

ARTS CUTS HIT HOME

From the Editor



A Call to Action

Just before the new year, along with hundreds of arts nonprofits across the state, the New York Folklore Society received alarming news. New York State's deficit reduction plan instituted in December 2008 included extensive cuts to a number of state programs—including the grants budget of the New York State Council on the Arts. The cuts to NYSCA meant that pending requests for fiscal year 2008–9 funding, including the New York Folklore Society's request for general operating support, could not be considered.

While the NYFS is now scheduled to receive 2009–10 funding, the loss of this year's funding has had a serious impact upon our finances. The NYFS has since applied for federal stimulus funding to the arts, which the NEA will make available to arts organizations

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nationwide after July 1. Nevertheless, the 2009 funding loss forced the NYFS, its director, staff members, and board members to revisit and reduce the costs of a spectrum of the society's services to the folk and traditional arts communities of New York State. As part of a strategic plan to help our organization weather the current economic storm, NYFS board and staff made the decision to shorten this issue of *Voices: The Journal of New York Folklore*. The issue you are reading has been reduced to two-thirds of the normal length—thirty-two pages, rather than forty-eight—and its graphic design has been simplified. This decision enabled us to avoid delaying the release of this issue or canceling *Voices* for this fiscal year.

More than ever before in the seven decades since the New York Folklore Society was

founded, the society and its journal need your support to survive. The raw cost of producing and distributing each issue of *Voices* amounts to approximately \$12,000. More than half of this amount pays three staff members to work on the publication: soliciting material for the journal from artists and writers all over the state, sending contributions out for review, editing content, copyediting, proofreading, handling photographs and other graphic elements, and designing each issue. Printing and distributing the journal costs the NYFS roughly \$5,000 per issue. The journal is released twice each year, in the spring and in the fall, at a total annual expense of nearly \$25,000.

If you are already a New York Folklore Society donor, member, and *Voices* subscriber, we thank you for your loyal support thus far, and ask that in 2009, you consider doubling your annual contribution to the organization. If you are not yet a member of the folklore society, but read and refer to this journal regularly in your work or personal pursuits, we invite you to become a member and contributor to the society and journal now, at any donation level that may be comfortable for you.

There are two ways you can take direct action to help us resolve this crisis. You can join us by making a financial contribution using the subscription and donation materials included in this issue—and you can join us for food, music, and celebration at a gala benefit concert and *Voices* release party on Friday, May 29, 2009, at 5:30 p.m. (reception) and 7:00 p.m. (concert). The event will be held in the GE Theatre at Proctors, 432 State Street, Schenectady. To purchase tickets for the event, please contact the New York Folklore Society at (518) 346-7008. See the concert advertisement on page 2 and our web site (www.nyfolklore.org) for further details.

We thank you in advance for your support. If you care about *Voices* and about the future of our collective work in the field of folk and traditional arts, please know that you stand in good company, as our history and recent testimonials both confirm.

—Eileen Condon

I read every issue of *Voices*. The taxpayers are hollering, and the state's contribution to this wonderful little magazine has been drastically cut. Those of us who read it all the way through have to all chip in.

—Pete Seeger, musician and activist,
Beacon, New York

Voices is unlike any publication in the United States, filling a vital role by bringing New York State folklore and folk arts to a broad public. The journal should be emulated, not eviscerated!

—Kay Turner, Director, Brooklyn Arts
Council Folk Arts Program

For more than sixty years, the journal of the New York Folklore Society has been a singular voice advocating for the grassroots artistry of a creative populace. From the days of Ben Botkin, it has encouraged professional folklorists and cultural mavens to document and present their work and to use their work to make a difference in the lives of New Yorkers. Although the discipline of folklore has a variety of academic journals, and there is no shortage of journalists interested in folklore, *Voices* plays a unique role in offering an accessible venue to disseminate the best documentation of our cultural life—upstate, downstate, and beyond—and to utilize that documentation to enhance our lives.

—Steve Zeitlin, Director, City Lore