

BOONE, N.C. — Appalachian State University's annual summer arts attraction, An Appalachian Summer Festival (AASF), proudly celebrates its 37th season from July 2-31, 2021. Highlights include performances by Jason Isbell and the 400 Unit, Leslie Odom Jr., Alan Cumming & Ari Shapiro and Paula Poundstone.

The monthlong whirlwind of music, dance, theatre, visual arts and film programming has emerged as one of the nation's leading regional arts festivals. After last summer's transition to all-virtual programming, the festival is pleased to return to a full schedule of events featuring a variety of in-person outdoor and indoor performances, along with additional livestreaming and virtual options. Tickets for festival events will be available online and at the Schaefer Center for the Performing Arts box office beginning Monday, May 10 at 9am. For more information, visit www.appsummer.org or call the box office at 828-262-4046.

AASF will feature nearly 30 days of live, in-person, socially distanced and COVID-compliant performances starting July 2. The season will be staged across two outdoor venues, including Kidd Brewer Stadium and the State Farm Road Concert Lot, a university-owned space adjacent to the Greenway Trail, which will be outfitted as an outdoor theatrical stage with pod seating to ensure a fun, festive and safe concert setting. The Schaefer Center will host several limited-attendance events, including performances that offer two different show times and livestream options. The 35th Anniversary Rosen Walk, Turchin Center exhibition openings, and a variety of virtual offerings round out the festival's diverse arts menu this summer. Additional details about each event are available at www.appsummer.org.

"Feedback from our audiences and supporters in recent months has been tremendously helpful in determining how best to safely gather and celebrate the festival's broad array of arts programming, while also creating the safe and protected atmosphere they are seeking," said Denise Ringler, Director of Arts Engagement and Cultural Resources. "Measures such as reduced capacity, socially distanced pod seating, enhanced cleaning protocols in our venues, elimination of intermissions and indoor concessions, touch-free ticketing, and digital communications are all designed to provide the health and safety assurances that are consistent with the university's protocols, and which are so important to our audiences."

With 27 events set across these three venues, and with limited seating in each, An Appalachian Summer Festival will only support a fraction of its normal capacity compared to previous festivals. That will make tickets harder to get, but the decision to limit audience sizes, in accordance with current state and local guidelines, fulfills a critical goal: keeping performers and audiences as safe as possible while providing the live indoor/outdoor experiences synonymous with App Summer. To keep audiences spaced safely, tickets will be sold in seated pods of two, four and six. Select performances also feature a livestreaming component to accommodate patrons who are unable to attend in person.

The Schaefer Center will be home to two artists on the Schaefer Popular Series slate, a celebrated dance company, and all events on the chamber music series. Comedian Paula Poundstone will offer two performances, the latter of which will also be livestreamed for a nominal fee, as will the performance by award-winning playwright Sarah Jones. New York City's Parsons Dance will offer two in-person shows, with family-friendly price points set for the matinee performance. And the diverse

chamber music series, which includes Emerson String Quartet, Canadian Brass, Tessa Lark and Michael Thurber, Tesla Quartet, and Julian Gargiulo, offers a livestream option in conjunction with the in-person concerts.

The festival's largest outdoor event features the wildly popular Americana band Jason Isbell and the 400 Unit entertaining an audience at Kidd Brewer Stadium. The new State Farm Road location welcomes Leslie Odom, Jr., star of Broadway's *Hamilton*; Tony winner Alan Cumming and NPR personality Ari Shapiro in a cabaret-style show; and the Charleston, SC-based band Ranky Tanky, wrapping up the festival with some certified funk. The Turchin Center for the Visual Arts' Summer Exhibition Celebration will welcome visitors using a timed-entry reservation system, and the 35th anniversary season of the annual Rosen Sculpture Walk will take place outdoors on the university campus.

Virtual-only events include the play *Freedom Summer*, a Civil Rights-era drama by NC Black Repertory Company, preceded by a Meet the Artist event with the company's artistic director, Jackie Alexander; the Weicholz Global Film Series, which features award-winning international films that spotlight human migration stories; a celebration of the 10th anniversary of the Rosen-Schaffel Competition for Young & Emerging Artists; and a series of visual artist Lunch & Learn events.

"Our hope is to offer multiple ways for our audiences to enjoy the festival — whether it's attending live events or continuing to enjoy festival programs via live streaming," says Ringler, adding that the virtual and livestreaming experience over the past year has proven to reach audiences across the nation -- and the world -- who would have otherwise lacked access to these programs.

Tickets for An Appalachian Summer Festival:

With a wide range of ticket prices, as well as several free events, the festival offers unique opportunities for residents and visitors to create arts experiences suited to their individual artistic tastes and budgets. To purchase tickets or to register for virtual events, call or visit the Schaefer Center box office at 800-841-2787 or 828-262-4046. Tickets can also be purchased online at appsummer.org. Registration is required for all streamed events with the exception of the chamber music concerts supported by The Violin Channel.

About An Appalachian Summer Festival:

Presented by Appalachian State University's Office of Arts & Cultural Programs, this annual celebration of the performing and visual arts is held every July in venues across the university campus, and features an eclectic, diverse mix of music, dance, theatre, visual arts and film programming. An Appalachian Summer Festival began in 1984 as a chamber music series, and retains strong roots in classical music, combined with a variety of other programming geared to almost every artistic taste and preference. With an audience of 27,000, the festival has been named one of the "Top Twenty Events in the Southeast" by the Southeast Tourism Society in recent years.

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