing the unique skill sets and shared resources across event production networks, the event industry is uniquely positioned to contribute to a community’s emergency response. The City of Asheville is excited to participate and learn from the Art of Mass Gatherings innovative event-based learning experience.



Event details

The Art of Mass Gatherings at the North Carolina Folk Festival

September 10th, 2021

Triad Stage, 232 S Elm St, Greensboro, NC 27401, and the grounds of the North Carolina Folk Festival

Doors open at 1:00 pm. Formal program begins at 1:15pm and concludes at 5:30pm with optional networking to follow. Additional optional events to follow on Saturday. Full schedule to be linked on registration page.

COVID-19 precautions: All participants are required to provide proof of full vaccination or a negative COVID-19 test result obtained within the two days prior to the event. Additional measures will be in place for participant safety. See details on the registration page. Childcare and various accessibility accommodations are available by request upon registration.

Free registration required by 5pm on Tuesday, September 7th:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/the-art-of-mass-gatherings-symposium-at-the-north-carolina-folk-festival-tickets-168153869751>

About the program

[The Art of Mass Gatherings](#) is an initiative of Majestic Collaborations that uses festivals as classrooms to activate an arts-focused approach to resilience and emergency preparedness. “People who set up festivals are skilled at creating temporary cities with all of the necessary infrastructure such as water, waste, power, and structures,” explains Matt Kowal, co-founder of Majestic Collaborations along with Molly North. “By sharing their knowledge and building skills in these areas, artists and event workers create more inclusive events, expand the safety and resilience of their entire communities, and become qualified for a wide range of job opportunities both in and outside of the arts.”

Local event producers are invited to attend a series of talks and workshops where local luminaries and special guest experts will present on how all gatherings can be elevated by adopting the four lenses of safety, accessibility, sustainability, and community engagement in their planning. Site tours and training will highlight some of the successful measures in place at NCFF to increase broad community engagement and reduce the festival’s ecological footprint. Confirmed speakers and workshop leads include:

- Holly Maniatty of accessibility advocacy organization [Everyone’s Invited](#)
- Tyler Bonner founder of sustainability advocacy organization [Zero Waste Event Productions](#)
- Atiba Berkeley of [Piedmont Blues Preservation Society](#)
- Fire Safety & Disaster Preparedness Consultant [Chris Soliz](#)
- City of Asheville Community Event Manager Jon Fillman
- Logistics experts behind the North Carolina Folk Festival

The full schedule and speakers will be linked on the [event registration page](#) shortly.

This event is made available at no cost to participants thanks to the support of the Performing Arts Readiness project (PAR). The event is one of several around the country this year that falls under the **Art of Mass Gatherings for Performing Arts** experiential education series, a collaboration between PAR and Majestic Collaborations. Tom Claeson, program director of PAR, explains, “There are myriad concerns that event producers and attendees need to consider in their work. We hope to help build capacity for our creative communities to adapt and respond if they are impacted by emergency, disaster, or long-term changes in climate in the near future.”

“Building capacity, increasing readiness and expanding use of our cultural organizations and networks is important to North Carolina’s future,” adds Catherine Swain, NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources. “These training resources will help expand community engagement across the state and we are grateful to the North Carolina Folk Festival and the various partners for helping to move us forward in this direction.”

This event would not have been possible without the support of the event partnering organizations, presenting speakers, and many other regional and local organizations. COVID-19 safety measures are in place at the event in alignment with CDC recommendations and local and state guidelines. [See the event registration page for details.](#)

Contact

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See our [online press kit](#) for event graphics, partner logos, and links to past media coverage

About the partners

MAJESTIC COLLABORATIONS works directly with arts organizations and agencies to address environmental and humanitarian concerns with art, culture, design and planning through training, consulting, advising, and experiential learning. Their experiential learning program, [The Art of Mass Gatherings](#), and workforce development advocacy initiative [The Art of Creative Resilience](#) recognize that many of the skills and resources that artists and event workers possess align with the needs of communities when it comes to building local resilience and responding to crises more equitably. Learn more at majesticcollaborations.com

NORTH CAROLINA FOLK FESTIVAL honors, celebrates, and shares 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. Their annual music and cultural festival each September welcomes over 150,000 participants to Greensboro. It is the successor to the National Folk Festival and continues that organization’s 87-year legacy of presenting the arts of many nations, races, and languages on the same stage on an equal footing. Learn more at ncfolkfestival.com

THE NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES oversees the state’s resources for the arts, history, libraries and nature. We’re home to the state’s 27 historic sites, seven history museums, two art museums, two science museums, three aquariums and Jennette's Pier, 39 state parks and recreation areas, the N.C. Zoo, the N.C. Symphony, the State Library, the State Archives, the N.C. Arts Council, State Preservation Office, Office of State Archaeology, the African American Heritage Commission, and the Office of Land and Water Stewardship. Learn more at www.ncdcr.gov

CITY OF ASHEVILLE OUTDOOR SPECIAL EVENTS OFFICE, A DIVISION OF COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT manages outdoor special event consultations, permitting, partnerships, lease agreements, and city service coordination for all event and festival productions on city-owned property, sidewalks, streets, and parks. The department works to provide the connections, resources, and guidance required to ensure seamless coordination of the approvals and support services needed for each event. Learn more at ashevillenc.gov/departments/community-economic-development/arts-and-events/outdoor-special-events

PERFORMING ARTS READINESS helps performing arts organizations nationwide learn how to protect their assets, sustain operations, and be prepared for emergencies. Its work brings together knowledge of the performing arts field and expertise in emergency preparedness from both the performing arts and cultural

heritage communities to conduct community outreach and engagement, sponsor grants, and develop and share informational resources to help support performing arts organizations in developing safety and preparedness plans. Learn more at performingartsreadiness.org