

**For Immediate Release**

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***Southwest Folklife Alliance Awards Funding to 9 Master Artists  
to Share and Transfer Cultural Knowledge***

**Tucson, AZ**—An accordion player, a Polish folk dancer, an old time fiddler, a dancer of traditional African dances, a Chicano muralist, an Annishinabae artist sharing the tradition of birchbark biting, a musician keeping alive sounds of the Caribbean, a Salt River Maricopa basket weaver and Tohono O’odham basket weaver, are the 2017 recipients of the annual Southwest Folklife Alliance (SFA) Master-Apprentice Award. SFA is an affiliate non-profit organization of the University of Arizona College of Social and Behavioral Sciences, UA Southwest Center and the parent-producing agent of the annual Tucson Meet Yourself Folklife Festival. The organization offers yearlong programs that celebrates and preserves the art, culture, heritage, foodways, and folklife of the borderlands region.

SFA’s Master-Apprentice Award Program supports master traditional artists and apprentices. It awards \$2,500 each to Arizona-based artists/tradition bearers and \$500 to an emerging artist to support the transmission of traditional knowledge and work together for one year. The first award program of its kind in Arizona, it joins over 20 similar award programs across the nation and affirms the organization's commitment to individual heritage based artists, economic development and the transmission of cultural knowledge. Since its inception in 2015, the program has provided awards to 19 master artists.

SFA Executive Director Maribel Alvarez says the awards help bring attention to artist who often go unrecognized. "Arizona artists working in the traditional arts make a unique contribution that too often goes unnoticed or taken for granted. They teach us all how extraordinary beauty and mastery can be forged from the ordinary tools, sounds, and sights of everyday life in our families, churches, or streets. In honoring these masters, the Southwest Folklife Alliance also affirms the dignity of every Arizonan as creative, adaptive, and imaginative problem-solvers."

**The 2017 master-apprentice awardees are:**

**Francisco Garcia**, a Chicano muralist rooted in hip-hop culture and traditional muralism, will work with emerging muralist Angel Lugo to build skills and knowledge in traditional and contemporary mural art in Phoenix.

**Terrol Johnson**, founder of TOCA and traditional and contemporary Tohono O’odham basket maker, will work with apprentice Edward Miguel, the grandson of Johnson’s first teacher, to share his knowledge and skill.

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Nationally acclaimed, Old Time fiddler **Dan Levenson** will work with fiddler Mary Ellen "Emmy" Truckenmiller to keep the tradition of Old Time music alive locally and regionally.

**Gertrude "Gertie" Lopez** is the only female band leader on the Tohono O'odham Nation. A button accordion player, she will work with band member Mike Lewis to preserve traditional waila music.

**Alice Manuel**, an Onk Akimel O'odham basket weaver from Salt River Pima Indian Community, will carry on the tradition of weaving with river willow, devil's claw and cattail working with her apprentice and daughter Raeann Brown.

**Wanesia Spry Misquadaceis**, Annishinabae artist and jeweler, will work with apprentice Lia Clark to pass on the tradition of birchbark biting, a traditional art form of the Annishinabae people and Canada.

**Richard Noel**, a Tucson-based drummer originally from Trinidad is an ambassador of steel drum and various Caribbean hand drums. Noel will work with apprentice Westly Langly Henry II to carry on steel drumming and Trinidad culture in the region.

**Joanna Schmit**, founder and director of traditional Polish folkdance company, Lajkonik, will work with her son Matthew Schmit and Amy Robertson to learn and perform traditional Polish folk dances.

**Barbea Williams**, will share ethnic dance and visual cultural traditions from Africa and the African Diaspora with apprentice Jezaniah and daughter Beah to refine knowledge and expertise in African-centered dance and performance in the region.

This year's awards were supported in part by The National Endowment for the Arts, the Surdna Foundation, The Arizona Commission on the Arts and matched by individual gifts from local donors. In addition to the awards SFA will promote work by Master-Apprentice artist teams throughout the year.

October 13-15, 2017, SFA will feature a special exhibit at the annual folklife festival, Tucson Meet Yourself, featuring 2015-2016 Master-Apprentice artists awarded through the program. "We are honored to celebrate the work of local tradition bearers in our program. The exhibit will create an opportunity for festival goers to gain insight into the creative process of the artists featured as well as learn something about their communities in Arizona," says exhibit curator and program manager, Leia Maahs.

**To learn more about the program and this year's and past year's awardees, visit:**

[www.southwestfolklife.org/master-apprentice-program/](http://www.southwestfolklife.org/master-apprentice-program/)

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