

I consider *Voices* one of the most interesting publications I receive. I am especially glad to read of the many different forms that folklore takes throughout our state. The articles are always well written and well illustrated. I hope you are able to continue publishing this informative organ that so many enjoy.

—Patricia Park, retired school librarian, Geneseo, New York

What always strikes me about *Voices* is its clarity and openness, both in design and content. It's inviting, lively, and readable and has plenty of variety. It presents artists and communities with respect and sensitivity, yet one learns too about what folklorists do and who they are. *Voices* gives a picture of New York State and its people that cannot be found elsewhere.

—Anna Lomax Wood, Director, Association for Cultural Equity

New York State is the site where some of the Old World cultures were first established and where those legacies continue to thrive. At this moment new refugee and immigrant groups are resettling in many of our cities and regions. Without *Voices* there will be no record of the formative cultural fermentation as it occurs and no one to celebrate our tradition bearers.

—Faye McMahon, Research Associate Professor of Anthropology, Syracuse University

From the Director



Our History

The New York Folklore Society was founded in 1944 by a group of folklorists, historians, writers, and enthusiasts—dreamers and visionaries emerging from the Great Depression. Sharing a vision for cultural democracy after World War II, they felt that it was essential to collect, save, and share the folk arts and cultural traditions of the many cultures that made up the urban and rural areas of the state, its historic regions, and the American literary traditions it inspired. The founders' goal was to “plow back”: to give back traditional arts to the people who created and maintained them.

Today, NYFS is a service organization that provides assistance to more than one hundred community-based cultural organizations, professional folklorists, and folk and traditional artists of all artistic genres. Our flagship publication, *Voices*, can be found in the Russian State Library, Bulgaria's Academy of Science, and Italy's Ministry of Culture. Articles on topics such as September 11 street memorials, cobblestone architecture in Ontario County, and the stories of Vietnam vets provide citizens of the world with a means of acquiring a genuine understanding of people in New York and in the United States.

Sixty-five years later, the organization founded by Louis Jones, Harold Thompson, and others is in economic crisis, as one of more than 570 organizations that lost funding due to the New York State legislature's \$7 million cut to NYSCA's budget. This budget cut means an immediate loss of salaries for two full-time and at least three part-time staff members at the New York Folklore Society. We have halted our assistance to Haudenosaunee Mohawk basket makers and Tuscarora beadworkers who have been developing their own educational materials. Services provided to community cultural organizations engaged in capacity building are also on hold, and we cannot proceed with our workshops training artists and musicians in the business aspects of their art so that they can

make their skills sustainable in today's economy. These losses weaken the state economy further and threaten to diminish all of us in subtler ways.

NYFS recently sent a challenge appeal letter asking for donor assistance beyond membership. The society's grant applications and corporate and individual solicitations will also increase in 2009. If you have already responded to these fundraising appeals, we are very grateful for your support.

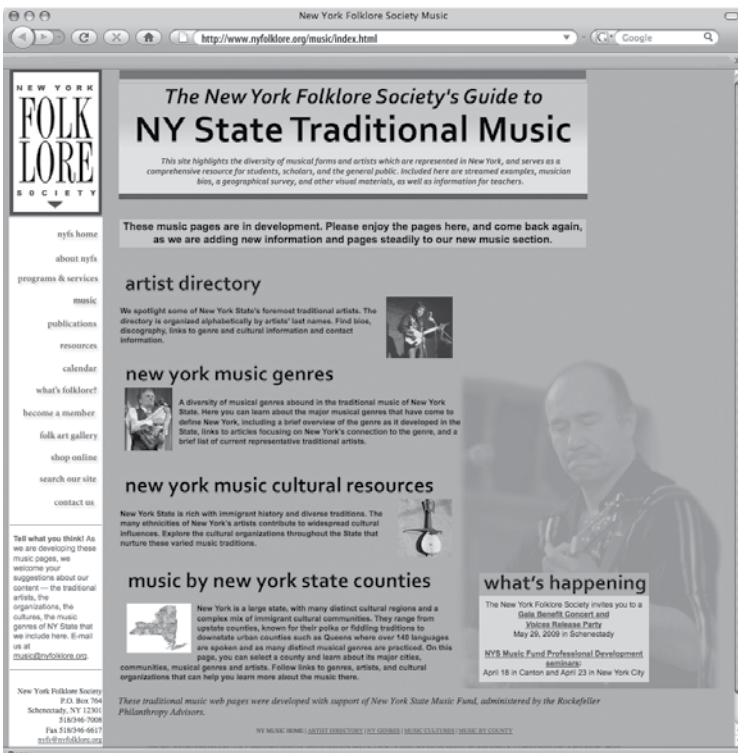
According to folklorist Bill Ivey, former chair of the National Endowment for the Arts and head of President Obama's transition team for arts and culture, a cultural Bill of Rights begins with a right to our heritage: the right to explore music, literature, drama, painting, and dance that defines our collective experiences as well as our individual and community traditions. New Yorkers have a right to participate in their heritage through continued and sustained funding for the arts at every level. Arts organizations provide arts education and programming for children and youth; maintain grassroots support for poetry, music, dance, handcrafts, and other performative family and community traditions; and encourage artists of every ability. New York's county-based regional arts councils support professional folklorists' documentation of ethnic, religious, and occupational traditions, preserving a huge diversity of art forms for generations to come.

According to Americans for the Arts, the nonprofit arts industry—museums, theater and dance companies, performing arts centers, orchestras, arts councils, and so on—generates \$29.6 billion in federal, state, and local tax revenues annually. Federal, state, and local governments combined spend less than \$4 billion on support for the arts each year. The financial return on government's investment in the nonprofit arts is, therefore, more than seven times the annual investment. The arts help New York State's economy by providing destinations for its downtowns, support for its schools, and direct service to its small business owners. Sixty-two percent of arts budgets are used directly for employment.

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NEW AND ONLINE!

NYFS's Guide to NYS Traditional Music



The New York Folklore Society, in consultation with folklorists, ethnomusicologists, and artists all over the state, has developed an eye-catching, web-based resource guide to New York's folk, traditional, and ethnic music, genres, and artists. This special section of the NYFS web site will allow you to search for information on individual artists, read articles about genres, find organizations that support different types of ethnic music, and explore the state's traditional music resources by region. The page recently went live and will continue to grow and expand. Visit the site at www.nyfolklore.org/music/index.html. NYFS gratefully acknowledges the work of ethnomusicologist Tom van Buren and folklorist Lisa Overholser, who researched and authored much of the guide's content, with support from the New York State Music Fund.

Save the Date!

The New York Folklore Society invites you to **Voices: Roots and Branches** of New York Folk Music

Gala Benefit Concert and *Voices* Release Party

Friday, May 29

Reception and Meet the Artists, 5:30–6:30 p.m.

Concert, 7:00 p.m.

**Colleen Cleveland
Fode Sissoko
Dan Berggren
John Kirk and Cedar Stanistreet
Kim and Reggie Harris**

7:00 p.m. Friday, May 29
GE Theatre at Proctors
432 State Street
Schenectady, New York

Admission: \$20 (concert only) or \$40 (concert and reception)

Proceeds of this benefit concert and reception will support the NYFS's programs and publications. To purchase tickets, please visit www.nyfolklore.org or call (518) 346-7008.

Join us for a benefit event featuring some of New York's favorite musicians. The Spring–Summer 2009 issue of *Voices: The Journal of New York Folklore* will be released at a cocktail reception before the show.

Our History (continued)

As a lifelong rural New Yorker who has worked as a folklorist in many of New York's counties, I can attest that arts organizations are anchors in every community. To support New York's arts organizations is to support Main Street in every county. In this difficult financial climate in which we find ourselves, it is not "business as usual." Perhaps this is a window of opportunity to strengthen our mission and define ourselves. Please join us in this vital endeavor—your participation will sustain us.

—Ellen McHale

Voices

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Voices is available in Braille and recorded versions. Call the NYFS at (518) 346-7008.

The New York Folklore Society is committed to providing services with integrity, in a manner that conveys respect for the dignity of the individuals and communities the NYFS serves, as well as for their cultures, including ethnic, religious, occupational, and regional traditions.

The programs and activities of the New York Folklore Society, and the publication of *Voices: The Journal of New York Folklore*, are made possible in part by funds from the New York State Council on the Arts.

Voices: The Journal of New York Folklore is indexed in *Arts & Humanities Citation Index and Music Index* and abstracted in *Historical Abstracts and America: History and Life*.

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