



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Media Contact: Nancy Hawley
Phone: (252) 514-4937
Email: nhawley@tryonpalace.org

“THE JONKONNU PARADE: AN ARTICULATION OF ESCAPE AND RENEWAL IN NORTH CAROLINA”

Presented by: Dr. Jermaine Archer

Thursday, November 20 – 7 p.m. – Free!
Tryon Palace Visitor Center Auditorium

The men, women and children who participated in the nineteenth-century North Carolina Jonkonnu slave parade engaged in a brief respite from the racial social hierarchy. The revelers would often approach the master’s residence seeking monetary compensation for their work. Central features of the festival included circular dance, drums and other percussion instruments, improvisational song, brightly colored garb, a wand to keep onlookers at a distance, and masks which sometimes took the form of houseboats or canoes.

While different forms of Jonkonnu have been documented in various locales throughout the African Diaspora, scholars generally agree that during the nineteenth century the festival was confined to North Carolina in the United States. Dr. Archer also believes that there were at least semblances of the parade that extended to South Carolina. There is also evidence to suggest that the appropriation of the canoe or houseboat in the Kunering festival was related to considerations of escape as well as a working-class consciousness

of discontentment that would not have been unfamiliar to some members of the West African occupational group of canoe laborers.

Dr. Archer will examine how contemporary performances of the Jonkonnu musical and dance troupe from Tryon Palace Historical Site & Gardens in New Bern, North Carolina may shed further light on the cultural and ideological currents of the African Diaspora.

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The North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources is a state agency dedicated to the promotion and protection of North Carolina's arts, history, and culture. For more information, visit www.ncculture.com.

Tryon Palace Historic Sites & Gardens, located in New Bern, N.C., is an agency of the N.C. Department of Cultural Resources. Buildings currently open to the public include the reconstructed Tryon Palace, the John Wright Stanly House, the Robert Hay House and the New Bern Academy Museum. The visitor center and the first floor of Tryon Palace are accessible to visitors with disabilities. For directions and further information about special events, programs or group tours, phone 800-767-1560 or 252-514-4900 or check our web site: <http://www.tryonpalace.org/>

610 POLLOCK STREET, NEW BERN, NC 28562
WWW.TRYONPALACE.ORG 252.514.4900