

Saturday, July 5

Appalachia's Harmony Stage

5:30–6:00 Songs from the Coal Fields:
Elaine Purkey and Carl Rutherford

6:00–9:00 NEA Presents National
Heritage Fellows from Appalachia: Ralph
Stanley, Still Waters, Hazel Dickens, Jesse
McReynolds, the O'Quinn Brothers and
the Bluegrass Travelers

Mali's Timbuktu Stage

6g 6:00–9:00 Malian Music: Kanaga de
Mopti, Malian National Band, and Ali
Farka Touré, "Africa's Bluesman"

Scotland's Fèis Stage

5:30–7:00 Scotland since Robert Burns:
New Voices/New Songs

*John F. Kennedy Center for the
Performing Arts, Millennium Stage*

6:00–7:00 The Battlefield Band

Sunday, July 6

Appalachia's Harmony Stage

5:30–6:15 Closing Concert: Bluegrass—
The O'Quinn Brothers and the
Bluegrass Travelers

6:15–7:00 Galax String Band:
The New Ballard's Branch Bogtrotters

Mali's Timbuktu Stage

5:30–7:00 Closing Concert:
Mali: From Timbuktu to Washington

Scotland's Fèis Stage

6g 5:30–7:00 Closing Concert:
Scotland at the Smithsonian

6g 7:00–8:00 Festival Finale

Maisie Shenandoah, Joanne
Shenandoah, and Liz Robert.
Photo © Silver Wave Records,
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Beautiful Beyond: Christian Songs in Native Languages

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A CENTRAL PART OF THE MISSION of the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) is the preservation, perpetuation, and awareness of Native languages. Language preservation has become an urgent matter in Native communities, especially where the number of elders who grew up with their own language is rapidly diminishing. In some of these communities, the singing of Christian hymns is one of the few ways in which the language is still heard on a regular basis.

Several years ago NMAI began a project to document the singing of Christian songs in Native languages. To date, more than twenty-five groups in fifteen communities have been recorded, including Mohawk, Cherokee, Navajo, Kiowa, Comanche, Yup'ik, and Hawaiian. In some communities the hymns are translations from English-language hymnals, sung in three- or four-part harmony, while in others the songs are "made" by Native singers and sung in unison. Besides singing in church, the singing groups are in demand for community events, especially funerals and wakes. An anthology will be released around the time of the opening of NMAI's new museum on the National Mall (September 2004).

The June 29 evening concert brings together five groups—Navajo, Cherokee (from the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma and the Eastern Band of North Carolina), Oneida (New York), and Lakota. Their presence at this Festival represents a strong force in Indian communities throughout the continent and demonstrates that among the many tools of cultural survival the power of language is one of the most important.

Howard Bass

Public Programs Producer

National Museum of the American Indian

