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Folk Alliance International’s office is located on the ancestral Indigenous land of the Osage, Kansa/Kaw, Kickapoo, and Očhéthi Šakówin nations, also known as Kansas City. We honor with gratitude their elders: past, present, and future.

The purpose of making this land acknowledgment in post-colonial society is to show respect for Indigenous peoples and their traditional territories, to recognize their unique culture and enduring relationship to the land, and to raise awareness about histories that have often been replaced, suppressed, or forgotten.

Photo Credits
Photographer Key: David Villalta (DV), Gus Philippas (GP), Jake Jacobson (JJ), James Dean (JD), Josh Goelman (JG), Luis Mora (LM), May Truong (MT), Morten Fog (MF), Natalie Marie Black (NMB), Scott Rohr (SR), Shadow Scape Records (SSR), Todd Zimmer (TZ). From left to right, top to bottom...
Page 2: Aengus Finnan (MF); Amy Reitnouer Jacobs (SSR);
Page 3: Charly Lowry (TZ); Chatham Country Line (JJ); Page 4: Artist in Residence (SSR); Jaimee Harris (SSR); Dave Cofell (JD); Page 5: Chris Thile (JG); Page 7: Janice Jo Lee (MT); Lilli Lewis (DV); Page 8: B2B Meetings (SR); John Platt (GP); Private Showcase (JJ); Page 12: Margaret Atwood (LM); Dr. Bettina Love (NMB); Page 19: B2B Meetings, Cajun Fiddle Techniques, First Timers Orientation (SR); IFMAs (TZ); Colin Lillieby, Elage Diouf, Private Showcase (JJ); Louisiana Entertainment Reception (SR).
Hello friends,

We hope you are all thriving in your own way, despite the lingering impact of the pandemic.

By the start of this report’s fiscal year (July 1, 2020), FAI had laid off several staff members, waived all membership fees, canceled all in-person events, pivoted to weekly online offerings, flipped our February 2021 conference to a virtual format, and had already assessed a grim two-year loss forecast. But we were determined to serve our mission and membership.

Against all odds, by the end of the fiscal year, we broke even thanks to the overwhelming success of our “pay-what-you’re-able” Folk Unlocked Virtual Conference (which drew 4,250 attendees between conference registrants and public showcase tickets), diligent application to every imaginable source of emergency funding, and the generosity of the folk community.

Financial relief aside, we have much to celebrate this year. Though not able to meet in person, our online convenings became a place where industry members huddled to hash things out, where colleagues consoled and commiserated, and where peer groups dove deep into new ideas and connections.

The benefit of a virtual conference was broader access, new attendees, and our most diverse and equitable program presented to date (as detailed on page 11).

The pandemic also prompted innovation and new partnerships including FAI's participation as the US Export Office for the award-winning Global Music Match project, as well as our “Artists in (Their) Residence” cross-border commissions.

This year also saw the announcement of Karima Daoudi and Dom Flemons as co-convenors of FAI’s Cultural Equity Council, joining the full staff and board in a year-long training led by BIPOC-owned Team Dynamics.

Finally, FAI proudly launched The Village Fund which, in its first round, provided $25,000 in direct grant support to 50 FAI artists and music industry entrepreneurs experiencing financial hardship due to the pandemic.

Heartfelt thanks to our steadfast staff, dedicated board, and generous donors (listed on pages 16-18) whose collective support ensured FAI was able to serve the community and flourish.

Amy Reitnouer Jacobs (she/her)
Board President

Aengus Finnan (he/him)
Executive Director
About Folk Alliance International

Folk Alliance International (FAI) was founded in 1989 to connect folk music leaders aiming to sustain the community and genre. Today FAI is the leading international voice for folk music: a worldwide community of artists, agents, managers, labels, publicists, arts administrators, venues, festivals, and concert series presenters.

From its international headquarters in Kansas City, Missouri, USA, FAI produces the International Folk Music Awards (IFMAs), an Artist in Residence (AIR) program, the Folk ExChange market development initiative, the Ethno USA gathering (on behalf of JM International), community outreach, a Finest Folk concert series, and the world’s largest conference for the folk music industry.

FAI defines folk broadly as “the music of the people” (reflective of any community they are from), and programs a diverse array of subgenres including, but not limited to, Appalachian, Americana, Blues, Bluegrass, Celtic, Cajun, Global Roots, Hip-Hop, Old-Time, Singer-Songwriter, Spoken Word, Traditional, Zydeco, and various fusions.

MISSION
To serve, strengthen, and engage the global folk music community through preservation, presentation, and promotion.

VISION
FAI’s vision is to advocate for the folk music community; create thoughtful, intentional growth; be a respected organization within the music industry; and continue to produce high profile, meaningful events.

VALUES
FAI values diversity, equity, inclusion, and access; strives to ensure gender parity in all its programming; celebrates multiple languages and cultures; and actively welcomes participation from marginalized, disenfranchised, and underrepresented communities.
Our Regions

FAI has five US-based regional affiliate organizations (regions) that represent the full North American membership, and a fledgling Nordic affiliate. Each has their own independent board of directors and hosts an annual conference in their respective territory. The goal of each is to build stronger regional folk music networks, develop local markets, and support artists and industry alike throughout the year. FAI convenes regular meetings for the regions, provides administrative and leadership support as needed, and bundles software, licensing, and insurance options to lower costs.

Learn more about our regions at folk.org/regions
As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and ensuing concert and festival cancelations worldwide, the folk music community was hit hard financially. In response, FAI launched The Village Fund, a grant program for folk musicians and independent music industry professionals experiencing financial hardship. Initial fundraising, combined with the proceeds of public tickets to online Folk Unlocked showcases, enabled us to distribute $25,000 in grants to 50 individuals in need from eight countries in the first round of applications. Learn more at folk.org/thevillagefund

Artists in (Their) Residence

Due to “stay at home” pandemic restrictions, this year’s Artist in Residence project was playfully renamed Artists in (Their) Residence. Supported by the Antonia and Vladimer Kulaev Cultural Heritage Fund, and released in partnership with GRAMMY Award-winning artist Chris Thile (pictured left), ten US-based artists were paired with artists from multiple regions and cultures within Canada, as well as artists from Australia, Egypt, England, Finland, Ireland, Israel, Scotland, and Spain. Artists met in pairs online to create a new song reflecting on the pandemic, then presented them as recorded video duets from their respective homes.

All of the collaborations can be viewed on folk.org/artists-in-their-residence
Timely and Relevant Community Webinars

Starting in April 2020, we flipped to virtual content and began producing our CommUNITY Online webinars covering a wide range of relevant topics, including “Getting the Best Sound for Your Livestream”, “What Fans Want: Consumption Trends in Music Now”, “Putting Together a Promotional Plan That Works”, and more. Additionally, we presented a series of mental health webinars and partnered with other community organizations like Global Toronto and the International Indigenous Music Summit to co-produce webinars that engaged new audiences.

All online content is archived at folk.org/webinars
Peer Sessions

Peer Sessions provide space and opportunity for folks who work in specific sectors of the folk music industry to get together to share experiences, practices, insights, and foster community. This year, sessions were held online and included dedicated meetings for agents, managers, festivals, venues, house concerts, artists, media/publicity, arts councils, music organizations, emerging music industry leaders, radio DJs, and promoters. To see upcoming Peer Sessions, visit folk.org/peer-sessions

Committing to Conversation

Committing to Conversation was launched in July 2020 to create and hold online space for small-scale facilitated conversations about race, cultural equity, and social justice between willing participants invested in the desire to hear and understand each other. This grassroots engagement initiative was envisioned and designed by Lilli Lewis (pictured right), Label Manager of Louisiana Red Hot Records and member of FAI's 2020 New Orleans Advisory Council, with the wholehearted support of FAI's staff, board, and Cultural Equity Council. Joined by facilitators SaulPaul and Janice Jo Lee, sessions were held throughout the year. Join the conversation at folk.org/committing-to-conversation
Membership Overview
This fiscal year we implemented several changes related to our membership program. The first was to pause our membership drive and instead extend all of the 2,306 active memberships by almost a full year at no additional cost to members.

Rather than restrict access to services and resources, we also chose to lift “member-only” restrictions on almost all of our online content, providing cost effective access for the entire community.

Given that all memberships naturally lapsed during the “waived fees” year, we elected to move to a universal start date coming out of the pandemic, meaning that moving forward every membership will renew/expire on the same date annually regardless of when it is purchased. This change helps minimize renewal confusion and lapses, is more operationally efficient, and resolves a “double-dipping” loophole.

Learn more and become a member at folk.org/join

Between The Lines
As a special “up-close-and-personal” experience during the pandemic, we produced a short interview series called Between The Lines, hosted by veteran folk DJ John Platt (pictured right) and featuring some of the 2021 International Folk Music Award recipients.

Guests included David Harrington of Kronos Quartet (Album of the Year), The War and Treaty (Artist of the Year), Eliza Gilkyson (Song of the Year), and Raye Zaragoza (recipient of the inaugural Rising Tide Award).
Global Music Match
FAI participated as one of 13 export offices in the inaugural Global Music Match, a project forging online connections between 96 international artists grouped in teams with industry coaches, with the goal of raising their profile in international markets through collaborations and shared social media amplification.

The musical output of the entire project was then presented as the Global Music Marathon, a six-hour premiere concert presented as the closing celebration of the Folk Unlocked Virtual Conference. In the spring of 2021, the project expanded to include 17 countries and was later awarded the 2021 WOMEX Professional Excellence Award.

Changing the Tune
Changing the Tune is a new FAI initiative to provide guidance and resources to the folk community in times of emergency. Launched in partnership with Majestic Collaborations and made possible thanks to a grant from Performing Arts Readiness (funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation), our focus is to provide tools and best practices for adopting precautionary measures at in-person events, virtualizing events, and developing business continuity strategies tailored to organizations’ audiences. Resources from this initiative can be found at folk.org/changing-the-tune
Folk Unlocked Virtual Conference

In April 2020, Variety magazine announced that FAI was the “first music conference to call off a 2021 [event]”, a “decision that could be a bellwether for other conferences weighing options.” In its place, we planned and produced a virtual gathering from February 22-26 called Folk Unlocked. The “pay-what-you’re-able” online event featured many standard conference events (awards, panels, keynotes, networking, showcases), in addition to innovative elements like digital elevator rides, a live 60-second DJ pitch session, and an interactive avatar-based social hub called Bramble. Folk Unlocked drew over 5,000 attendees, presented over 1,000 online showcases, and had over 600,000 views in total.

View the post-conference report at folk.org/2021-post-conference-report
Conference Data

DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN

PANELISTS

- Non-U.S.: 30%
- BIPOC: 45%
- Disability: 7%
- LGBTQ+: 13%
- Female: 69%

PEER SESSIONS

- Non-U.S.: 28%
- BIPOC: 10%
- Disability: 0%
- LGBTQ+: 7%
- Female: 59%

AWARDS SHOW

- Non-U.S.: 36%
- BIPOC: 55%
- Disability: n/a
- LGBTQ+: 15%
- Female: 50%

AFFINITY GROUPS

- Non-U.S.: 37%
- BIPOC: 40%
- Disability: 7%
- LGBTQ+: 20%
- Female: 57%

Conference Data

- 10 Peer Sessions
- 26 Panels
- 35 Countries Represented
- 268 Artist Mentorship Meetings
- 818 One-on-One Meetings
- 1,156 Public Attendees
- 3,094 Conference Attendees
- 673,000 Total Views

CONFERENCE ATTENDEE BREAKDOWN

- 46% Artists
- 29% Industry
- 11% Affiliates
- 9% Presenter
- 5% Unidentified

PRESENTER BREAKDOWN

- 40% Festival
- 24% Concert Series
- 18% Venue
- 15% House Concert
- 2% Theatre
- <1% Camp

DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN

- Non-U.S.
- BIPOC
- Disability
- LGBTQ+
- Female
Keynotes: Margaret Atwood + Dr. Bettina Love

This year’s conference featured two exciting keynote events. Margaret Atwood was interviewed by Anaïs Mitchell, reflecting on the role of music as a rooted art form, a healing process, and a connective thread for our community. Atwood's keynote can be viewed on FAI’s YouTube channel. Dr. Bettina Love’s live-only interview by Brandi-Waller Pace felt like a window into a conversation between two friends about activism, Black culture, and a call to the community to engage in active allyship.
Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility

In 2021, FAI signed on to APAP’s national 10/20/30 pledge, a 10-year commitment to achieve 20% representation and allocate 30% of artistic and vendor fees to organizations whose primary focus is, and individuals who identify as Black, Indigenous, People of Color, women, individuals with disabilities, and LGBTQ2IA+ persons. Transparent public reporting of all demographic statistics is a key element of this pledge.

Diligence, community engagement, and a commitment to centering new voices, combined with the accessible nature of online programming and an increased allocation of participant honorariums, led to FAI’s most diverse year-round and conference programming to date. This included holding continued space for Affinity Groups under the banners of LGBTQ2IA+ Folks; Black, Indigenous, People of Color; Folks 55+; Women; Folks with Disability; Francophones; and Hispanohablantes, among others.

Related to the 10/20/30 commitment, and building on six years of internal training and program integration, BIPOC-owned cultural equity firm Team Dynamics was hired to lead a year-long team orientation and organizational review with the board, staff, and contractors.
International Folk Music Awards

The 2021 International Folk Music Awards (IFMAs), hosted by long-time community member Dan Navarro, moved from the stage to the online screen as we honored legends and leaders in our community. Awards presented included Lifetime Achievement (Gordon Lightfoot, Celia Cruz, and the Putumayo label), Spirit of Folk (Magnus Bäckström, Matthew Covey, Reggie Harris, Suni Paz, Lisa Schwartz), Clearwater (The Woodford Folk Festival), and the People’s Voice (Jackson Browne) as well as Folk DJ Hall of Fame inductions (Manolo Fernández, JoAnn Mar, and Chopper McKinnon) and the newly-launched Rising Tide Award presented to Raye Zaragoza.

View a full recording of the IFMAs on our YouTube channel.

In addition to the above awards the member-voted Best of 2020 awards were announced and presented to the following:

**SONG OF THE YEAR**
"Peace in Our Hearts"
Eliza Gilkyson

**ALBUM OF THE YEAR**
"Long Time Passing: Kronos Quartet & Friends Celebrate Pete Seeger"
Kronos Quartet

**ARTIST OF THE YEAR**
The War and Treaty
Financials

The initial FY21 budget included a loss of over $350,000 with operating income of only $793,669, which represented less than half of the previous year’s actual income of $1,638,139. It was an ambitious budget that dramatically increased individual donations by more than 200% from $85,000 in FY20 to $180,000 in the FY21 budget. In a seldom exercised measure, the FAI Board approved an amended budget that decreased the loss to $150,000 in January 2021 based on a substantially different reality six months into the pandemic.

Our community stepped up to support the organization and each other! Individual donations jumped 205% from 226 in FY20 to 689 in FY21. And 52% of the Folk Unlocked conference attendees chose to pay to attend the online edition of our conference so that the remaining 48% could participate for free.

Ultimately, having cut expenses wherever possible while producing increased timely programming with reduced staff, we surpassed our initial fundraising goal of individual donations and grants by 130% for a total of $625,995 through the generosity of our community, a Paycheck Protection Program grant and other CARES Act grants, and an unanticipated and anonymous new major gift from a Donor Advised Fund. Against all odds, FAI posted a small profit at year end!

All financial figures are pre-audit. Audited reconciliation available at AGM.
Donor List

Our deepest thanks to the following donors who supported FAI during our 2021 Fiscal Year (July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021).

The Village Fund donations are listed separately at folk.org/thevillagefund

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