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Atchafalaya

AMERICA'S PORTRAIT
Cemetery
NEW BRANDING

Folk Alliance International (FAI) unveiled and implemented its new branding at the 2020 conference. The new logo and visual assets present FAI as a contemporary, professional, and dynamic organization rooted in tradition.

“Our genre, community, and organization are in an exciting renaissance, so we’re thrilled to reveal a logo that proudly and unequivocally presents the word folk,” said Executive Director, Aengus Finnan. “Just as the f-hole of an instrument transmits sound from the body of the instrument, the stylized ‘f’ in the new logo suggests a similar community transmission, while the signature tip and tail of the logo can be activated separately as playful ‘speech bubbles’ for highlighting key messages.”
For the sixth straight year, attendance figures eclipsed the previous year’s record with 3,332 attendees representing 41 countries on site.

The conference was held in New Orleans, Louisiana, at the Sheraton New Orleans. With 179 Official Showcases, 2,703 Private Showcases, and 1,200 speed meetings, the conference presented a strong front for folk music artists and industry.

**KEYNOTES**

Legendary performer and civil rights activist **Mavis Staples** provided a mainstage keynote interview hosted by NPR’s Melissa Block. Sharing anecdotes that spanned her 70 year career in folk, blues, soul, and gospel music, Staples addressed cultural equity issues through the lens of activism in song, commenting that “Freedom Highway is even more powerful and necessary today than when it was written”. A 2008 recipient of FAI’s Lifetime Achievement Award, Staples was announced as the winner of the member-voted 2019 Album of the Year award during the International Folk Music Awards. Watch the full interview here.

**Rhiannon Giddens**, a GRAMMY award-winning songwriter and multi-instrumentalist, gave this year’s keynote address, delivered in word and song. A clarion call to action for the folk community in the face of a ‘world on fire’, Giddens’ presentation urged all who attended to embrace a consciousness shift ‘born of compassion, of empathy, and of love above all else’. She also showcased in support of her nephew Demeanor. Giddens is a founding member of the Carolina Chocolate Drops, a member of Our Native Daughters, a 2017 MacArthur Genius Fellow, and two-time winner in the Album of the Year category at the International Folk Music Awards. Click here to watch the full address.
The 2020 International Folk Music Awards (IFMAs) were hosted by celebrated New Orleans musician Leyla McCalla. The show began with a welcome address and land acknowledgment by local Indigenous (Houma) elder Grayhawk Perkins and featured performances by Cha Wa, Quique Escamilla, and Lula Wiles. The full show is available to view online.

In addition to the awards announced earlier in the year, the member-voted Best of 2019 awards were presented as follows:

**SONG OF THE YEAR**
Black Myself
(by Amythyst Kiah - performed by Our Native Daughters)

**ALBUM OF THE YEAR**
We Get By
(by Mavis Staples)

**ARTIST OF THE YEAR**
The Small Glories
ARTIST IN RESIDENCE (AIR)
FAI's 2020 AIR project was developed in partnership with the Denver office of the IRC (International Rescue Committee), an organization which responds to some of the world's worst crises, delivering aid that saves lives while paving the way for long-term recovery. Folk artist Rebecca Folsom, working with IRC staff member and translator Mireille Bakhos, was commissioned to coach high school student and poet Roqaya Alfaris in a songwriting workshop exploring and articulating her experience and perspective as a refugee. The end result was the creation of a song called “I am the Power of Love” which they performed during the conference. A video of the song and process is available here.

GLOBAL SUMMITS

CULTURAL EQUITY SUMMIT
Hosted by Jorge Arévalo Mateus, Executive Director of The Association for Cultural Equity (ACE) and co-presented by Kaisha S. Johnson, Co-Founding Director of Women of Color in the Arts (WOCA), this core summit related to the conference theme of The Story of People and Place. The summit was open to all delegates and provided an overview of global issues related to concepts of cultural equity, identity, intersection, and influence. Summit content dovetailed with conference-wide programming to address the role of constructive allyship and collective engagement in the development of FAI’s cultural equity committee and plan in 2020.

INTERNATIONAL INDIGENOUS MUSIC SUMMIT
FAI was honored to hold space for the 2nd annual International Indigenous Music Summit. The summit’s purpose was to celebrate the historic and ongoing contribution of Indigenous music to art and culture worldwide. Hosted by community leaders ShoShona Kish and Amanda Rheaueme, the summit provided the opportunity for artists, knowledge keepers, and community builders, along with invited allies, to nurture connections, share resources, and build networks to promote Indigenous music across the global music community.
CONFERENCE STATS

TOTAL PRESENTERS: 589
Sum of primary and secondary roles
- **Festival**: 201 | 34%
- **Concert Series**: 156 | 26%
- **House Concert**: 111 | 19%
- **Venue**: 103 | 17%
- **Camp**: 15 | 3%
- **Theater**: 3 | 1%

TOTAL ATTENDEES: 3,332
Sum of primary and secondary roles
- **Artist**: 1,454 | 44%
- **Industry**: 879 | 26%
- **Associate**: 370 | 11%
- **Presenter**: 391 | 12%
- **Media**: 121 | 3.6%
- **Other**: 117 | 3.5%

GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION, 41 COUNTRIES TOTAL
Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Côte d’Ivoire, Cuba, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, England, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jersey (Channel Islands), Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Northern Ireland, Norway, Pakistan, Puerto Rico, Russia, Scotland, Senegal, Serbia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Syria, Turkey, United States of America, Wales.

GENDER EQUITY

Official Showcases
- 55% women 45% men

Panelists
- 52% women 48% men

Emcees
- 51% women 49% men

Keynote Speakers
- 100% women

IFMAs Participants
- 52% women 48% men

Data is based on the Keychange initiative, whose priority is to ensure that 50% of acts programmed include at least one person who identifies as a woman, transgender, or non-binary.
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM)

FAI’s annual general meeting of its membership was held on Wednesday, January 22, 2020 with 149 delegates in attendance. The meeting was chaired by Board President Lisa Schwartz, and included a message from the board, a celebration of retiring directors, the introduction of new directors, the presentation and request for approval of the audited financials for Fiscal Year 2019 by Board Treasurer Alka Sharma, a motion to appoint the auditor for FY2020, and a review of the past year’s activities and activities to date by FAI’s Executive Director. The 2021 conference art and FAI’s new branding was revealed. Past AGMs can be viewed online here.

BUSINESS ACCELERATORS

The third annual day-long pre-conference Business Accelerators had a total attendance of 63 participants. The Agent Accelerator (led by Lori Peters) was designed for small roster agencies to address the changing landscape of artist booking. The Manager Accelerator (led by Holly Lowman and sponsored by Music Managers Forum Canada) focused on navigating the opportunities and challenges of taking an artist’s career to the next level. The Artist Entrepreneur Accelerator (led by Jayme Stone) offered creative entrepreneurs concrete career tools for today’s music industry.

COMMUNITY GATHERING

This year’s CommUNITY Gathering built on last year’s focus on mental health and featured a talking circle on the topic of The Whole Self. Facilitators Laura Thomas and Melanie Brûlée led an open conversation about the complex personal process of finding, making, and recalibrating #FolkLifeBalance. To support this programming, a dedicated health and wellness space was provided for delegates to engage in self-care, including guided meditation, yoga, and recovery meetings.
The Louis Jay Meyers Music Camp featured 18 classes, with 483 conference delegates participating in a wide range of learning opportunities, marking an attendance increase of 29 percent over 2019. Popular classes included:

- **A Rapid Fire Tour of Music Tech for Artists**  
  Instructor - Bruce Houghton (Sponsored by Berklee Online)
- **Beyond the Craft - The Extended Life of a Song**  
  Instructor - Ellis Paul (Sponsored by TrueFire)
- **Allowing Your Audience to Find Their Own Meaning**  
  Instructor - Ray Bonneville
AFFINITY GROUPS
This year’s conference featured a series of affinity group sessions held in the Health and Wellness Center. Affinity groups provide safe spaces for people to connect with other people who share aspects of their identity. Some of the group sessions included Parents, Women, Allies, LGBTQIA+, and People of Color (BIPOC).

2020 SURVEY RESPONSES (431 Total)
FAI prioritizes inclusion, diversity, and international growth. Presented here are the responses to questions in the post-conference survey regarding FAI’s progress toward meeting related goals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2020 REPORT CARD</th>
<th>2021 PRIORITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of survey respondents who felt satisfied or very satisfied</td>
<td>Percentage of survey respondents who feel these should be priorities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range of Ages</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range of Career Levels (ranging from emerging to veteran artists)</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Balance</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range of Folk Genres</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presence of Marginalized/BIPOC communities (Black, Indigenous, People of Color)</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Diversity (language, musical style, and content)</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Representation</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

WISDOM OF THE ELDERS
This year’s Wisdom of the Elders panel featured luminaries Maria Muldaur, Cyril Neville, and Tom Rush, who provided insights gleaned from their decades of musical experience, reflecting on the milestones and industry context that shaped their artistic lives. The interview was conducted by NPR’s Gwen Thompkins. A recording of the session is available here.
THANK YOU!

VOLUNTEERS

FAI would like to extend heartfelt thanks to all who helped make the conference a success this year.

Rene David Alkalay
Rachelle Alkalay
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Laurel Zydney
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* New board members seated as of January 22, 2020
** Retiring board members as of January 22, 2020

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ABOUT
FOLK ALLIANCE INTERNATIONAL

Founded in 1989, Folk Alliance International (FAI) is a National Arts Service Organization based in Kansas City, Missouri, USA.

FAI defines folk broadly as “the music of the people” (reflective of any community they are from), and programs a diverse array of sub-genres 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.

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

LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

FAI acknowledges that this year’s conference took place on the ancestral lands of the Atakapa-Ishak, Caddo, Chitimacha, Choctaw, Houma, Natchez, and Tunica peoples, and the Petites nations. We also recognize the Alabama, Biloxi, Koasati, and Ofó peoples, and others who were pushed into Louisiana from their ancestral lands.

FAI’s office is located on the traditional land of the Kansa and Osage nations. FAI acknowledges that all of its activities and that of its North American member organizations take place on ancestral Indigenous lands.

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