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**CONGO SQUARE RHYTHMS FESTIVAL
DEBUTS SEPT. 28-30, 2007**

Ivan Neville's Dumpstaphunk, Big Sam's Funky Nation, African drum and dance performances and a special mass featuring the legendary Blind Boys of Alabama are highlights of the Congo Square Rhythms Festival, a new event to be presented by the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Foundation on Sunday, Sept. 30, 2007.

This free community event will celebrate the history and cultural significance of Congo Square by bringing music, dance, food and crafts to the cobblestone plaza within Louis Armstrong Park. As the spot where African slaves were allowed to practice their ancestral drumming and dance on Sundays, Congo Square has become famous as one of the birthplaces of American culture. See: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Congo_Square.

"Congo Square has a unique role not only in our community but in the world," said Don Marshall, the Jazz & Heritage Foundation's executive director. "It is one of a handful of places where the Old World was embedded in the New. It is one of the most important ingredients in the gumbo of our culture."

The Congo Square Rhythms Festival begins with a forum that is a part of the Foundation's Tom Dent Congo Square Lecture Series. The discussion, entitled "Congo Square: The Roots of Our Culture," will feature Freddi Evans, Kalamu Ya Salaam, Luther Gray and Ausetua Amor Amenkum. It will be held Friday, Sept. 28, at Basin Street Station (501 Basin St.).

On Sunday, Sept. 30, the festival continues with a special mass at St. Augustine Church (1210 Governor Nicholls St.). "The Amistad Mass: A Tribute to the Unknown Slave" will feature a musical performance by the world-famous, Grammy Award-winning gospel group the Blind Boys of Alabama.

From there, the Treme Brass Band will lead a procession to Congo Square, where drummers and dancers will celebrate a ceremonial blessing of the ground. Members of the public with an interest in African drumming are invited to bring their instruments and participate in the drum circle.

Following the drum circle will be performances on two stages. The Bamboula Stage will feature some of the best in contemporary New Orleans rhythm-and-blues, while the Calinda Stage will feature African drumming and dance. Spoken word artists and poets will also perform on both stages.

There will also be lots to do for children, including storytelling, drum workshops, mask making and other activities. The Food Court will feature African, New Orleans and other international cuisines. The African Marketplace will have art, clothing and other collectibles. Numerous community groups will have informational displays.

The complete schedule of performances is as follows:

Friday, Sept. 28

Basin Street Station (501 Basin St.)

7:30 p.m.

The Tom Dent Congo Square Lecture Series presents a forum: "Congo Square: The Roots of Our Culture," featuring Freddi Evans, Kalamu Ya Salaam, Luther Gray and Ausetua Amor Amenkum.

Saturday, Sept. 29

Inter-Fest, at Louis Armstrong Park

Co-sponsored by the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Foundation

Sunday, September 30

St. Augustine Church (1210 Gov. Nicholls St.)

10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

The Amistad Mass: A Tribute to the Unknown Slave
featuring a performance by the Blind Boys of Alabama

11:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Jazz procession to Congo Square
featuring the Treme Brass Band

BAMBOULA STAGE

12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m. Drum Circle at Congo Square
with dancing, ceremony and plaque dedication

1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. Bamboula 2000

2:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. Donald Harrison and Congo Nation

4:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Big Sam's Funky Nation

5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. Ivan Neville's Dumpstaphunk

CALINDA STAGE

2:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. Takrema Dance Theater

3:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. Culu & N'Kafu African Dance Companies

5:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. Kumbuka African Drum & Dance Collective

For more information about the Congo Square Rhythms Festival, please see: www.jazzandheritage.org/congosquare.

The Congo Square Rhythms Festival is presented by the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Foundation. Co-sponsors include: The Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation & Tourism; the New Orleans Metropolitan Convention & Visitors Bureau; the Louisiana Division of the Arts; Basin Street Station; SDT Waste & Debris Services; and the Congo Square Foundation.

The Jazz & Heritage Foundation is also a major sponsor of Inter-Fest, a festival of Caribbean and Latin American culture that will be held on Saturday, Sept. 29, in Congo Square. Performers at Inter-Fest include Fredy Omar con su Banda, Moyuba, Casa Samba, Misterio and many others. For details, please see: www.interfestnola.org.

The New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival and Foundation, Inc. is the nonprofit organization that owns the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival presented by Shell, proceeds from which support the foundation's year-round community development activities in the areas of education, economic development and cultural programming. Programs and assets of the foundation include: radio station WWOZ 90.7-FM; the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Foundation Archive; the Don Jamison Heritage School of Music; the Tom Dent Congo Square Lecture Series; the Jazz Journey concert series; the Community Partnership Grants program; the Raisin' the Roof housing initiative; and the S.E.E.D. micro-loan program for entrepreneurs. The foundation also produces community events such as the Crescent City Blues Festival, Fiesta Latina, the Congo Square Rhythms Festival, the Louisiana Cajun-Zydeco Festival, the Down By the Riverside Thanksgiving concert and others.

For more information, please call the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Foundation at (504) 558-6100.