For Immediate Release

New Jersey Folk Festival Celebrates the Andes

Fans of all ages can enjoy traditional folk dancing, storytelling, music, food, crafts and much more at the 36th annual New Jersey Folk Festival on Saturday, April 24th, 2010, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., rain or shine. Admission is free for this all-day family event held on the lawn of the Eagleton Institute, at the corner of George Street and Ryders Lane, on the Douglass Campus of Rutgers, the State University, in New Brunswick.

The New Jersey Folk Festival will be celebrating the history, heritage and traditions of the Andes through an array of music, art, food, and crafts demonstrations. Performers such as Eco del Sur, an ensemble that consists of Latin American artists from various musical backgrounds, will dazzle and delight with their blend of ancient Andean and contemporary music. Encompassing styles from different Latin American regions, they have produced two commercial albums and have prepared a large repertoire of famous Latin American songs that are now part of the world popular culture.

Balleto Folklorico Perú is one of most respected and beloved Peruvian dance groups based in the East Coast of the USA; the group offers a rich repertoire of authentic dances from the Amazon, the Andes, the Coast and Afro-Peruvian communities. Founded in New York City by three Peruvian dancers - Amparo Soria and Nélida Silva from the Andes, and Luis Iturre from Lima - who were eager to bring the rich traditional dances of their homeland to their new home in the Unites States.

Ensemble A Contratiempo is born of the fusion musical knowledge in the various musical branches of Venezuelan, Bossa Nova and Jazz. This group has been performing in Venezuela, achieving a name for their interpretations of traditional music, and their incorporation of traditional Venezuelan instruments such as Round Drums, Quitiplas, among others into their show. They have performed in numerous concert halls throughout Venezuela, Europe and the United States.

Although the Festival’s focus is on the Andes other musical traditions will also be represented. Among this year’s performers is Atzilut. A high energy, ten member, ensemble group comprised of Arab and Jewish musicians performing together to make a powerful statement for peace through shared music. This project exemplifies the potential for artistic collaboration and shared creativity when musicians representing two traditions with common roots overcome conflict to celebrate hope and trust through music.

Gráinne Hambly and William Jackson are two of the foremost harpers of Ireland and Scotland. Combining their extraordinary talents on harp as well as concertina, tinwhistle and bouzouki, “The Masters of the Celtic Harp”, have been performing all over the country and dazzling audiences with their artistry. Among Gráinne’s credentials are winning the Senior All-Ireland titles on harp and concertina in 1994 and her three commercial albums, which are considered to be “must-haves” amongst the Irish harp community. William Jackson was a founding member of...
Ossian in 1976, which became one of Scotland’s best-loved traditional bands. He has composed music in Scotland for the BBC and Scottish television. William’s performance on harp, whistle and bodhran is featured on the soundtrack of the film *A Shot at Glory*, starring Robert Duval and Michael Keaton, which was filmed in Scotland. Both are all-world performers and together they take their music to an entirely higher level.

Another performer this year is the Csurdongolo Folk Ensemble, a Hungarian-American folk music and dance troupe operating since 1998 out of New Brunswick, New Jersey. The group’s members specialize in and present the authentic, archaic folklore from the villages of present-day Hungary, Transylvania, Slovakia and beyond.

Also appearing to this year’s festival is the Violanta Street Organ, hosted by Johanna Vanderheysen. Originally constructed by the Limonaire Brothers in Paris, France, the organ was deconstructed and hidden in pieces from the Nazis during World War II and then reconstructed in Holland after the war ended. This intricate mechanical organ was originally designed to play in a carousel, but was then converted to a street organ. The interior is visible exposing all of the inner workings of the organ. The Violanta Street Organ plays by inserting program books into a player that directs special pipes to play at a specific time. These special pipes are constructed to assemble the sounds of flutes, drums, violins and even cymbals.

Several New Jersey Folk Festival favorites will be returning this year, including Spook Handy, About.com’s “2006 Best Folk Artist You’ve Never Heard Of”. This year Spook will be performing a special tribute to the famous folk trio Peter, Paul and Mary. See why folk legend and Spook Handy fan Pete Seeger says, “Spook Handy really understands how to write a good song that says something important.”

In addition to the many performances, three organized jam sessions – in the form of bluegrass, old-timey, and traditional Irish seisuns – will be held on the festival’s Shore Stage, which will then transform into the Singer-Songwriter Showcase. There, eight contest winners chosen form a pool of over 100 qualified applicants will be given a chance to perform their original songs in 20-minute sets.

The festival is also proud to honor master instrument crafter David Field, with a *Lifetime Achievement Award*. Mr. Field has been creating custom Irish Folk Harps and Appalachian Dulcimers since 1964. His personal designs are both highly artistic and functional and he is one of the leading traditional instrument crafters around today.

In addition to the four stages of music, dance, workshops, and both American and ethnic food vendors, the festival offers a diverse craft market of approximately 75 booths, craft demonstrators and a folk marketplace where performer CDs and information on area folk organizations are available. For children, there is a designated activities area with games, a clown, and free crafts to make and take. The New Jersey Folk Festival is the oldest and largest continuously held festival of its kind in the state. Wheelchair accessible, it offers selected programs with ASL interpretation; large-print program books and audio assists are also available.

The New Jersey Folk Festival is proud to be a key component of Rutgers Day, a day of learning, exploration, and fun at New Jersey’s State University. The Folk Festival is the main attraction of Rutgers Day on the Douglass Campus, but visitors are encouraged to check out the many workshops and live performances at the other Rutgers campuses throughout the day – all designed to demonstrate the impact and value of our world-class university. Admission, parking, and on-campus bus shuttles are all free. For further details including stage schedules and directions, visit [http://njfolkfest.rutgers.edu](http://njfolkfest.rutgers.edu) or call the festival office at (732)-932-5775 or Rutgers Campus Info Services at (732)-445-INFO.