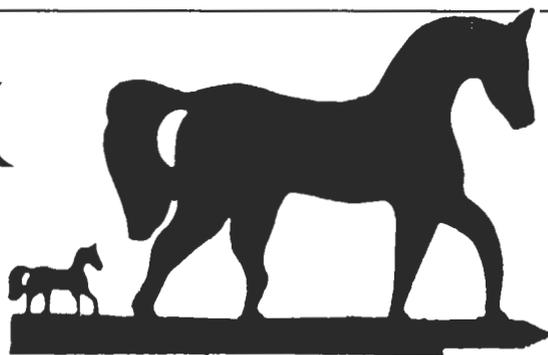

NEW YORK FOLKLORE

newsletter



Vol. 11, No. 3
Fall 1990



Cambodian dancers Chan Moly Sam and Somaly Hay performing Cambodian court dance in Ithaca following Presenting Folk Arts Conference and Showcase at Cornell.

PRESENTING FOLK ARTS: CONFERENCE AND SHOWCASE

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New York Folklore Newsletter

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NEA IN CRISIS: ACT NOW!

by John Suter

As you know, the National Endowment for the Arts is under heavy attack this year, and the climax of the struggle is at hand. Every five years, the NEA must be reauthorized by Congress. This year, in the wake of the Mapplethorpe and Serrano affairs (or perhaps we should call it the Jesse Helms affair!), the agency is facing its toughest fight ever, and the outcome is by no means certain.

The reauthorization bill has been passed out of committee in the House without restrictive language, but also without a recommendation. Some 27 amendments have been added, and the whole package is scheduled for debate by the full House in September. So far, the Senate has taken no action. Also in the fall the appropriation bill will be debated—how much money will the Endowment have to spend?

So there is urgent work to do: letters to write, calls to make, visits to your legislators. When the debate caught fire around the beginning of the summer, the mail was running very heavily against the NEA. But in recent weeks, the arts community nationwide and supporters of the arts from every walk of life have awakened to the seriousness of the situation, and now the mail in favor of reauthorization has increased dramatically.

We must keep up the pressure. Congress must hear articulate and passionate support of the NEA, and in particular of a grants-making process free of censorship, from all quarters. Numbers count. *Your* letter or call is important. Here's what you can do:

- 1) Write a personal letter to your U.S. Representative, your two U.S. Senators, and the President. Tell them that you want them to support the reauthorization of the NEA without restrictive language and without budget cuts.
- 2) Visit the local office of your Representative or Senator and speak your mind. Congress is in recess during August, and your legislators will be home, listening to their constituents. You can be sure that the anti-NEA factions will be busy lobbying, and we must, too. The personal

phone calls and visits have an impact. They let legislators know that you care enough to act.

3) Call 1-900-226-ARTS. At a cost of \$4.50, automatically charged to your phone bill, a letter or telegram will be sent directly to your two Senators and your Representative. All you have to do is leave your name and address.

4) Write letters to the editor of your local papers. Legislators read them.

On the surface, the issue of the moment, as raised by highly organized, politically savvy elements on the far right, is obscenity. But the attack on the NEA, and the arts in general, is really about much deeper issues. Is it a proper role of artists to be creative, provocative, and challenging to the conventional wisdom of the day, or must artists be supported only if they play it safe and reflect back to society only bland and uncritical images of itself? Are we witnessing an attack on the First Amendment right of free speech? When the movies and television, whose audiences dwarf those of the arts, are filled with gratuitous violence, sexual and otherwise, and violent crime, sexual and otherwise, is on the rise, why the special attention to serious creative artists? What's really going on here?

From Madison Avenue to presidential campaigns to foreign policy we have seen increasingly sophisticated distortion of facts and manipulation of people's fears and prejudices used to stifle debate about real issues and build support for political decisions based solely on emotion (the Willie Horton commercials were a case in point). Facts about the issues—for example that of some 80,000 grants awarded by the NEA over the years, fewer than 20 have been controversial—have been frozen out of the debate. It will take determined and persistent effort to break the ice, to force politicians to listen to reason—and numbers—and to face the political consequences if they cave in to the hysteria on the far right.

Please take the time *now* to write, call, and visit your legislators. August is the critical time. Your efforts *will* make a difference.

NYFS FALL MEETINGS AT CORNING

by Peter Voorheis

Corning is the site of the 1990 Fall Meetings of the New York Folklore Society, on September 14 to 16, co-sponsored by the Chemung Valley Arts Council and the Corning Museum of Glass. Each year, the New York Folklore Society's annual meeting focuses on aspects of the folklore and folk arts of the region where the meetings are held. This year, the theme is glass. You can expect demonstrations by glass artists, a tour of the Corning Glass Works and a glass blowing studio on Market Street, a presentation by local historians, a discussion of the nature and limits of occupational folk arts in an industrial setting, good food, and evening entertainment.

The city itself provides some interesting contrasts in both its history and its present day milieu. Home of the Glass Works, Corning is for all intents and purposes a one-company town. At the same time, the city is both a tourist mecca and cultural center for its region. Renovated brickfront buildings housing glassblowing studios and art shops share the street with 1950's storefronts.

These contrasts are a function of the dual nature of glass itself which is both an artistic medium and a raw material for manufactured products. For those in the art world, Corning is associated with handblown glass, fine crystal, and engraving. But only a handful of individuals have worked in these areas compared to those involved in the more practical applications that Corning has pioneered. In 1879, for example, eleven years after the founding of the Glass Works, the company made the glass bulb for Edison's first incandescent lamp. In 1915, it invented Pyrex and in 1926 introduced a ribbon machine that could produce as many glass bulbs in one minute as two blowers could in eight hours. In 1934 the Glass Works manufactured the largest piece of glass ever made—a 200-inch mirror for the Mount Palomar observatory.

When the Corning Glass Center opened in the early 50's, highlighting both the industrial and artistic aspects of glass, the

city quickly gained a reputation for its cultural and scientific offerings. However, Corning had a parallel reputation as a factory town. All of this changed in 1972 when Hurricane Agnes headed inland and stalled over western New York and Pennsylvania. After a few days of torrential rain, the Chemung River overflowed its banks into Market Street—the center of the business district. While the progress of recovery has been piecemeal, the merchants have revitalized their buildings to the point where the street itself has become both a tourist attraction and an artistic community.

The artistic side of Corning might only be a memory were it not for a decision made by the Glass Works directors more than 70 years ago. In 1903, the glass artist Frederick Carder founded the Steuben Glass factory. Steuben was acquired by the Corning Glass Works in 1918. Since the demand for art glass had fallen off, the directors considered abandoning glass blowing altogether in favor of strictly industrial applications.

Instead, Steuben glass artists who had previously designed their own pieces, nearly to their professional oblivion, now made uniform designs determined by the company. While to arts advocates such a compromise may seem more like a sell-out, the effect was that Corning retained its reputation as a center for glass arts. Private glass artists, many of them former Glass Works artists who branched out on their own, flourished in the cultural atmosphere salvaged by the company's decision.

Given the longevity of the glass industry here, occupational traditions are passed on within families. For example, Roy Denson, master gaffer (or head glass blower) at the Glass Works for many years, is the son of John B. Denson, a glass cutter at the factory where

Roy apprenticed at the age of 17. When Roy retired in 1975, he went into business for himself repairing fine glass and making jewelry from shards or rare or antique types of Corning glass. He uses cutting, grinding and polishing equipment, some of which was inherited from his father. Roy has taught much of what he knows to his son and son-in-law who run their own glass repair business and make objects for sale at the Glass Works giftshop.

Accommodations for the meetings will be at the Pierri's Days Inn, one block from the Corning Museum of Glass.

For further information, or to register, contact Peter Voorheis, Chemung Valley Arts Council, (607) 962-5871.

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

Friday, Sept 14

- 5:00 Hotel registration
- 7:00 Informal gathering at Star's Restaurant

Saturday, Sept 15

- 9:00 NYFS Annual Meeting (for NYFS members)
- 10:30 Local History Presentation
- 11:30 Visit to a local glass blowing studio
- 12:15 Lunch on your own
- 1:45 Forum: Occupational folk arts in an industrial setting
- 3:00 Visit to the Corning Museum of Glass
- 5:00 Free time or optional visit to Rockwell Museum
- 6:30 Dinner at Antoinette's Restaurant
- 8:00 Evening entertainment

Sunday

- 10:00 New York Folklore Society Board Meeting

WHO OWNS MICKEY?

MUSINGS ON DISNEY AND FOLK TRADITION

by Steve Zeitlin

School Library, Valle Cruzes, NC. Mickey Mouse never bothered anyone—neither did Snow White, the seven dwarfs, or the other Disney characters that blithely smiled ear to ear from the mural on the wall. But these images were recently covered over with an agonizing layer of paint by a principal who developed the “Fear of Disney” when the megacorporation took action against a day care center in Hallandale, Florida. It seems that the day care center had painted Mickeys, Donalds, and Plutos on their walls. Disney’s legal arm is a little like Ursula’s tentacles in *The Little Mermaid*—attacking in every direction. Even the Academy Awards were threatened with litigation this year when a dancer dressed as Snow White appeared on the program.

Law suits were something Disney himself never had to worry about. In the 1940’s and 1950’s, animated Disney films featuring Snow White and Cinderella, and the B’rer Rabbit stories featured in *Song of the South* were traditional—free for anyone to use around a campfire or in a book. They were part of a common heritage of widely known songs and stories that had been passed on by word-of-mouth in local communities for generations. In fact, during the 1940’s and 1950’s when Disney was exploring ways to transform folk into popular culture, a group of academicians from countries around the world were, and had been, engaged in an unprecedented effort to catalogue, index, and map out the world’s traditional stories according to type and motif. Led by Stith Thompson and Antti Aarne, the result of the effort is called the *Types of the Folktale* (1928) and the six volume *Motif-Index of Folk Literature* (1932-1936). According to folklorist Bruce Buckley, Walt Disney Productions was the largest single purchaser of the publications, giving a set to each of its writers. The folk heritage of the world was theirs to copyright.

Disney’s research department communicated with Duncan Emrich of the Archive of Folk Song a number of times while working on their films about Davey Crockett and cartoons about Pecos Bill, John Henry, and Johnny Appleseed. On

September 4, 1945, the Research Department of Walt Disney Productions wrote to the archive: “Gentleman: We are in the process of compiling research on American Folklore with a view to a possible feature production concerning same.” They requested listings of everything in the archives and ended up purchasing two records for \$14.03. They did hire a folklore consultant by the name of Carl Carmer although precisely what he was hired to do awaits further research.

Walt Disney’s gift was, in part, to imaginatively transform folk tradition with the tools of animation and film. But it is ironic that, having taken so much from folk tradition, there is so little sense of having to give anything back. Rather than appreciating the fact that parents and teachers have internalized these characters to the point where they want to make them a part of their surroundings, the Disney Corporation sees grounds for litigation. The corporation is deeply concerned that any of their characters—molded from tradition—might slip back into tradition; that school children and other communities might use them without paying royalties.

Of course, to vilify Disney after all he has contributed to American life would be pointless. But the Hallandale case and the subsequent Great Mickey Mouse Blot Out make us think for a moment about the commoditization of American culture. In America, images and stories that were once traditional are now owned, and their owners can resist efforts by others to customize, personalize, adapt, and reuse them. Admittedly, Disney’s copyright and law suits are about the use of visual images created by Disney and not the stories themselves, but the two have become closely, if not inextricably, linked.

When Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm began collecting folktales in the early 19th century, Napoleon’s troops were still in Germany. Collecting folktales became a kind of subversive pursuit for a German mythology, an effort to codify a German identity. Today, characters such as Snow White and Cinderella, uncovered by the Grimms and other collectors in the stories of the European peasantry, have become unofficial symbols of America, albeit

transformed by the magic of animation. For many people around the world they stand for us—like the eagle, the flag, and the Statue of Liberty. But unlike symbols that are free and open for use and interpretation, Mickey, Donald, Snow White, Cinderella, and Sleeping Beauty are corporate symbols viciously protected by copyright.

If corporations could get away with it, they might charge us a few cents every time we hummed a tune in the shower. The truth is, we can’t afford to pay a fee every time we doodle Mickey Mouse or photocopy a cartoon to distribute in the office. After all, once they pass into our communities, stories and songs become part of our lives. Copyright ultimately reverts back to the people at the local level. It’s our job to transform pop culture into what Gary Fine calls “idioculture”: the idiosyncratic adaptation of mass culture that occurs in families and communities. Halloween, parades, parties, and murals on school walls are ways we transform pop culture into metaphors for our lives, resources for our humor, part of our cultural lexicon. Real communities—and schools are one of them—have to be able to use common images to build communities where people interact face-to-face on a daily basis. Americans cannot find meaning in their lives as passive recipients of popular culture across the airwaves. Pop culture becomes meaningful when it is integrated into our personal lives, into the folk cultures of local communities.

Disney films are America’s folktales. It is a tribute to the writers and animators that Disney is such an important link in the chain of tradition. As much as Disney stories are transmitted via television and film, and on lunchboxes, there is a point at which they belong to us. They become part of the folklore of families, teenagers, and groups of kids. In the 1940’s and 1950’s, the work song of the seven dwarfs in *Snow White* was parodied by schoolchildren: “Whistle while you work/ Hitler was a jerk/ Mussolini pulled his weini/ now it doesn’t work.” In our family, my daughter has mastered the accent of the West Indian lobster in the *Little Mermaid*

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MADE WITH PASSION: THE HEMPHILL FOLK ART COLLECTION

Made with Passion: the Hemphill Folk Art Collection of the National Museum of American Art opens in Washington, DC on September 22 and continues through January 21, 1991. Almost half of the 427 folk arts objects acquired by gift or purchase from the Herbert Waide Hemphill Jr. Collection since 1986 will be on view in their new home in the National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

The exhibition includes monumental "tin men," trade signs, visionary and political paintings, whirligigs, tattoo designs, fraternal objects, bottlecap animals, carvings, canes, and face jugs—an extraordinary array of 199 objects created in America in the 19th and 20th centuries. These works reflect the committed inventiveness of people from diverse geographic, ethnic, religious, political, and economic backgrounds.

Suggesting the range of 20th-century works are landscapes by Joseph Yoakum, "sermons on paper" by African American Sister Gertrude Morgan, visionary paintings and constructions by Rev. Howard Finster, "root monsters" by Miles Carpenter, carved animals by Hispanic American Felipe Archuleta, and expressionistic



Painting by Howard Finster, 1978.
From "Made with Passion."

paintings by 96-year-old Jon Serl. Twenty-two of the artists are still living, and several will be demonstrating their work throughout the duration of the show.

Collector Hemphill favored works that convey the underlying passions and ideas of their makers, whether they have been involved in social commentary, spirituality, the effects of time, or the concept of community. The museum's collection suggests that folk art is not isolated creativity but an elaboration of social and personal expression: from decorating a functional work to reinterpreting popular culture or recycling discarded objects.

The 256 page, fully illustrated book published by the Smithsonian Institution Press provides a history of American folk art collecting from 1950 to the present, a description of the events, objects and issues that affected Herbert Hemphill, and much new information about the histories of many of the objects.

Exhibition public programs include ongoing demonstrations by contemporary folk artists, and a seminar, lecture series, and symposium. From October 9-12, presenters will challenge traditional notions of folk art through lectures, films, and tours of the exhibition. Art historians, folklorists, and American Studies experts from around the country will address issues of authenticity, tradition, community, ethnicity, aging, eccentricity and collecting as elements in understanding folk art as cultural expression from October 15-December 10. In addition, an October 26 symposium addresses *Cult, Culture, and Consumers: Collecting Self-Taught Art in the 20th Century*.

The National Museum of American Art is at Eighth and G Streets N.W.—at the Gallery Place Metro Station—and is open every day of the week, except December 25, from 10-5. Admission is free.



"Marla," by Irving Dominick, 1982. From "Made with Passion."

Excerpt from the Catalogue Essay...

"...Occasionally, Hemphill added an example that once again tampered with this neatly packaged field. From several different sources in New York, he acquired objects such as a Mickey Mouse kachina, a beaded Iroquois whimsy, a New Mexican santo of the Virgin Mary . . . Their character and low prices may have attracted him, but it is also possible that their ethnographic or craft origins once again struck a chord . . . Whatever Hemphill's reason, these works did not figure into the mentality of those collecting in the accepted genres of folk art . . ."

—Lynda Roscoe Hartigan,
National Museum of Art

PRESENTING FOLK ARTS: SHOWCASE AND CONFERENCE

by John Suter

"I'd like to present folk artists in my concert series, but how do I find performers who are available to tour, and how can I tell if they're appropriate for my series?"

"My organization plans to present some traditional performers in concert at the local high school. We don't have much money for a fancy sound system, but we can use the school's PA system free. Is that likely to be adequate? How do we tell? What technical help are we likely to need?"



Keynote speaker Bess Lomax Hawes, Director, NEA Folk Arts Program

"Our facility has rarely presented African American music in the past, and when we have, we've usually had only a handful of African Americans in the audience. What do we need to do differently to serve the black community more effectively?"

"The audiences in our community know almost nothing about Puerto Rican music and dance. When we present these traditions, we want people to have some idea what they're hearing and seeing. But how much information is really useful? And how should it be presented—in program notes, by a speaker on stage, by the performers themselves?"

On June 14, sixty performing arts presenters and others involved in folk arts programming gathered at Cornell University for a two-day showcase and conference to discuss questions like these which inevitably arise when an organization is presenting culturally diverse folk tradi-

tions on stage. The presenters were joined by twenty panelists with broad and diverse experience in folk arts programming and by performing artists representing a range of regional and ethnic musical traditions.

Presenting Folk Arts was produced by The New York State Council on the Arts in cooperation with the New York Folklore Society, and hosted by Cornell's Department of Theatre Arts. It was directed by NYSFA Folk Arts Program Director Robert Baron and coordinated in Ithaca by John Suter, Director of the New York Folklore Society.

Throughout the conference, panel discussions were interspersed with brief performances by the six folk ensembles in a format designed to introduce presenting organizations to a variety of traditions and to illustrate methods of presenting performing folk artists. The panel discussions addressed criteria for selecting folk artists, production values and technical considerations for folk arts presentations, techniques for educating audiences about folk traditions, audience development, and the fostering of relationships with communities whose traditions are presented on stage.

The performers were *The Apsara Ensemble*, performing traditional Cambodian music and dance and led by Sam-Ang Sam; *The Whitstein Brothers* with old-time country vocal and instrumental music from Louisiana; Upstate New York old-time fiddlers *Alice Clemens* and *Mark Hamilton*; *Los Pleneros de la 21* playing Afro-Puerto Rican *bomba* and *plena*; *Shashmaqam: Bukharan Jewish Ensemble* with music and dance from Soviet Central Asia; and Piedmont blues musicians *Cephas* and *Wiggins*.

Daytime performances at the conference were presented in contrasting spaces, a 450-seat proscenium theater and a 150-seat flexible theater, to illustrate how

folk arts can be effectively presented in various kinds of performance spaces. Three public performances were also included in the schedule, both to suggest to the conference participants various contexts for presentation, chosen for their accessibility to target communities and their approximation of traditional performance settings, and to serve the local community—to spread the artistic and cultural wealth beyond the walls of the conference. The performance components of *Presenting Folk Arts*, which occurred both at the conference and in the Ithaca community, offered concrete examples of solutions to some of the issues being discussed.

On Thursday evening, Piedmont blues musicians *Cephas* and *Wiggins* from Washington, D.C., and the *Whitstein Brothers* gave a concert in the Proscenium Theater of the Center for Theatre Arts for an audience of about 400. It was an interesting pairing of duos from Southern folk traditions, one black and one white, and was enthusiastically received.

Friday, *Alice Clemens* and *Mark Hamilton* headed up the hill south of Ithaca to the Montessori School where they played for the regular Friday night dance, sponsored by Tompkins County Country Dances. They called mostly old-time square dances (the dancers there usually do contra dancing) and were joined by several local musicians. It was a festive evening and certainly a more natural and

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Shashmaqam: Bukharan Jewish Ensemble

UPSTATE NEW YORK FOLK ARTS FORUM CRITIQUES

Folk Roots/New Roots: Folklore in American Life

by John Suter

On June 21, in its second meeting of the year, the Upstate New York Folk Arts Forum met at the Strong Museum in Rochester to discuss exhibit planning and evaluation. The meeting, hosted by Kate Koperski of Arts for Greater Rochester, began with a walk through of *Folk Roots/New Roots: Folklore in American Life*, a travelling exhibit originally installed at The Museum of Our National Heritage in Lexington, VA, and now on display at The Strong. The exhibit—and the associated book of the same title—explore from an historical point of view the conceptualization of folk culture in the United States and its relationship to mainstream culture. They look at the ways folklife and traditional culture have been mythologized, romanticized, demeaned, commercially exploited, and otherwise integrated into or purged from America's dominant image of itself over the years. Beginning with the treatment of American Indians, the exhibit presents many examples of stereotyped images and concepts and through text or other counterposed images draws attention to the distortions and violations inherent in the stereotypes.

Folk Roots/New Roots proved to be an excellent catalyst for the discussion. There was general agreement among the forum participants that the exhibit is interesting and provocative and that it addresses very important issues. But it also has serious flaws. So there was plenty to talk about.

Those who had read the book—*Folk Roots, New Roots: Folklore in American Life*, Jane S. Becker and Barbara Franco, eds., Lexington, MA, 1988—agreed that it is excellent. Its thoughtful and often provocative essays look at the issues from a range of perspectives, but throughout there is a unifying theme of respect for traditional people and their cultures and a desire to expose stereotypes and the social, political, economic, and cultural dynamics that create and sustain them. The exhibit is an excellent complement to the book, but on its own, it doesn't deliver what it promises.

Participants in the forum took issue with many aspects of the exhibit. It presented the Strong Museum staff with extraordinary difficulties in installation, primarily because, although it was intended to travel, it had been designed idiosyncratically for its initial site and was hard to adapt to a new one. Viewing the exhibit, the theme was difficult to discern, the flow was unclear, and there were serious problems with design.

The most important criticisms centered around the failure of the exhibit to deliver its message clearly enough visually, and the consequent danger that people attending could easily leave with stereotypes and misconceptions reinforced rather than challenged. Not everyone who walks through a museum exhibit reads all the text panels and labels thoroughly. If there is a theme or a narrative flow that is conveyed only through the text and that is not inherent in the flow of objects and images, the casual observer will miss it. In many cases that's fine. The viewer may enjoy and be stimulated by the succession of beautiful or interesting objects and leave satisfied without reading a word. But when the images are stereotypical and are intended to be understood as distortions, extra care must be taken to ensure that the critical point of view is conveyed clearly and unmistakably through the design or through text that can't be ignored.

This is where *Folk Roots/New Roots* falls short. It is a good example of a book-on-a-wall exhibit, and one has to read the book carefully to understand the exhibit. Participants at the forum found themselves confronted with offensive images or contexts and often had to dig through the text to find the interpretation that put the object, image or context into proper critical perspective. Reflecting afterwards on the exhibit and the discussion at the forum, Kate Koperski says that, "whenever powerful ethnic/class/racial stereotypes are presented publicly, the real people behind the stereotypes deserve equal time, whether or not, as is the case with this exhibit, the joke is ultimately on the ethnographers, folklorists or others who create the stereotypes." She suggests it would have been a good idea to have the

exhibit evaluated, perhaps in its planning stages as well as at the end, by a panel representing various ethnic communities that are included in the exhibit.

The choice of a brown-on-brown color scheme, the dim lighting, and a series of cartoon-like, stereotypic graphic figures on the main text panels seemed to reinforce dated clichés about folk arts, folk culture and particular ethnic or regional groups.

All this criticism notwithstanding, the exhibit is well worth seeing if you get a chance—just be sure to read the text. And pick up a copy of the book at the gift shop.

The discussion of *Folk Roots/New Roots* stimulated a number of recommendations regarding planning and evaluation, including:

- Set clear goals during the planning process—to explore a particular theme coherently, to raise certain questions, to encourage participation, to have visitors leave with new ideas about a subject, etc.
- Begin evaluating the progress towards the goals during the planning, perhaps by involving community people with an outside perspective in the process.
- Use a team approach (e.g., curator, designer, educator, and publicist) from the beginning to ensure a cross fertilization of ideas and representation by all the key players in the complete process.
- Use focus groups or other similar techniques to monitor the planning process and evaluate the project at the end.

The Upstate New York Folk Arts Forum is a project of the New York Folklore Society and is supported by a grant from the New York State Council on the Arts Folk Arts Program.

NEW YORK STATE OF THE ARTS

FOLK ARTS HANDBOOK

Folk Arts Programming in New York State: A Handbook and Resource Guide is now available. Written by folklorist Karen Lux and published by the Regional Council of Historical Agencies, the handbook is a comprehensive resource guide and how-to manual for museums, community organizations and folklorists. With examples drawn from successful projects in New York State, the book includes case studies and photographs of exhibitions, performances, demonstrations, folk arts in education, media projects, publications, and more. The handbook also contains a supplemental listing of folk arts resources in New York State including: folk archives, funding sources, consultants in folklore and traditional arts, and folk arts materials available for purchase.

To order, send a check or money order for \$10.50 payable to: The Regional Council for Historical Agencies (RCHA), 1400 North State Street, Syracuse, NY 13208.

ADIRONDACK LIARS CLUB

I Always Tell the Truth (Even if I Have to Lie to Do It!): Stories from the Adirondack Liars Club is a collection of tall tales as related by nine tradition bearers from the Adirondack region of Upstate New York. Edited by folklorist Vaughn Ward and illustrated by Deborah Delaney, the 120 page book contains story illustrations and photographs of the liars at work.

Transcribed from the mouths of the tellers themselves—some of them in performance before an audience, some just sitting around the kitchen table—the stories range from feats of strength, weird weather, and fabulous animals, to jokes first recounted around the fire in logging camps. Some of the tellers, such as the late Lawrence Older, Pack Basket Bill Smith, Daddy Dick Richards, and Joe Bruhac, enjoy wide reputations as performers. Others have done most of their yarn-spinning in such informal settings as a campfire in the woods or a bench in front of the town post office. All of them are part of an informal group which has become known, through their appearances at folk festivals, art centers, and historical museums in Upstate New York, as the

Adirondack Liars Club.

The introduction by folklorist Vaughn Ward sets the tone for the collection and puts it into broad historical perspective. Throughout, the editor's individual notes on each story trace the roots of some tales as far back as Aristophanes. Since her efforts first brought the group together, Ms. Ward's biographical notes about the tellers are appropriately personal and informative. As she explains: "Lies were the social stuff of the Adirondack live-in lumber camp. Lying, as an art form, can flourish only within a moral system where telling the truth is taken for granted. The wonderful talkers in this book represent the range and application of Adirondack tall tale material—factual and otherwise."

I Always Tell the Truth is available from the Greenfield Review Press, PO Box 308, Greenfield Center, NY 12833. For further information contact Carol Bruhac (518) 584-1728.

THE FOCUS IS FISH

The South Street Seaport Museum's fall *Maritime New York* folk arts programs will focus on traditions related to commercial and recreational fishing in New York harbor and vicinity. Supported in part by a grant from the Folk Arts Program of the New York State Council on the Arts, these programs enrich the many exhibitions and programs on fish and fishing planned for the museum this fall.

All About Fish, a free outdoor festival of fishing-related traditional arts demonstrations, will be held Thursday through Saturday, October 16-18 from noon to 4 pm on Pier 16 and at the Museum Visitors' Center on Fulton Street. Fishing traditions will also be featured in three fall demonstrations at the Museum Gallery on Water Street. Held from 1-4 pm on Saturday afternoons, these demonstrations are open to all ages but will be specifically geared to young audiences. The demonstrations are free with admission to the museum and include: Carmine Marinaccio, Sports Fishing, on October 20; Lenny Koch, Net Making, on November 17; and John Cioffi, Fish Filleting, on Dec. 15.

For more information on these programs, call or write: Kathleen Condon, SSSM

Education Department, 207 Front Street, New York, NY 10038; (212) 669-9400.

TITANIC!: LECTURE SERIES

The South Street Seaport Museum announces a series of folklore lectures in conjunction with *TITANIC!*, an exhibition about the "great ship going down."

On September 13 at 12:30 pm enjoy *Up Where the Ice Begins* as Jimmy Gavin relates humorous and compelling misadventures from time spent on the "Ice Patrol" battling icebergs in Arctic waters in the 1920's. Admission is free.

The Titanic in Song features noted music scholar, record collector, and radio personality Richard Spottswood introducing a selection of the multitude of songs about the Titanic in a lecture illustrated by sound recordings. The ship, which has long held our musical imagination, will be highlighted on November 1 at 6 pm. A \$2.00 admission includes exhibition viewing from 5-6.

On November 29 at 6 pm YIVO sound archivist and Yiddish cultural historian Henry Sapoznik presents *Der Naser Keyver: The Jewish Response to the Titanic Disaster* using period recordings and broadsides. A \$2.00 admission includes exhibition viewing from 5-6.

All lectures will be held at the South Street Seaport Museum's A.A. Low Building at 171 John Street. For a full schedule of fall lectures scheduled in conjunction with *TITANIC!*, an exhibition on loan to SSSM from the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, call or write Kathleen Condon, SSSM Education Department, 207 Front Street, New York, NY 10038; (212) 669-9400.

ADIRONDACK FESTIVAL

The Crandall Library Department of Folklife is pleased to announce its 3rd annual Festival of Adirondack Folklife on Saturday, September 15, from 10-5 pm in front of the Library in City Park, Glens Falls, NY.

The annual celebration of the people and traditional culture of the Adirondack North Country features rustic furniture and pack baskets, tied quilts, Balsam

OF INTEREST TO THE FIELD

Christmas wreaths, fishing flies and nets, guide boats, and wooden canoes in demonstration. Festival workshops are also scheduled, including open fire cooking, lumberjack games, storytelling, giant origami and Eastern rodeo roping. Look forward as well to music, storytelling, the construction of an Adirondack lean-to and food all day!

For more information about the festival and other programs contact Todd DeGarmo, Department of Folklife Programs, Crandall Library, City Park, Glens Falls, NY 12801; (518) 792-6508.

FELLOWSHIP ANNOUNCEMENT

Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library will award a number of fellowships to encourage research in America's artistic, cultural, intellectual, and social history. Scholars pursuing advanced research are eligible to apply for NEH fellowships with stipends of up to \$27,500 for six to twelve month's work. Short-term fellowships with stipends ranging from \$1000 to \$2000 per month are available to academic, museum and independent scholars, and to support dissertation research. Resources include a library of approximately one half million imprints, manuscripts, visual materials, and printed ephemera supporting interdisciplinary study of American life into the early twentieth century, as well as a museum collection of more than 89,000 domestic artifacts from the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries.

Furnished rental housing is available on the grounds. The deadline for application is December 1, 1990. For an application packet please write to Dr. Katherine Martinez, Visiting Research Fellowship Program, Winterthur, Delaware 19735; or telephone (302) 888-4649.

CALL FOR PAPERS

Winterthur seeks paper proposals for its 1991 annual conference entitled *Historical Archaeology and the Study of American Culture*. The conference will be held at Winterthur in the fall of 1991 and is designed to promote dialogue among scholars from diverse fields. Its purpose is to broaden the scope of material culture studies through the perspectives of historical archaeology while enriching historical archaeological inquiries through multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches.

Tentative session topics include: *Theory and Method/Culture and Context, Things Not Found, Household and Domestic Economy, Landscape and Architecture, Industrial Archaeology*. The latter three topics are intended to address themes such as ethnicity, industrialization, urbanization, class, gender, regionalism, consumerism, and environmental history.

Proposals of 250 words must be post-marked by December 31, 1990. Each proposal should specify the subject matter of the paper and its relevance to the theme of the conference and specific sessions. Speakers will be notified by March 31, 1991.

Proceedings of the conference will be published. Speakers will receive an honorarium upon submission of the final version of the paper, due no later than February, 1992. In addition, speaker's travel expenses, lodging, meals, and registration costs will be paid by Winterthur.

Proposals should be sent to: Professor Lu Ann De Cunzo and Professor Bernard Herman, Office of Advanced Studies, Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library, Winterthur, Delaware 19735.

TENNESSEE PUBLICATIONS

The Tennessee Arts Commission has completed three publications designed to serve Tennessee folk artists, folk music events, and audiences in new ways. The first of these, a brochure entitled *Fiddle and Old-Time Music Contests in Tennessee*, promotes traditional music and dance events through tourist information

networks and provides an interpretive program guide for audiences. A second publication, *Tennessee Folk Music Recordings: A Recommended List*, recognizes the best available recordings of authentic Tennessee traditional music. It encourages institutional and private record buyers to make use of these underpublicized resources issued on small, independent labels. Patricia Atkinson Wells authored the final booklet, *Handbook for Tennessee Folk Artists*. The handbook provides direct, technical assistance to grassroots craftspeople and musicians. It addresses the most common questions and problems faced by folk artists and offers business, promotional, and practical advice.

All three publications were supported by a grant from the NEA Folk Arts Program and are available from Robert Cogswell, Director of Folk Arts, Tennessee Arts Commission, 320 Sixth Ave. N., Suite 100, Nashville, Tennessee 37219; (615) 741-1701.

ARTS & CRAFTS MOVEMENT

The Substance of Style: New Perspectives on the American Arts & Crafts Movement is the subject of the 1990 Winterthur Conference, October 19-20 at the Winterthur Museum. Papers will address ideology, style, craft and machine production, artisans and labor, and linkages between handicraft and fine arts. One session will be an "open forum," showcasing new discoveries, work-in-progress, and lesser known arts & craftsmen and/or objects. The projected registration fee is \$50. To be placed on the mailing list and for further information contact: Advanced Studies Office, Winterthur Museum, Winterthur, Delaware 19735; or telephone (302) 888-4649.

PRESENTING FOLK ARTS

(continued from page 6)

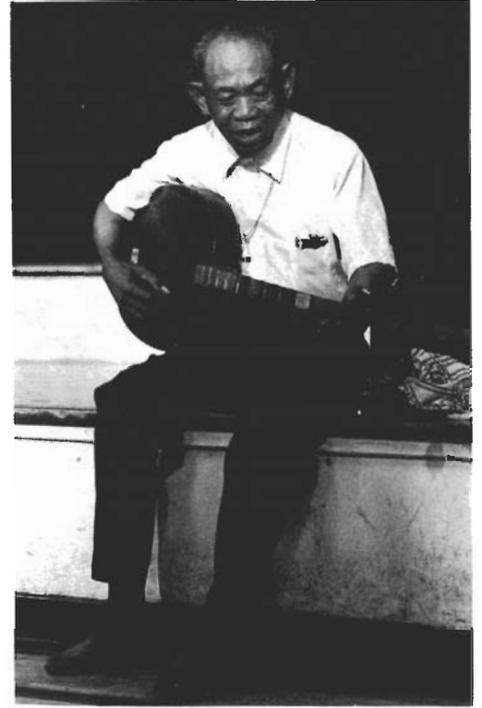
comfortable setting for the musicians than the regular concert stage.

And on Saturday, the Apsara Ensemble presented the ancient tradition of Cambodian court music and dance at the Greater Ithaca Activities Center, a community center in downtown Ithaca close to where most of the local Cambodians live. The performance took place in a packed and sweltering gymnasium before a mixed audience of Americans and perhaps a third of the Cambodian community. An important highlight of the evening was the music of Un Sam, an Ithaca-based folk musician in his seventies who performs a now rare form of sung epic poetry to the accompaniment of a long-necked lute called *chapei*. Un Sam has never before performed in the U.S. outside his community, and according to

Sam-Ang Sam, an ethnomusicologist and a leader in the effort to revitalize and sustain traditional Cambodian culture, very few musicians within or outside of Cambodia know this form in its traditional style.

Presenting Folk Arts was the first conference of its kind in the country and has stimulated interest nationwide in establishing networks of folk arts presenters, developing systematic mechanisms to facilitate folk arts touring, and finding ways to help presenters feel more confident and be more effective in offering traditional arts to the audiences in their communities. Look for more reflections on the substance and ramifications of the conference in the next issue of this newsletter.

Photos by Patricia Reynolds



Cambodian epic singer Un Sam

DISNEY

(continued from page 4)

and the “dinglehopper” and “snarfblatt” have become part of our family folklore. One of our neighbors filmed the local children acting out their own version of *Batman: The Movie* by editing (illegally, I suppose) home video footage with sections of the Hollywood movie on cassette. Unless these mass forms, so many of which draw from folk tradition, can pass into the lives of real people, we become passive audiences “delivered” to a corporation. The irony is particularly acute in the case of the Disney Corporation which has drawn so much from tradition. Any efforts to block the use of expressive symbols, stories, and characters for non-commercial purposes detracts from our communities. For any corporation to prevent us from taking an active role in popular culture and reshaping it for our lives and communities is just a little bit, well . . . mickey mouse.

MENTORING PROJECT

A Technical Assistance Program of the New York Folklore Society

The Mentoring Project offers opportunities for professional growth and technical assistance for individuals and organizations engaged in folk arts programming in New York State. The project provides funding for short-term, one-on-one consultations with others in folklore or related disciplines. Folk arts programming in the public sector requires knowledge and skills in many areas— fieldwork, documentation, archiving, promotion, graphic design, exhibit design, editing, concert production and more. If you could benefit from a one- or two-day consultation with someone who has more knowledge or experience than you have in a particular area related to your folk arts programming, the Mentoring Project may be able to help.

Here's how it works:

- Write or call and request an application form.
- Contact the person you would like to consult with.

- Submit the application to the New York Folklore Society.
 - A panel will evaluate your proposal and notify you within two weeks.
 - You and your mentor meet as planned.
 - You and your mentor submit a brief report and we will reimburse your travel costs and pay the mentor's fee. The mentor may be from any field or discipline as long as the consultancy will directly benefit your folk arts programming.
- For more information or an application, call or write: John Suter, New York Folklore Society, P.O. Box 130, Newfield, New York 14867 tel. (607) 273-9137.

The Mentoring Project is made possible with funds from the New York State Council on the Arts Folk Arts Program.

PLEASE JOIN US

The New York Folklore Society is dedicated to furthering cultural equity and crosscultural understanding through the documentation, explication, and services to the field of folklore and folklife in New York State. The Society seeks to nurture folklore and folklife by fostering and encouraging folk cultural expressions within communities where they originate and by sharing these expressions across cultural boundaries.

The New York Folklore Society publishes the scholarly journal *New York Folklore* and the *New York Folklore Newsletter*. The Society provides technical assistance to organizations engaged in folk arts programming and produces conferences and other programs with statewide scope that address issues concerning folklife.

Members of the New York Folklore Society include folklore enthusiasts,

historic preservationists, school teachers, folklorists, librarians, anthropologists, ethnomusicologists, local historians, folk artists, museum curators, students, photographers, arts administrators, and writers, among others.

Our regular membership fees for 1990 are still only \$25.00 for individuals, \$35.00 for institutions, and \$15.00 for full-time college or university students. Foreign members pay an additional \$5.00 over the regular membership fee. Members receive a subscription to *New York Folklore* and to this newsletter.

We welcome your involvement and support. To join us, return the membership form below with your check payable to New York Folklore Society, P.O. Box 130, Newfield, NY 14867. (607) 273-9137 Thank you!

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THE NEW YORK FOLKLORE SOCIETY

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15th Anniversary

Queens Ethnic Music & Dance Festival



Lazaros Harnisiades, by Panos Papanicolaou

*A Celebration of the
Traditional Music and Dance
of New York's
Immigrant Communities*

**Saturday,
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(Rain or shine)**

11:00 AM to Midnight

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