

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 4, 2017

## **American Folk Festival Announces First Performers**

Annual 3-day festival named as one of the 20 Must-Experience Festivals in the US

BANGOR, MAINE – The American Folk Festival on the Bangor Waterfront has released the names of the first several artists scheduled to appear at the three-day event in August. Announced cultures include Blues, Gospel, Quebecois, Zydeco, and Afro-Mexican. All five performers being announced today will be first-time performers at the American Folk Festival.

"We prep for this festival starting basically the day after the previous festival ends," said American Folk Festival executive director Heather McCarthy. "So every year when we get to announce the first set of artists, it is not only exciting for staff and volunteers, but it's exciting for the thousands of people who plan their vacations and stay-cations around this event, and start looking forward to warm August days on the Bangor Waterfront."

This year's artist announcement was held at Parkside Children's Learning Center in Bangor, allowing organizers to emphasize the availability of live music from around the world for people of all ages. As research and studies indicate, music and arts education has proven to increase social and academic benefits for students of all ages.

"We offer music education every week for our students here at Parkside," said Jillian Wilson of Parkside Children's Learning Center in Bangor. "They get excited about learning new music, but we also see first-hand how it has a positive impact on everything from their creativity, to self-initiated learning, to their vocabulary. It might even help with attendance; kids don't like it when they miss 'Music Day' at Parkside!"

American Folk Festival Board Chair Richard Fournier noted that the American Folk Festival provides an ideal opportunity for children and families to be exposed to live music that might otherwise be difficult to find with such variation, quality, and accessibility.

Fournier also pointed out that the American Folk Festival was recently named as one of 20 "Must Experience" festivals in the United States by Expedia Viewfinder.

"With a range of genres and traditions, family-friendly hours, a Children's Area, and a place for moms and dads to change diapers or offer a feeding, the American Folk Festival is an ideal place for that first taste of live music for little ears," said Fournier. "This festival is a no-admission festival, meaning that absolutely anyone can attend and celebrate music, culture, and the arts."

Bangor City Council Chair Joe Baldacci applauded the Folk Festival for consistently bringing a quality, diverse festival to the Bangor Waterfront.

"I have had the pleasure of being on the Council when the National Folk Festival came to Bangor in 2002," said Baldacci. "I have seen this festival evolve over the years and change in a variety of ways, but it's always been something that is a cornerstone of a great Maine Summer. Congratulations to everyone involved on a great 15 years, and what I'm sure will be another successful year."

The artists announced this morning are:

**Selwyn Birchwood** is one of the top young stars playing the blues today. At the age of 32, Birchwood has been defying expectations and impressing audiences throughout his career. The *Tampa Tribune* said Birchwood plays with "power and precision reminiscent of blues guitar hero Buddy Guy. He is a gritty vocalist [who is] commanding with his axe." Birchwood has four albums under his belt including "Pick Your Poison," released earlier this year. Birchwood's honors include being named the winner of the 2013 International Blues Challenge.

*Selwyn Birchwood's appearance is sponsored by Hannaford.*

**Cora Harvey Armstrong** has been a favorite Gospel act at festivals and celebrations around the world for more than 40 years. Cora began playing piano since the age of five and has been singing for nearly as long. Cora and her sisters sang for many years with their mother, and even after the death of their parents the sisters have continued to sing as a family with their nieces. In addition to being a singer, songwriter and pianist, Cora is also an ordained Minister.

**Les Poules a Colin** is a five-piece Quebecois group that formed in 2009. The group has carried with them a strong stage presence, and an ability to explore alloys between Quebecois traditions and the blend of jazzy, pop, folk, bluegrass, and contemporary styles.

**C.J. Chenier and the Red Hot Louisiana Band** is led by Clayton Joseph Chenier, the son of zydeco great Clifton Chenier. C.J. was handpicked by Paul Simon to play accordion on his 1990 album "Rhythm of the Saints" and his music was exposed to wide, mainstream audiences in 1995 through appearances on *The Jon Stewart Show* and CNN. "You play zydeco and you see shoes flying off," says Chenier of his live performances. "You can't come to my show and stay unhappy all night long. You're going to break a smile and stomp your foot before too long. This is happy music and it makes you dance."

**Las Cafeteras** has been described by the LA Times as "uniquely Angeleno mishmash of punk, hip-hop, beat music, cumbia and rock...live, they're magnetic." That magnetism of live music has crossed-genres and musical borders, playing with bands such as Mexican icons Caifanes, Lila Downs, Colombian superstar Juanes, the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra, and Talib Kweli. The group's Afro-Mexican beats, rhythms, and rhymes deliver inspiring lyrics that document stories of a community seeking love and justice in the concrete jungle of Los Angeles.