



## Cecelia Otto performs along the Lincoln Highway for the second time — this time with a newly released CD and book about her adventures on the famous road

**PRESS RELEASE** — For immediate release

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**NEWS HOOK:** *Portland, Oregon, resident Cecelia Otto is gearing up for her second trek across the country performing century-old popular tunes from the era of the Lincoln Highway. With a new CD and book to boot, this vaudeville singer owes her theatrical success to Kickstarter.com backers — and a love for celebrating ancestors.*

In June, 2015, singer Cecelia Otto will embark on her second trek across the United States performing historical songs along the Lincoln Highway — the first automobile road across America.



Otto is a 21st century vaudeville singer and creator of The American Songline project, an outlet for the singer to perform, travel, write and share historical music across the country.

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## WHAT IS THE LINCOLN HIGHWAY?

**WHAT:** *The Lincoln Highway was the first transcontinental highway for automobiles across the United States. It was America's first national memorial to President Abraham Lincoln.*

**WHEN:** *Conceived in 1912 and dedicated in 1913, the highway ran coast-to-coast through 14 states from Times Square in New York City to Lincoln Park in San Francisco.*

*Through its history in operation, the highway ran through 128 counties and 700 towns. At one time, the highway was 5,872 miles. It is affectionately known as "The Main Street Across America."*

## WHO IS CECELIA?

**WHO:** *Cecelia Otto of Portland, Oregon, spent six months performing historical songs along the Lincoln Highway — sharing its history as a living history entertainer. Otto performed at the 100th anniversary Centennial Celebration in Kearney, Nebraska. And in June, she hits the road again.*

“ I wasn't sure if Americans today would like this, but there they were — sitting there and putting their phones away and asking questions. ”

— Singer Cecelia Otto



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Otto's fascination with the national highway system sparked the creative project which went on to earn \$15,291 in 2013 from 163 backers on the popular crowdfunding website Kickstarter.com.

That year, the Portland, Oregon, resident celebrated the highway's 100th anniversary by traveling and performing for six months all while documenting her musical journey.

Her album, "An American Songline: A Musical Journey Along the Lincoln Highway," was released in March, 2015, and her book also titled "An American Songline" will be available for purchase in June.

#### **History of the songline**

Before embarking on her first solo cross-country journey, Otto reached out to historical societies along

the route to view old musical programs and see what songs were performed back in the Lincoln Highway's heyday. She chose songs from the 1913 to 1935 pre-WWII era that worked well for her professionally trained mezzo-contralto voice.

Wearing vintage-inspired stage outfits, Otto performed popular old time tunes such as "Second Hand Rose" and "Out Where the West Begins" in theaters across the country. She mimicked the movements and expressions of the singers a hundred years ago after studying silent films.

"I was booking shows while I traveled," she said, noting that venues often didn't book months in advance. "The money raised went toward venue rentals, insurance and to pay the musicians in each town."

She traveled alone in her 2001 Volkswagen to each

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tour stop — racking up more than 10,000 miles on her car. Her 2013 tour started at Duplex Cabaret in New York, New York, and ended at the Duarte Garage and Lincoln Highway Museum in Livermore, Calif.

### Setting the stage

Otto's 2013 performances often took place in theaters with pre-promotion performed by historical societies. This ensured that a piano, piano player and — hopefully — a crowd would be available. She'll also use this method this second time around.

"This was the best way," she said. "No one wants to see some girl sing vaudeville at a truck stop."

Her singing performances — either 30 minutes or an hour — required a piano player whom she'd meet for the first time in each town.

"We'd do a quick rehearsal and it was showtime," Otto said. "In Wyoming I met the piano player an hour before. We were meeting as people were arriving."

Performances often organically ended with questions from the audience about her travel plans and knowledge of this forgotten highway system.



"Roads have significance in other cultures, as well," she said. "In Australia, when Aborigines go out on 'walkabout,' they follow ancestral paths and 'sing their ancestors' back into existence. These paths are called 'songlines.'"

By following the Lincoln Highway through song, Otto's ongoing project is aimed at keeping history alive, informing Americans of their strong heritage and giving audiences an oppor-

tunity to unplug and enjoy a simpler time.

"I wasn't sure if Americans today would like this, but there they were — sitting there and putting their phones away and asking questions," Otto said.

### Adventures make up new book

In addition to sharing historical stories with her audiences, Otto learned a great deal about the country today. It is these

two storylines which are woven into her new book "An American Songline," available through Amazon.com soon.

"This isn't a travel diary; it's not, 'I ate a sandwich and then played a concert,'" Otto joked. "It's about the journey and the people. I stopped in 14 states. There's a chapter for each state."

In June, Otto will start performances in the midwest before hitting the western states in July and August.

A complete schedule is available on her website <http://AmericanSongline.net>.

"I'm excited to get back out there. What I saw on my six-month journey was that people are genuinely kind and looking for meaningful experiences. I stayed on couches, made friends and saw great patriotism," she said. "Parents, kids and grandparents want to make their lives and communities better."

She continued, "Oh, and Americans — for the most part — are interested in their history and families just want to have a good time spending time together."

Otto hopes to enhance lives once again as she weaves her way through the small American towns she has grown to love.

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