



June 5, 2017

Media only: Angelica Aboulhosn (202) 633-0644; aboulhosna@si.edu

Media website: <http://newsdesk.si.edu>

Smithsonian Folklife Festival Celebrates 50th Anniversary With Stories of the American Experience

To celebrate its 50th anniversary, the Smithsonian Folklife Festival will host a series of programs exploring American identity and creativity. “Circus Arts” will take visitors behind the scenes to explore the cultural and artistic expressions of the ever-evolving circus. Program highlights will include daily performances in a Big Top circus tent, a full-scale circus school in the Arts and Industries Building and a series of hands-on activities for visitors. The “On the Move” program will bring together hip-hop artists, muralists and poetry slam performers, among others, to explore immigration and migration from new and diverse perspectives.

The Festival will be held Thursday, June 29, through Tuesday, July 4, and Thursday, July 6, through Sunday, July 9, on the National Mall between Seventh and 12th streets. Admission is free. Festival hours are from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. each day, with evening dance parties at 5:30 p.m. and circus performances at 7 p.m. The Festival is co-sponsored by the National Park Service.

Together, “Circus Arts” and “On the Move” expand on the work that the Festival has done for 50 years—exploring timeless questions of identity, representation and community engagement—with a focus on the rich stories and continuing traditions that make America the diverse landscape it is today.

“Visitors to this year’s Festival will encounter both story and spectacle,” said Sabrina Lynn Motley, festival director. “From the thought-provoking discussion stages to the dazzling Big Top performances, visitors to the Festival will have the opportunity to interact with and learn from hundreds of musicians, artists, performers and others as we celebrate 50 years of cultural exchange on the National Mall.”

Special events associated with the “Circus Arts” program will include intimate workshops, full-scale performances and an interactive circus school. There are no exotic animals involved in the “Circus Arts” program. As part of “On the Move,” visitors will experience live performances, sports activities and discussion stages on the themes of migration, identity, creativity and community.

The 2017 Festival will also include a series of evening concerts and dance parties at the Ralph Rinzler Concert Stage on the National Mall. Among the performers are BeauSoleil, Los Texmaniacs, the Chuck Brown Band and Los Pleneros de la 21, among others. These events, many featuring the National Endowment for the Arts' National Heritage Fellows known for their mastery of traditional arts, will entertain and inspire visitors with a rich array of music from across the United States and around the world.

Visitors will also be invited to participate in a 50th anniversary Reunion Weekend celebration, bringing together past staff, volunteers, participants and visitors to reflect on the transformative power of the Folklife Festival. As always, visitors will have the opportunity to support the work of artisans at the Festival Marketplace and enjoy food from various concessions.

Since its inception in 1967, the Festival has become a national and international model of a research-based presentation of contemporary, living cultural traditions. Over the years, it has brought more than 2,300 musicians, artists, performers, craftspeople, workers, cooks, storytellers and others from all 50 states and 100 countries to the National Mall to demonstrate the skills, knowledge and aesthetics that embody the creative vitality of community-based traditions.

About the Festival

The Smithsonian Folklife Festival, inaugurated in 1967, honors contemporary living cultural traditions and celebrates those who practice and sustain them. Produced annually by the Smithsonian's [Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage](#) in partnership with the National Park Service, the Festival has featured participants from all 50 states and more than 100 countries. Follow the Festival on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#).

###