



Half Moon Sword **Traditional English Sword Dancing**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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THIRTY-EIGHTH ANNUAL NEW YORK SWORD DANCE FESTIVAL RETURNS TO NEW YORK CITY, FEBRUARY 17-18, 2024

**Ten performing groups to perform a variety of
English-based dance forms in a weekend of free performances**

Family-friendly showcases built on ancient wintertime traditions

Half Moon Sword will present its 38th annual New York Sword Dance Festival in New York City on February 17-18, 2024. The event will feature ten performing troupes from across the northeastern U.S. in a captivating weekend of performances in public spaces in Brooklyn and Manhattan. The Festival, which New York-based Half Moon Sword inaugurated in 1986, was the first event in North America to focus on English-style sword dancing.

"The dark days of winter have traditionally been a time for dances that celebrate the turning of the seasons," says Sarah Henry, a founder of the Festival. "For close to four decades, this event has become a New York ritual of its own. We are thrilled to brighten the mid-winter season for New Yorkers of all ages, showcasing some of the best American interpretations of Northern English folk dance."

Sword dancing is a winter celebration practiced in the farming and coal-mining regions of northern England, where the annual visit of the local sword dancers to the village homes was thought to guarantee good luck for the year. The Festival will feature both mystical, stately longsword and athletic, percussive rapper sword dancing, with live music on fiddle, accordion, and other instruments. In both types of sword dance, the dancers are linked in a ring by the "swords" they hold in their hands while they work as a team to weave intricate figures and patterns without breaking the circle. The dances are thought to have roots in ancient

rituals, traces of which can still be seen in these present-day displays of skill. Some performances will also include Cotswold Morris and step dancing, related English folk traditions.

This year's Festival will feature the "home team," Half Moon Sword, and their many guests for a weekend of crowd-pleasing, mesmerizing family entertainment. The dancers will perform in libraries, schools, churches, and other public spaces. All performances are free.

The performance schedule follows. For more information, or to see photos and videos, e-mail Emma Gorin at emgorin@gmail.com or call 646-241-4599. You may also check the team website at www.halfmoonsword.org, or contact the team at halfmoonsword@gmail.com

**PRELIMINARY SCHEDULE FOR THE 38th NEW YORK SWORD DANCE FESTIVAL
Saturday, February 17th, 2024**

10:00 a.m.

OPENING SHOWCASE

Speyer Hall at University Settlement
184 Eldridge Street, Manhattan

1:30 p.m.

Brooklyn Heights Library
286 Cadman Plaza West, Brooklyn

1:30 p.m.

Seward Park Library
192 East Broadway, Manhattan

1:30 and 3:30 p.m.

Pacific Library
25 Fourth Avenue, Brooklyn

3:30 p.m.

Jefferson Market Library
425 Sixth Avenue, Manhattan

3:30 p.m.

Park Slope Library
431 Sixth Avenue, Brooklyn

**Use of library space by the New York Sword Dance Festival for this program does not indicate endorsement by The New York Public Library.*

Sunday, February 18th, 2024

12:30 p.m.

The Gray Mare

61 Second Avenue, Manhattan

12:30 p.m.

Brooklyn Conservatory of Music

58 Seventh Avenue, Brooklyn

12:45 p.m.

Old First Reformed Church

729 Carroll Street, Brooklyn

GRAND FINALE

2:30 p.m.

Brooklyn Waldorf School

11 Jefferson Avenue, Brooklyn

PARTICIPATING TEAMS

Bouwerie Boys Morris Dancers; New York, NY

Charles River Rapper; Boston, MA

Cutting Edge Sword; Washington, DC

Great Meadows Morris and Sword; Sudbury, MA

Half Moon Sword; New York, NY

Harbour Steel; Boston, MA

Just in Time Step Dancers; Washington, DC

Marlboro Morris and Sword; Marlboro, VT

Orion Longsword; Boston, MA

Sligo Creek Sword; Washington, DC

ABOUT HALF MOON SWORD

Half Moon Sword is a New York City sword dance team that has been dancing together since 1981. Their skillful dance displays have gained them a reputation here and in England for precision and fresh interpretations of traditional dances. The members of Half Moon Sword share a love of this dance form with all its ritual and mystery. The annual New York Sword Dance Festival is their opportunity to share the excitement of sword dancing with other dancers and the public. In recent years the team has performed at the Dancing America Rapper Tournament in Amherst, Boston, and Baltimore; at the annual New England Folk Festival in Massachusetts, and at the Marlboro Morris Ale in Vermont.