2017 IN REVIEW

This past year Folk Alliance International returned to center and simultaneously broadened its reach. The exploration of values in our “Forbidden Folk” conference theme deepened our connection to the roots and power of folk music.

The 2017 conference was the largest in our 30-year history, with 500 more delegates than the previous year, an incredible 1,000 attending for the first time, and 27 countries represented (a 50% increase from 2016).

Intentional actions to diversify FAI’s board, staff, networks, programming, outreach, and showcases challenged perspectives and strengthened outcomes. Partnerships and meaningful experiences were developed with the Indigenous, Blues, and Global Roots communities. Capacity building events included a pre-conference staff workshop on sexual harassment, a seminar on diversity for FAI’s board, and a training session on racial justice made available to all conference delegates.

In response to a year of heightened global tensions, community conflicts, and humanitarian crises, FAI issued a values statement (found at folk.org/mission) declaring our sincere commitment to diversity and internationalism and adamant rejection of all forms of discrimination and harassment. Without equivocation, FAI called on the music industry community to adopt proactive policies emphasizing the values of diversity, inclusion, respect, and safety for all.

A highlight was an expanded Artist in Residence program that partnered musicians with local law enforcement and correctional facilities to collaborate creatively with inmates and officers. This year we also launched a Folk in the Schools program to complement our local children’s hospital outreach, bringing folk music to youth across the city.

Augmented green initiatives and the introduction of the Clearwater Award increased our commitment to improving sustainability.

Strategic governance, transparency, and fiscal accountability ensured another year of financial stability and program growth. Our staff also grew in the areas of development, communications, and our board expanded its activity in the areas of membership, research, and advocacy. The third annual Regional Leaders’ Retreat took place in Baltimore, Maryland, where regional board presidents met with senior FAI staff and board members to focus on collaboration and non-profit governance best practices.

Our community has passion, solidarity, and positive momentum. We aspire to consistently listen, learn, and lead as the bright future of folk music unfolds and we prepare to celebrate our 30th conference year.

MISSION

To nurture, engage, and empower the international folk music community – traditional and contemporary, amateur and professional – through education, advocacy, and performance.

We fulfill our mission through Education, Networking, and Advocacy as well as Consumer, Field, and Professional Development.

Diversity and inclusion are core values of FAI.

ABOUT FOLK ALLIANCE INTERNATIONAL

Folk Alliance International (FAI) was founded in 1989 to connect folk music leaders aiming to sustain the community and genre. The leading international voice for folk music, FAI’s network now includes more than 3,000 members: a worldwide community of artists, record companies, publishers, presenters, agents, managers, and arts administrators.

Enhancing folk music networks and creating development opportunities for cultural sector entrepreneurs is the foundation of FAI’s work. From its headquarters in Kansas City, Missouri, FAI produces the world’s largest conference for the folk music industry, the International Folk Music Awards, the Louis Jay Meyers Music Camp, the Folk in the Schools and Artist in Residence programs, community outreach, and the Kansas City Folk Festival.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Tim McFadden
Tim McFadden Management
Nashville, TN, USA

Cover: Hundreds of conference delegates gathered on the rooftop of the Westin Crown Center Hotel in Kansas City for a group photo. Pictured are FAI staff, board, family members, interns, volunteers, delegates, Billy Bragg, and Ani DiFranco. In their hands are copies of the US Constitution provided by Lynne Margolis, the ACLU, and other generous donors. Photo: Jayne Tosheff
Industry and Consumer Development begins with FAI being present at key market events. Raising the profile of folk music ensures our community of artists are connecting to an ever-growing and appreciative audience. This year, FAI participated in 31 events all around the world.

- Economic impact of $5.5 million to Kansas City.
- A sold out, second annual Kansas City Folk Festival, a family-friendly indoor festival.
- Leadership in the cultural sector and advisory support for innovative arts initiatives in KC.
- Local referral and national exposure for area musicians.

**Global Expansion**

Folk Alliance International’s 2015-2018 Strategic Plan detailed a five-year vision that included global expansion as a key area of focus. The outlined objective of the plan was “to thoughtfully expand FAI’s footprint globally.”

**Progress Towards Strategic Goals:**

- **Increase international membership:** International membership now represents 17.7%.
- **Increase international participation in annual conference:** 11% increase in international attendees.
- **Officially represent folk music globally:** Export office meetings with Ireland, Scotland, England, Brazil, Colombia, France, Spain, Israel, South Africa, Australia, Estonia, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Russia, and Italy.
- **Take an active role presenting, exhibiting, and representing folk at national and international events:** 24% increase in number of events attended in FY 2017.

**Local Impact - Kansas City, MO**

- “Partnerships across borders are important, especially in music, and Folk Alliance clearly takes that part of its mission seriously.”
  
  Åke Lundström, CEO, Live at Heart, Sweden
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

FAI’s 29th annual conference drew 2,694 attendees, the largest number in its history.

The conference theme, Forbidden Folk, celebrated activism in art by exploring the past and present role of folk music in documenting and encouraging social change. The official artwork was inspired by the evocative images of the labor movement and included the universal clenched fist of resistance wielding a populist ukulele. One result of this focus was a strong sense of solidarity and commitment that emboldened the present day folk community of activist artists.

Billy Bragg in his keynote address said, “Activism is the antidote to cynicism,” and asked a new generation of folk artists to be visible by taking their messages to places where it will challenge the status quo.

Forbidden Folk themed programming:
- Indigenous Gathering hosted by a local elder to welcome Indigenous artists from the Americas, Australia, and Norway.
- Standing Up for Racial Justice training promoting accountability through collective action.
- Contemporary Protest panel with Nic Davies of Human Rights Watch, Billy Bragg, SONIA disappear fear, Ramy Essam, and Eliza Gilkyson.
- Two new annual awards to honor the socially conscious roots of folk music.
- Special presentation by Ani DiFranco, who spoke of the importance of voting by saying, “Believe in democracy just enough to show up and make it real.”

Highlights:
- 50% increase in international presence
- Sold out hotel and Exhibit Hall
- Expanded mentor and peer sessions
- New industry-specific receptions
- Enhanced production values

ATTENDEE DATA

27 COUNTRIES REPRESENTED

ATTENDEE BREAKDOWN

GREEN FOLK

The Green Folk program launched to address the environmental impact of FAI events and programs. Implementing a variety of strategic actions to significantly reduce the footprint of the five-day conference, FAI successfully diverted 5.9 tons of landfill waste to recycling and compost stations.

THANK YOU VOL UNTEERS!

A crew of 233 volunteers donated 4,190 hours of time representing an in-kind value of $101,147. Without the commitment, time, skill, and personal investment of these volunteers, producing an international event at this scale would not be possible.

(* Volunteer hourly rate based on US national average from the Corporation for National and Community Service.)
MEMBERSHIP
FAI membership includes the following:

- Discounted registration for conferences and events.
- Access to a network with over 3,000 global members through the member database and forums.
- Work visa letters of support.
- The opportunity to elect the board of directors for FAI and regional organizations.
- A vote to determine recipients of the Lifetime Achievement Awards, and Artist, Album, and Song of the Year.
- Listing in FAI’s monthly festival and conference email and online festivals calendar.
- Exclusive benefits and discounts on a variety of services and memberships.
- Participation in a global community that works together to provide a platform for emerging artists.

2,075 MEMBERSHIPS

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<th>INDIVIDUAL</th>
<th>SMALL ORG.</th>
<th>MEDIUM ORG.</th>
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Membership vs. Members: A membership is counted as a single paid account regardless of size or type. Members are the actual number of individuals associated with each membership.

LOUIS JAY MEYERS MUSIC CAMP

In 2017, the music camp was renamed after its founder, the late Louis Jay Meyers. The camp featured 85 classes over three days. Instructors included guitar titan Bill Kirchen, banjoist Tony Furtado, soul-roots artist Cécile Doo-Kingué, and many more. Featuring classes in 19 distinct disciplines, topics ranged from “Ukulele: The Magic of Chord Twins,” to “Flatpicking: The Lesson of the Masters,” from “Blues Banjo” to “Ottawa Valley Step-Dancing,” and from “Intro to Looping” to “Fiddle Basics.”

KANSAS CITY FOLK FESTIVAL

The Kansas City Folk Festival (KCF) was at capacity and welcomed 1,800 attendees in only its second year, a mixture of the public and international conference delegates. The event featured six stages of local, national, and international talent. Headline performers included iconic UK artist-activist, Billy Bragg, Blues legend Bobby Rush, and the GRAMMY™ Award-winning Okee Dokee Brothers on the Children’s Stage. The Artisan Market featured 43 local artisans and makers, a photo bus, and the addition of Coloratura, an interactive art and music-making activity.

INTERNATIONAL FOLK MUSIC AWARDS

The International Folk Music Awards (IFMAs) were standing room only. The event was hosted by Paula Cole, with special guest Megan Mullally and performances by Capuli Iskali, Jean Rohe, Eliza Gilkyson, and Kris Kristofferson.

ARTIST IN RESIDENCE PROGRAM

FAI created the Artist in Residence (AIR) program in 2015 to develop partnerships, foster cultural cross-pollination, diversify audiences, and nurture artistic growth between musicians and national institutions and community organizations. The 2017 conference featured two projects:

The first project featured acclaimed blues artist, Rita Charelli working in the Topeka Correctional Facility for Women, in partnership with Warden Shannon Meyer and retired warden and poet, Rex Pryor. Rita and a select group of inmates established and rehearsed a new choir named the Freedom Singers. Four days later, the new group performed for inmates and guests at the prison. FAI commissioned a short documentary film shot and edited by Kansas City-based production company State City Films.

The second project featured emerging Kansas City-basedLatinx band, Making Movies, and 16-year veteran police officer and poet, Chato Villalobos. His poem, “Brown Eyes in Blue,” addresses the complex feelings and sometimes contentious era of law enforcement’s relationship with minority communities. The band was commissioned to create a soundscape composition to accompany a live recitation of the poem at the FAI conference.

FRIENDS OF FOLK

FAI launched the Friends of Folk program to build awareness and grow financial support for initiatives and programs. An inaugural Kansas City event raised $3,360 in one evening and the program raised $7,340 overall in its first year.

“FOLK ALLIANCE IS A VIBRANT ORGANIZATION THAT CONNECTS PROFESSIONAL MUSICIANS TO A CAREER-BUILDING NETWORK AND USES ART TO BRIDGE CULTURES AND STRENGTHEN COMMUNITIES. I AM PROUD TO SUPPORT FAI FINANCIALLY AND TO RAISE AWARENESS OF ITS GOOD WORK.”

Pete B. Browne, Kissick Construction Company

FAI membership includes the following:

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Continued focus on industry best practices for financial stewardship have resulted in seven years of positive earnings, three years creating a million dollar operating budget, and this year achieving increased and diversified revenue streams.

ANNUAL REVENUE VS. EXPENSES

FUNDRAISING GROWTH

OUR GENEROUS DONORS & FUNDERS

Our deepest thanks to the following donors who supported the charitable mission of our 501c3 organization during the 2017 fiscal year (July 1, 2016 - June 30, 2017).

To donate or bequeath funds, visit folk.org/donate. Federal EIN # 56-1698333.

Legend
- member of FAI staff, contractor or board of directors
+ Kansas City Friends of Folk
++ Friends of FAI
* Donation to the Mike Seeger Fund (Traditional Artist Scholarship)
** Donation to the Gene Shay Fund (Emerging Folk DJ Scholarship)
*** Donation to the Elaine Weissman Fund (First-Timer Scholarship)
++ Friends of FAI
~ member of FAI staff, contractor or board of directors

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The conference was enriched by extraordinary attendance, international representation, and passionate engagement. Below are excerpts of conversations with our distinguished guests who shared their thoughts about being at the world’s largest gathering of the folk music community and industry.

**Billy Bragg, United Kingdom - iconic artist-activist and organizer**

*Folk Alliance has always given a platform to people who have something to say. So, for an artist like myself to come and be a part of that and give a keynote speech, it was a great great honor. The key moment for me was the end of my keynote singing “Solidarity Forever” with the crowd of people. Being able to strike a chord with people... bringing the room together like that is something that I'll take away with me. Because, you know, talking is great, but singing is always better.*

**Ani DiFranco, United States - feminist trailblazer and artist-entrepreneur**

*This is not just the community I grew up in, but the community I continue to come home to. This is the community-based, politically aware, socially conscious folk underground. Independent promoters, bookers, labels, and performers that are really doing the underground sub-corporate music thing. And it is strong enough that it will hold you, you can live and die on the folk circuit and have a career, it’s that strong. So, I was always happy to be here, I got that recognition, and it mattered a lot to have a place to belong.*

**Ramy Essam, Egypt - artist voice of the Arab Spring**

*This is my first time to experience something like this. Everybody is supporting each other in different ways. There is music all the time, 24-hours, everywhere. Jamming and meeting new artists from different cultures and backgrounds, it’s the best feeling. I had missed the feeling of unity, of having other fighters around like I had in Egypt. I had been feeling lonely in the music fight. When I came here, it was wonderful to see hundreds of people caring about the same causes and fighting for the same thing, so I am not alone anymore in just four days.*

**CORE TEAM**

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  Executive Director  
- **Jennifer Roe**
  Director of Operations  
- **Alex Mallett**
  Business Development Manager  
- **Erika Noguera**
  Communications Manager  
- **Jenny Tonyes**
  Creative Services Manager  
- **Jerod Rivers**
  Membership & Technology Manager  
- **Leah Watts**
  Office & Outreach Coordinator  
- **Marisa Kolka**
  Development & Communications Coordinator

**ADDITIONAL STAFF**

- **Doug Cox**
  Music Camp Director  
- **Lellie Capwell**
  Publicist  
- **Sheena Keane**
  International Representative  
- **Treasa Levasseur**
  Canadian Representative  
- **Beth Hatch**
  Volunteer Coordinator  
- **Bird Fleming**
  Music Camp Coordinator  
- **Cindy Cogbill**
  Programming Coordinator  
- **Jim Schultz**
  Private Showcase Coordinator  
- **Kelly Dougherty**
  Folk Festival Coordinator  
- **Tara Tonsor**
  Artisan Market Coordinator

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