

# From the Director



As we look back on our organization's sixty-fifth year, I would like to thank all of our supporters on behalf of the entire New York Folklore Society family. 2009 was a year of

great upheaval and rethinking of the organization. We told you about our current financial situation in the last issue of *Voices*, and you responded with an outpouring of support. In this issue you will find our members and donors listed. Thank you all for your generosity, especially those who joined at the Harold Thompson level of \$100.00 or above. This class of membership saw our largest increase. Heartfelt thanks and a debt of gratitude go to past president Karen Canning and to Anna Lomax Wood of the Institute for Cultural Equity, who became major donors in 2009. Their combined gifts helped us through our most tenuous period.

Our fundraising concert in May 2009 gave the New York Folklore Society some additional visibility. We thank concert planners Paul Mercer, Eileen Condon, and Lisa Overholser and all the volunteers who helped that evening. Thanks also to Proctors in Schenectady for providing a venue and assisting with ticketing. Of course, we couldn't have done it without our fine musical entertainment for that evening: George Ward, Dan Berggren, Colleen Cleveland, Kim and Reggie Harris, John Kirk, Joe Bruchac, and Fode Sissoko donated their precious talents for our benefit. It was a great evening!

New partnerships were formed in 2009, including a partnership with the Capital District Community Loan Fund, a nonprofit community agency for sustainable development. We are pleased to join this network of socially concerned investors. Partnerships in 2009 also helped us to realize programming

goals: Union College, the Albany Institute for History and Art, the City of Schenectady, and the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor were invaluable in helping us to continue to provide folklore and folk arts programming. Finally, I wish to acknowledge the National Endowment for the Arts and its role in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. With this support, the New York Folklore Society was able to maintain its core capacity. We are indeed humbled by the support of so many.

We are facing the new year with a renewed sense of purpose. While we were able to sustain our activities through 2009, we need your help in 2010. We ask that you continue your support at a similar level over the coming months. We look forward to continuing to serve you with technical assistance and professional development opportunities, a web site that provides up-to-date resources, and this publication: *Voices: The Journal of New York Folklore*. ▼

Ellen McHale, Ph.D., Executive Director  
New York Folklore Society  
newyorkfolkloresociety@juno.com  
www.nyfolklore.org

## From the Editor



The articles featured in this issue of *Voices* contain a variety of voices whose messages are "traditional"—in the surprising, the comforting, and even the most alarming senses of that disciplinary keyword.

In the photo essay "Carving Out a Life: Reflections of an Ithaca Wood-Carver," self-taught carver Mary Michael Shelley describes how she responded simultaneously to her Northeastern farm family heritage, liberal arts education, and the emerging feminism of her time to claim a form of man's work—carpentry and carving—as

her own. In the article "From Wild Man to Monster: The Historical Evolution of Bigfoot in New York State," sociologist Robert E. Bartholomew and historian Brian Regal offer us a wealth of primary source narratives of Bigfoot and other "wild man" sightings in New York State, from the early nineteenth century to the present. Pete Rushefsky's profile of a Manhattan-based Chinese hammered dulcimer master, Xiao Xiannian, captures not only the pedagogical evolution of a virtuoso *yangqin* player, but also the determination of a Chinese family to survive political persecution and economic oppression by encouraging musicianship among their children. And in Trevor Blank's honest and disturbing report, "Fieldwork, Memory, and the Impact of 9/11 on an Eastern Tennessee Klansman: A Folklorist's Reflection," we are challenged together, as readers, to join a young ethnographer in making sense (with Klan-buster Stetson Kennedy's help) of an encounter with an American racist, struggling with partial—but not complete—remorse for his views and hate-group affiliation after the events of September 11, 2001.

As folk artists and culture workers, we spend much time considering what speech, art, ritual, belief, music, material culture, customs, work, play, and other cultural forms may be worth remembering in New York State. We may have devoted our lives to working toward their preservation. Are there portions of "tradition," however, which might be better forgotten than preserved or examined? Under what circumstances should the details of the political persecution of immigrants before their arrival in the U.S. be recalled, for example, and for what purpose? Does the history of hate groups in New York State, or any other part of the United States, fall into the first category or the second? Do we evolve past hate by

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**"Research is formalized curiosity. It is poking and prying with a purpose."**

—Zora Neale Hurston, *Dust Tracks on a Road* (1942)