

Voices

Fall–Winter 2011
Volume 37: 3–4

The Journal of
New York Folklore

Yuri Yunakov,
National Heritage
Fellow

Rhetoric of
Italian American
Identity

Roman Turovsky-
Savchuk and
Ukrainian Folk Music

Remembering Jean
Crandall
(1964–2011)



From the Director



As an organization, the New York Folklore Society has supported regular opportunities for professional development and convening on specific topics. Since its founding in 1944, the Society has annually supported at least one conference for the exploration of topics of relevance to the collecting and study of folklore in New York State. In our early years, the Society supported both a fall meeting which was held outside of the New York tri-State region and a spring meeting which was held in New York City. The spring meeting eventually was halted, but the fall meeting has been ongoing since our first fall meeting held in Cooperstown in 1945. In 2010–2011, the Society embarked on two new conference formats: a graduate student conference which showcases student work and the New York State Folk Arts Roundtable, a professional development opportunity, initiated by the Folk Arts Program of the New York State Council on the Arts, which for several years was organized with the assistance of the Cultural Resources Council of Syracuse and Onondaga County. In 2011, the New York Folklore Society became the convening organization for the New York State Folk Arts Roundtable.

Within the next several months, the New York Folklore Society will be offering a variety of new opportunities for the presentation of research and the exploration of folklore in New York State. On November 2–3, 2012, in collaboration with the Erie Canal Museum and with support from the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, the New York Folklore Society will be presenting a symposium about

the varieties of musical expression found along and encouraged by the Erie Canal, both past and present. “Music of the Erie Canal” will offer scholarly presentations as well as the performance and presentation of music. Partnering with the Erie Canal Museum in Syracuse, the conference will involve multiple venues and diverse opportunities to present the musical history of the Erie Canal. Please visit our website, www.nyfolklore.org/progs/cfp-eriemusic.html, for the Call for Proposals and for additional information for attendance.

A new program for the Society, the graduate student conferences have been held at New York University (2010) and Binghamton University (2011). On February 7, 2013, the Society will hold its third graduate student conference at the Westchester County Arts Council in White Plains, New York, in collaboration with the Westchester County Arts Council. Please continue to check our website for updates regarding the theme and a call for student work.

Finally, the New York Folklore Society is pleased to announce that it will be convening a statewide youth conference on Latino dance in 2013. Supported by funds from the National Endowment for the Arts, this Latino Dance Conference will invite several youth dance troupes and their leaders to two to three days of workshops and performances exploring the connections between Latino dance traditions from several countries. Youth participants will have the opportunity to share their traditional dance styles with other interested youth and will have the opportunity to present their group’s work in a public presentation. Dance leaders will receive professional development training on the organizational aspects of dance troupes. Designed with the goal to provide encouragement for traditional dance in New York State, the weekend should be both fun and informative for the student attendees.

The New York Folklore Society continues its mission of education and encouragement of traditional arts and culture in New York. Please join us in our work!

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

From the Editor



The present issue of *Voices* reflects in large part upon ethnic identity in New York. In “Ethnicity, Nostalgia, Affirmation: The Rhetoric of Italian American Identity,” Michael Buonanno examines, with poetic eloquence, some of the tropes of speech and story which helped to shape what it was, and is, to be Italian American in, and beyond, the community in which he was raised. Mu Li focuses with fascination upon activities Jewish Americans customarily engage in upon the Christian holiday of Christmas, especially eating out at Chinese restaurants. Frank Campagna (“Field Note”) remembers a traditional Italian folk story passed down in his family, and what the story offers to an understanding of how best to treat elders in their later, vulnerable years.

Pete Rushefsky and Ethel Raim share the story of Bulgarian Romani saxophonist Yuri Yunakov’s career and celebrate his receipt of the NEA National Heritage Fellowship. Ukrainian American lutenist, composer, and painter Roman Turovsky-Savchuk explains the development of his engagement with Ukrainian music and musical genres, in life as well as in cyberspace, in “Dialogues with Time.” We revisit the New York Folklore Society’s Annual 2011 “Legends and Tales” Conference proceedings via a report by Lisa

continued on page 2

“The absence of models, in literature as in life, to say nothing of painting, is an occupational hazard for the artist, simply because models in art, in behavior, in growth of spirit and intellect—even if rejected—enrich and enlarge one’s view of existence.”

—Alice Walker, In Search of Our Mothers’ Gardens: Womanist Prose (1983), p. 4.

Features



- 3 Ethnicity, Nostalgia, Affirmation:
The Rhetoric of Italian American Identity
by Michael Buonanno

- 11 Dialogues with Time
by Roman Turovsky-Savchuk

- 16 Yuri Yunakov: 2011 National Heritage Fellow
by Pete Rushefsky and Ethel Raim

- 24 Follow Spot: Growing the Ranks
by Kristen Andresen

- 27 Jewish Activities on Christmas: An Online Case Study
by Mu Li

- 36 Essere Vecchi é Brutto
by Frank Campagna

- 38 A Report from an Embroiderers' Gathering
by Ellen McHale and Lisa Overholser

- 42 The New York Folklore Society Features
“Legends and Tales” at Its 2011 Annual Conference
by Lisa Overholser



Departments and Columns

- 10 NurorAsian: Asian American Arts in New York
by Andrea Louie

- 14 Upstate
by Varick A. Chittenden

- 15 Downstate
by Steve Zeitlin

- 20 In Memoriam: Jean Crandall
by Eileen Condon, Elena Martínez,
and Hanna Griff-Sleven

- 23 Play
by John Thorn

- 26 Good Spirits
by Libby Tucker

- 34 Still Going Strong
by Paul Margolis

- 35 View from the Waterfront
by Nancy Solomon

- 41 Songs
by Dan Milner

- 44 Reviews



Cover: Yuri Yunakov at Lincoln Center. The National Heritage Fellow of 2011 is profiled on p. 16. Photograph by Richard Conde. Courtesy of Center for Traditional Music and Dance Archive.



From the Editor (continued)

Overholser, and Ellen McHale and Lisa Overholser describe the Society's three-day, two-state Embroiderers' Gathering in Ithaca in November 2011, thanks to a grant from the Mid Atlantic Folk Arts Outreach Project. *Voices* is pleased to reprint an especially noteworthy article from *Inside Arts*, the publication of the Association for Performing Arts Presenters (APAP): Kristen Andresen's account of the historic founding of WOCA—Women of Color in the Arts, at last year's APAP conference in New York City. *Voices* also welcomes its newest column, "NurorAsian: Asian American Arts in New York," written for this issue

by Andrea Louie. In upcoming issues, two writers will pen this column in alternation: Andrea Louie and Nico Daswani, both of New York's Asian American Arts Alliance (www.aaartsalliance.org). Finally, with sorrow, but with a shared gratitude for having known her, three of Poughkeepsie-based folklorist Jean D. Crandall's close friends reflect on Jean's life and legacy in folklore, since her untimely passing in November. ▼

Eileen Condon

Acquisitions Editor

New York Folklore Society

econdon@ctmd.org



A Benefit at Café Nola for the New York Folklore Society

You are cordially invited to a New York Folklore Society fundraiser* with Music by award-winning bluegrass band Dyer Switch and other friends

Café NOLA

617 Union Street
Schenectady, NY 12305
2 - 7 p.m.
Saturday, June 30, 2012

Dining, Raffles,
Art Sale, Music
and more!

*10% of all proceeds from the sale of food will benefit the New York Folklore Society, Schenectady, NY



For more information, call 518-346-7008
or visit nyfolklore.org

Voices

Fall-Winter 2011 · Volume 37: 3-4

Acquisitions Editor Eileen Condon

Copy Editor Patricia Mason

Administrative Manager Laurie Longfield

Design Mary Beth Malmsheimer

Printer Eastwood Litho

Editorial Board Varick Chittenden, Lydia Fish, José Gomez-Davidson, Hanna Griff-Sleven, Nancy Groce, Lee Haring, Bruce Jackson, Christopher Mulé, Libby Tucker, Kay Turner, Dan Ward, Steve Zeitlin

Voices: The Journal of New York Folklore

is published twice a year by the New York Folklore Society, Inc.

129 Jay Street

P.O. Box 764

Schenectady, NY 12301

New York Folklore Society, Inc.

Executive Director Ellen McHale

Folklorist Lisa Overholser

Gallery Manager Laurie Longfield

Web Administrator Patti Mason

Voice (518) 346-7008

Fax (518) 346-6617

Web Site www.nyfolklore.org

Board of Directors

President Gabrielle Hamilton

Vice President Elena Martínez

Past President Paul Mercer

Secretary Delcy Ziac Fox

Treasurer Jessica Schein

Pauline Adema, Karyl Eaglefeathers, Ellen Fladger, Anna Mulé, Christopher Mulé, Connie Sullivan-Blum, Libby Tucker, Kay Turner, Thomas van Buren

Advertisers: To inquire, please call the NYFS (518) 346-7008 or fax (518) 346-6617.



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*.

Reprints of articles and items from *Voices: The Journal of New York Folklore* are available from the NYFS. Call (518) 346-7008 or fax (518) 346-6617.

ISSN 0361-204X

© 2012 by The New York Folklore Society, Inc. All rights reserved.

Ethnicity, Nostalgia, Affirmation:

The Rhetoric of Italian American Identity

BY MICHAEL BUONANNO

The Italian diaspora, in all its various manifestations, is characterized by a profound sense of ethnic identity. Even for those of us who don't speak the language, there is a particular reality born of Sunday dinners at Grandmother's, the sound of Italian—or more likely Sicilian, Neapolitan, Calabrian, or another of the Italian dialects—at the kitchen table, and the innumerable stories that we heard there: stories of the people back home in Italy and stories of the people just down the street. There was the particularly gluttonous Benedictine in the old country who gave *gnocchi* its nickname, *stranga lu prev* (strangle the priest), when he choked to death on it. And there was the woman down the street who, upset at her husband's extravagance (indoor plumbing), nicknamed the unhappy man *Bagnarol* (Bathtub)—only to discover one day that her own nickname was *Moglie di Bagnarol* (Wife of Bathtub). There was the mythical Italian who crossed the Delaware with George Washington; upon hearing Washington swear, "*Che cazzo freddo*," (roughly, "I'm freezing my nuts off;"), he joyfully exclaimed, "*Ma, tu sei italiano!*" ("Oh, but you're Italian!").

In my interviews with members of the Seneca Nation between 2000 and 2003, I sometimes heard the complaint that when non-natives borrow Native American religious traditions, they oversimplify them, making them seem trivial or superficial. A person has to have grown up in the culture to understand the nuances of the religion, some Seneca say,

because the culture is the soil that nurtures the religion and makes it bloom. They do make a point. There is a reality to being immersed in a singular cultural environment that places a stamp on one's life. Such immersion does not define individuals in all of their complexity, but by refining their sense of affiliation and the rights, obligations, and meanings that reside there, it orients individuals to the world at large.

The continuing relevance of this orientation, however—particularly for an immigrant community that is no longer regenerated by significant movement from the home country and is subject to significant pressure to assimilate—is sometimes difficult to define. As with all immigrant communities, a shared history in another country, stories of the migration itself, and the scramble to make a living and build communities in the host country became central features of Italian American identity, wherever and whenever it develops. But all of these elements of shared experience are steeped in a process of communication that represents and re-represents them in a rhetoric of identity that hinges upon at least three crucial concepts: ethnicity, nostalgia, and affirmation. It is in this rhetoric, I believe, that the continuing relevance of Italian American identity is situated.

Rhetorical Theory in Cultural Studies and Folklore

Marcel Danesi suggests that metaphor—

perhaps the central figure of speech in the arsenal of rhetorical strategies—is one place where the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis works, pointing out that "metaphor shapes reality because it springs from our experience of reality." Here Danesi is underlining a major function of rhetoric: "Consider the expression," he continues, "John is a monkey. The topic in this case is a person named John and the vehicle the animal known as a monkey. Portraying John as a monkey forces us to imagine a human person in simian terms... Like the spell put on people by shamans, people become what our metaphors say they are" (Danesi 2004, 147). Metaphor, then, is not simply a rhetorical flourish; it is a mechanism for constructing reality. But metaphor is just one tiny nodule of rhetoric. What of the other units of rhetorical analysis? There are any number of tropes beyond metaphor: metonymy, synecdoche, pun, antonomasia, and—one of my favorites—cryptonymy, a figure which seeks to reveal through concealment (Abraham and Torok 1986, 132), just to name a few. There are also innumerable speech acts: hyperbole, litotes, antinomy. And then there are tones—essentially genres of speech—to consider: sarcasm, irony, consolation, threat.

Whether dealing with tropes, speech acts, or tones, rhetoric entails the mobilization or redeployment of linguistic formulas in order to imply something more than the mere denotative value of an utterance. Phonetics can be



Lucia and Alessandro in their flower garden. All photos courtesy of the author.

used to suggest different class affiliation: in the early history of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, for instance, omitting the final *r* in words to emulate the privileged accent of the home country. The artful use of morphemes can offer an utterance various suggestive qualities: for instance, the morphological form, *-er* can be added to the name of a political group in order to suggest a degree of fringe ideology (John Bircher, Birther). Altering the intonation pattern of a word can insinuate a different meaning of the term than generally intended; likewise, the grammatical environment of a word can give a word a connotative rather than denotative value: “I see the light,” for instance, rather than “Turn on the light.” There can even be gestural cues or specific social settings that might alter the normative understanding of a communication: think about the significance of the statement, “You look gorgeous in that outfit,” if the speaker rolls his or her eyes while saying it.

Within the context of Italian American rhetoric, blasé American-style pronuncia-

tion of Italian words may illustrate a lack of interest in Italian identity: my aunt shocked me one time when she nonchalantly uttered an unaccented *stess cos* (same thing) with a shrug of the shoulders instead of the usual *stessa cosa*. The artful use of metonymy—the signification of someone by an item closely associated with him or her—allowed both *Bagnarol* and *Moglie di Bagnarol* their nicknames; in fact, it provided the nicknames that nearly everyone in the community carried. Animal metaphors, such as those discussed by Danesi, were a rich source of the rhetorical flourishes that characterized humor in my community. I—like many Italian Americans—had in my youth the term *cinccio* (Americanized as *chooch*, literally donkey, but figuratively stubborn and even dim-witted) hurled at me liberally. The term was rendered doubly poignant in my community when one woman who had lost track of the length of her pregnancy, started to approach, by her calculation, the fourteenth month, the gestation period of a donkey, and—as if to confirm the satiric warnings

of the ladies of the community that she was going to give birth to a donkey—she gave birth, in fact, to perhaps the most infamous *scemu*—dunce—the neighborhood ever knew. In the context of my upbringing, this animal metaphor is evocative not only of obstinate and foolhardy youth, but also of growing up in a context somewhat outside the mainstream of American society.

When language—and the nonverbal communication that surrounds it—is explored rhetorically, analysis moves beyond that which is merely informative to that which is culturally charged. Rhetorical analysis considers language that serves not simply to communicate cultural realities, but as Danesi suggests, to construct such realities and in doing so, I would add, to establish identity. In fact, I think dissecting the rhetorical structure of culture to chart its effect on identity is essential, because this analysis draws attention to the contested nature of culture: to the fact that culture exists only in its negotiation and renegotiation by actual flesh-and-blood members of a society.

It is through this contestation that cultural identity—the actual locus, or place, where culture is situated—emerges. The reason that rhetoric is the crux, even the crucible, of identity is this: identity must be learned and then displayed through communication. Rhetoric—viewed as the deployment of verbal, behavioral, and even material symbols—becomes the filter through which communication renders identity legible.

But here's the problem with applying rhetorical theory to cultural analyses and exploring, in turn, the relationship of culture and identity: rhetoric as a discipline has historically been so unwieldy! What exactly are the metaphors or symbolic equivalencies that rhetoric isolates? And where are their definitions? What follows, then, is a selection of rhetorical devices I have found in my examination of Italian American culture—partly as a result of my own life's experiences and partly as a result of formal fieldwork—and its significance in establishing (or not) an Italian American identity. I have not attempted to offer a systematic treatment of these devices, and in fact I am unsure whether a completely systematic treatment is called for or even possible, but I have attempted to organize my observations with recourse to three major subsets of rhetorical devices that recur in Italian American cultural tradition and seem to effect the translation of a societal culture to its individual members: (1) tropes, in which one thing—through a number of technical operations—stands for or symbolizes something else, (2) speech acts, in which the grammatical organization of an utterance serves to imply something more than is explicitly stated—Deborah Tannen describes this as a “metamessage”—and (3) tones, in which everyday speech patterns or genres of speech serve to mobilize an emotive response to an utterance.

When viewed through the lens of such rhetorical devices, culture works very much like a wiki: everyone in the society has an editorial role, an ability to participate in the dialogue that is ultimately culture, but the dialogue itself—the culture proper—resides in no one. It exceeds the individual, but at the same time, it informs the individual, for it gives voice to what would otherwise be inchoate informa-

tion and allows rhetoric to express not simply *itself* but also *the self*.

Ethnicity: A Peculiar Antinomy

“Why, what makes you think that we know anything about that?” Maria asked when I told her I was here to talk to her about her experiences with the evil eye. That was a bit of a shocking response. Here I was, diligently beginning my fieldwork in the Italian American community, and the friend who had brought me to Vincenzo and Maria's house had assured me that the couple knew everything there was to know about the evil eye. Now, I was not more than five minutes into my project, and I had already offended my informants. I looked over at my friend, but he just glanced about the room abstractedly.

The momentary discomfort that I felt, however, led me to an early recognition: some of my informants were in the habit of denying certain elements of their own culture. This recognition led me to a strategy—one that was, in fact, requested by a few of my informants—of maintaining a policy of anonymity. I began to use pseudonyms in my field notes and the articles that resulted from them and to hide the locations (generally small towns and even smaller neighborhoods) where my interviews took place. I was even reticent to give exact dates, as I was working in very small communities where people could be easily identified. I have found the policy of anonymity helpful in alleviating anxiety among some Italian Americans who worried that professing a belief in the evil eye could open them up to a reprimand from the parish priest or ridicule from members of the larger society.

What I learned from Vincenzo and Maria—who, despite their initial disclaimer, did seem to justify all my friend's confidence in them—was that the belief in *malocchio*, or the evil eye, quickly adapted itself to an American landscape, and what was once a multifaceted belief system—with different variations for each of Italy's disparate regions—became homogenized. The belief became, in essence, Italian American and took on a localized function: negotiating Italian Americans' status as outsider to mainstream American society. Over and again, the descriptions of

the cursed—those who actually gave the evil eye—seemed to stress the obstacles to successful acculturation: the *strega* (witch), characteristically a reclusive woman who was never going to adjust to a new society, and the *jettatore* (sorcerer), characteristically a powerful man who, once he gained his own position in the new society, acted to guard it jealously. If a person had been looked upon with *invidia* (envy) by a *strega* or a *jettatore*—my informants used both of those words—he or she would sicken. A persistent headache, a nagging pain, an upset stomach, even impotence—as if fertility and generation were metaphorically evocative of forward momentum—were continuously seen as evidence of having attracted the envious glance of the *strega* or *jettatore*.

The entire belief system, which the phrase *malocchio* conjured, was steeped in what one of my informants jokingly referred to as becoming white—that is, making it in what Italians almost immediately recognized upon arriving in America as a racially charged society. Specifically, he claimed that evil eye was “something we believed in before we were white” (Buonanno 1984, 39). Here, a troublesome aspect of Italian American culture emerges: the fear of being included in the underclass of the host society, catapulting certain segments of Italian American society (never the majority, but nonetheless a visible minority) to embrace the racism that agitated social relations and party politics in America. I will return momentarily to this fraught element of Italian American culture, one that is too often (like some embarrassing relative) dealt with by attempting to ignore its existence.

If a sufferer had been “looked upon” by the invidious gaze of the *strega* or *jettatore*, he or she first needed a divination to ascertain whether evil eye was indeed the cause of his or her ailment, and second—if indeed evil eye was the cause—a cure. A *comare* (godmother)—not a specific term, but the only one I have ever encountered—taught her patient the art of intercession through a kitchen reenactment of the baptismal ritual that almost every infant underwent within the confines of Roman Catholic tradition. During the course of my fieldwork, Lucia (named for the patron saint of eyesight, upon whose day she was born)



The grandchildren on Lucia's stoop.

told me how she would intercede with Mary, the Blessed Virgin, on her patient's behalf, by dripping olive oil into a bowl of water. If the oil slicked, it indicated that evil eye was the cause of the patient's illness, but when the oil beaded normatively upon the water's surface after the curative ritual, it indicated that a cure—by Mary's grace—had been effected.

The Italian word for godmother is *madrina*, but my fieldwork indicated that the word *comare* (literally, co-mother) was used for the woman who stood up for the child at baptism, so in the Italian American context, the better translation for *comare* seems to me to be godmother. This translation draws attention to the fact that in the Italian American context, at least, she who cures the evil eye metaphorically participates in the nature of the godmother: just as the godmother takes responsibility for the spiritual well-being of an infant in the baptismal ritual, the *comare* takes responsibility for the spiritual welfare of her entire community through her special gift of intercession. It is her duty to dispel the ill effects of envy from the community and replace it with beneficent grace—and only she has the ability to do so, for she possesses a secret incantation that breaks the back of the evil eye curse. She had been given the incantation by an elderly woman, who could give it up only once in her lifetime and that on

Christmas Eve, and she would in turn give it to a younger woman, again only once in her lifetime at Christmas Eve, when she could no longer bear the responsibility of an entire community's spiritual well-being.

What is especially interesting is that the *comare's* intercession is the direct spiritual corollary to the more pragmatic intercession of another characteristic personage of Italian American culture: the *padrone* or boss, who found work for the men, but also the women and children, of the community through his early ability to build bridges with the host society. His best assets were usually a facility with the English language, which allowed him to construct a network of potential employers, and the resources to be able to afford transport for the labor force he maintained. I will return to him shortly. For now, let me simply point out that belief in evil eye became not simply one of many elements of Italian culture in America: so strongly was it associated with the culture that it became over time a fundamental demarcation of Italian American identity. Non-Italians in the know could slyly mention the word *malocchio* to indicate that they had some knowledge of or connection to the community, and it didn't carry the stigma of the *scemu*—dunce—who would injudiciously bring up that other word, *mafia*, as soon as he learned you were Italian.

Constructs of ethnicity, such as the surreptitious profession of a belief in *malocchio*, served to center Italian American identity, but often in the negative context of subordination to the dominant social order. To know anything about the evil eye was, in essence, to open oneself to the accusation of being an outsider to American society: a *cafone* (peasant or bumpkin) from the Italian interior and victim to all the superstitions that reigned there. The persistence of such a belief is therefore continuously allied to its denial, in a grand act of *antinomy*: a simultaneous I Am (depending upon who you are), and I Am Not (depending on who you are not). How like the peculiar brand of racism and its political concomitants that at times devolves into some segments of the Italian American community; the troubled “othering” by the perennial Other partakes in the nature of this antinomous belief in the evil eye. Each results in part from a desire not to be included in a perceived underclass. Certainly, we can only respond to the display of a *brutta figura* (unseemly manner) by a justice at the State of the Union address, the infamous incidents at Howard Beach and Bensonhurst, and the anti-immigrant diatribes of a grandson of Italian immigrants with a sense of embarrassment, given our intimate knowledge of the origin and intrinsic understanding of the rhetorical significance of such behaviors. I suspect that some of the attributions of racism that have unfortunately (and not always unfairly) been leveled at the Italian American community—in Spike Lee's decidedly evenhanded *Do the Right Thing* (1989), for instance—result from the ambivalences with which Italians have faced the peculiarly racially charged environment that they encountered in their host society.

Nostalgia: The Mnememe

One day, during one of the last gatherings at my grandmother's house that I can remember, I ran into Mr. Bellotta, a longtime resident of the neighborhood and one of the last few original Italians, out on the sidewalk. He mentioned that his sister, who had once lived in the neighborhood but had moved back to Italy, had returned for a brief visit. “Nobody remembered her,” he added bewilderedly. A

bit later, I was in my grandmother's kitchen, talking to Mary Genovese, who remained unmarried for her entire life along with her bachelor brother in their parents' house, just two doors down from my grandmother's. "Guess who I was just talking to," I said to her. "Well, how can I guess?" she asked. "Mr. Bellotta," I said. "Oh, you know his sister was just back from Italy," she said, but then added, "She didn't remember me."

As I think back on that incident, I can't help but recall the closing scene of Barry Levinson's 1999 film on growing up in Baltimore's Jewish community, *Liberty Heights*. As the cantor operatically intones the Rosh Hashanah service, the narrator's voice proclaims: "I had a relative who once said, 'If I knew things would no longer be, I would've tried to remember better.'" I think the same could be said of many of the memories—my own and others'—of my grandmother's neighborhood. And, it seems, the same could be said of the memories from many other neighborhoods, communities, and even nations. Daniel Martin's notion of the *mnememe* is a discursive cue—an aphorism, for example, or a formal preamble, such as "once upon a time"—that allows a sign to function mnemonically (Engel 1992, 187). A *mnememe* causes one to remember, like the West African symbol of the *sankofa*, a stylized bird that turns its head back towards its homeland in order to remember and thereby reempower itself.

It sometimes seems as if we are witnessing the fading away of the memory, not just of a community, but of a culture. Still, statistics argue against this perception: approximately 12.5 million Americans claimed Italian ancestry in the 1980 census, but by the year 2000 the number was closer to 15 million, and in 2008 it was edging up toward 18 million (Mormino and Pozzetta 1990; U.S. Census 2008). If self-identified Italian Americans are growing in number, despite low rates of new immigration, some elements of our culture seem to be secure. But still, it is sometimes difficult to say exactly what—beyond the ability to recount oral histories and humorous anecdotes—it means to be Italian American in the twenty-first century.

A continuing element of Italian American

identity, I believe, is nostalgia expressed in the form of memories of the homeland and the early days of the Italian American community. Not surprisingly, narrative plays a large role in such expressions. Let me return to the personage of the *padrone* to examine the role of narrative in the rhetoric of Italian American identity. One of my favorite stories from the neighborhood was that of the double-crossing *padrone* Kingfish. Among Kingfish's many businesses was a pool hall. Lucia's son Mike tells how Kingfish kept a picture of Mussolini hanging in his pool hall, but on the day that Italy declared war on the United States in 1941, Kingfish—worried that he might call the combined might of the American armed forces down about his ears—hurriedly took the picture down. As he walked by one day, Mike, noticing the bright patch of green paint that had been protected by Mussolini's picture from the sun shining through the pool hall's storefront window, shouted into the pool hall, "Hey, Kingfish, where's *il Duce*?" (*Il Duce*, the duke, was a common title for Mussolini both in Italy and the United States.) As he dashed down the street, fleeing Kingfish's inevitable wrath, Mike heard the pool stick, launched like a javelin from Kingfish's hand, whiz not more than two inches past his ear.

Despite this run-in with the boss, Mike elected to follow a time honored family tradition: picking beans for Kingfish. Each day, his mother, Lucia, and other women from the neighborhood, as well as a smattering of the neighborhood kids and teenagers, would clamber into the back of Kingfish's battered pickup, and Kingfish would haul them out to one of the farms that lay just beyond town, where they would spend the day picking. Kingfish would arrange for work for the women and children, many of whom could not speak English well enough to obtain work on their own, provide the women and their kids with transportation to and from the farms, and collect each of his laborer's pay from the farmer for them. His reward was a cut of their earnings, but while they picked all day in the sun, Kingfish drank cool water from a pail beneath a hedge of sumac and wild grapevine, his pickup truck always close at hand.

Lucia had been working for Kingfish ever

since she moved to the States, perhaps twenty years earlier. In her first years here, she put all her sons and daughters to work for Kingfish as well, and each day they dutifully put their earnings into Lucia's hand, not keeping a penny back for themselves. It was with that money that Lucia one day purchased the house that her family had rented: two thousand dollars worth of bean picking, Mike said when talking about the house.

Each afternoon that summer, Lucia and Mike and the others would gather up the bushels of beans they had picked to weigh them on the scale provided, of course, by Kingfish. Everyone swore that the scale was fixed, but they were never able to prove it. The best they could do was distract Kingfish as they weighed out the bushels and add a little poundage to their tally while his attention was diverted. But one day, one of the women claimed she had weighed herself at the supermarket the day before, and as everyone organized their bushels of beans and waited for Kingfish to come over from his shady burrow, she began to step onto Kingfish's scale to test them. Kingfish was just coming around from the front of his pickup, and when he saw what was going on, he started running toward her, shouting at the top of his lungs that he would kill her if she fucked up his scale. Mike stopped dead in his tracks, terrified, right in Kingfish's path as he rushed headlong at the woman on the scale, and rather than going around him, Kingfish plowed straight on, so that Mike thought Kingfish was going to kill him first and the woman next. He said his fist just sprang out of its own accord and hit Kingfish square on the jaw, but before he could even see the result, he took off running back toward town. Mike always avoided Kingfish thereafter, and he thought Kingfish hated him, but a few years later, when it was time for him to go off to the war, Kingfish stopped by and gave him a gold watch—a typical act of beneficence by a *padrone*. Later, a female competitor, or *padrona*, purchased a truck and began to cut in on Kingfish's contract labor at harvest time, but I have never been able to ascertain if any bitterness erupted from the competition.

The *mnememe* that arises from this narrative is a rhetorical function not simply

defined by the act of remembering, but also by evincing an emotive framework, particularly Mediterranean in tenor, encapsulated by the construct of patronage—that is, veneration of a patron saint—which is metaphorically reconfigured in the personages of the *padrone* and the *comare*. Both figures, by virtue of their characteristic act of intercession, participate in the nature of the patron saint. The rhetorical reconfiguration of the *padrone* as a kind of benevolent despot is further evidenced by antonomasia, the signification of an item or a person by an epithet, for *padrone*, if translated literally, means the patron; the rhetorical reconfiguration of the *comare* as a nurturing mother to the community at large is further evidenced by her associations with the role of the godmother of the baptismal font. The centrality of patronage to the life of the community is underscored by the fact that the patron saint is the figure that serves to communicate the community to itself as well as to outsiders. This is why Italian American communities look upon the dissolution of patronal festivals—or, perhaps worse, the inundation of community-based patronal festivals with outsiders who view the festival as a piece of quaint ethnic charm—a bit wistfully, if not with out-and-out dismay.

Although the *comare* intercedes with ephemeral powers for the spiritual benefit of her client, and the *padrone* intercedes with the host society for the more pragmatic political-economic benefit of his client, in either case a palpable sense of transition permeates their efforts. It is as if everyone involved—patron and client alike—comprehends that the community that surrounds the *comare* and *padrone* is temporary, or—in the words of Victor Turner—liminal, a threshold community marked by all the ambiguity that characterizes a community between two worlds. Perhaps this is why both the *comare* and *padrone* are simultaneously feared and respected—and indeed, Mike cut me off when I unwittingly almost said something inappropriate about Kingfish in front of the *padrona* that displaced him. Today, with the passing of the *padrone* and *comare* from the active life of the community—and the transformation of patronal festivals into Italian street fairs—the notion of

patronage no longer exists as an active feature of Italian American culture. Rather—again, mnemonically—it exists as a demarcation of the place from which Italian American culture emerged. Although the art of intercession is no longer practiced as it once was, it is still comprehended and remembered, which became apparent to me as Mike cut my words short when I almost crossed a line with the *padrona*.

There is more to the rhetoric of nostalgia than the stories told and their evocative power. I suspect that family photos, scrupulously curated and almost magical in their ability to stir faded memories, play a central role in the rhetorical function of the mnememe, as do the particular tastes, smells, and sounds that mnemonically reconstruct a grandmother's kitchen or a grandfather's shady grape arbor. As long as my grandfather's garden lasted, I liked to seek out the stone upon which we would sit with a sugar bowl between us, dipping fresh stalks from his patch of rhubarb and enjoying a treat which makes my non-Italian friends grimace painfully.

Affirmation: Italianità

Affirmation is a bit of an oddity in the rhetoric of Italian American identity. We hear it in conference papers that conclude that Italian American culture and identity are very much alive in contemporary American society. But when we return to our neighborhoods, often pale remnants of their former selves, or worse yet, return to one of our favorite Little Italies (as I recently did to Saint Claire Street in Toronto, after an absence of more than twenty years) to find that it is almost nonexistent, it becomes clear that Italian American identity is a different sort of animal in 2012 than it was in, say, 1962. So many of the features that characterized our communities in the past persist today *only* in our memories.

In some respects, this is natural. Once Italian Americans were sufficiently assimilated, the function of both the *comare* and the *padrone* became less and less a necessity to the community, and these two local dignitaries slowly faded from existence. The veneration of the saints and belief in the efficacy of their intercession became less a pressing concern, as

well, as the host society came more and more to take the presence of Italians for granted. The evil eye belief, with less cultural work to accomplish for the immigrant, became a quaint bit of Italian American folklore—expressed perhaps by wearing a golden Italian horn on a chain, often to claim Italian American identity without even realizing that the Italian horn was a protective amulet against the evil eye.

But there is something more. Today, as I have suggested, professing a belief in the *malocchio* has become—instead of an element of a conflicted acculturative process—a statement of ethnic pride: *Italianità* (Italianicity) cast in bold relief. It is as if the belief metonymically stands in for ethnic affiliation. A colleague of mine mentioned surreptitiously that, after having suffered a headache over which her mother presided with a successful evil eye cure, she not only was rid of her nagging headache, but also found a ten dollar bill on a campus sidewalk. With a wink, she let me know that she and I were members of a select club—those in the know—and whether or not our Anglo colleagues would label it superstition or not, we knew that an evil eye cure exiled bad luck and even welcomed good luck into our charmed circle. This was a far cry from an interchange that occurred in one of the last discussions I conducted with Lucia on the evil eye. During that chat, Lucia's daughter exclaimed: "Ma, you don't really believe all that stuff, do you?" "*Non lo so*," Lucia sighed, "I don't know." And heaving herself back into the thoroughly American easy chair that had become her favorite resting spot, she seemingly lost sight of the room, the people in it, and the emerging reality that was their life.

Today, we find that surreptitious admission of knowledge (rather than outright belief) in the evil eye, wearing of a golden horn, or—as many analysts of the Italian American experience have documented—returning year after year to the hometown's Festa Italiana to eat a grilled Italian sausage sandwich, affix a small ex-voto to the patron saint, and perhaps don a red, green, and white beret all serve to affirm identity. It may be that these affirmations—slyly acknowledged, boldly voiced, or dramatically enacted—are today the central rhetorical

strategies for establishing and communicating Italian American identity.

Today, the process of evaluating the Italian American experience—its past, its present, and its future—in essence what it means to be Italian in America today and tomorrow, lies ahead of us. Is that experience, like that of other immigrant groups, more or less over once the process of assimilation is close to complete, and the Little Italies (or Chinatowns or Little Persias) are abandoned, or nearly so, in favor of suburban tracts? Is the subject matter for historians alone? Is the Italian American experience today based mainly on nostalgia for our Italian grandparents or dwindling communities? Or will being Italian in America continue to be a significant factor into the future?

To suggest that the old Little Italies are as vibrant as ever is a fallacy. People left them in droves, often associating them with a way of life that was characterized by intense family interaction, but also economic hardship and a lack of upward mobility. Today, many—if not most—of us are conversant with or even products of other communities with very different realities than those in which we grew up. But we still get a charge out of encountering others who have experienced what was in our childhood the oddity of Italian American culture and what became with time a distinguishing factor of our own personal history and identity.

Let me return for a moment to the joke about George Washington crossing the Delaware and remarking, “*Che cazzo freddo,*” and the guy behind him—gloomy, shivering, wrapped in his mantle against the blustering cold—perking up his ears and exclaiming, “*Ma, tu sei italiano!*” The joke should be that the icon of American exceptionalism, George Washington, could cut such a *brutta figura* (poor figure), but instead, it’s that Italians are always—incessantly, it sometimes seems—trying to discover the other Italians in the crowd. Thus, it seems to me, this joke itself participates in the rhetoric of affirmation. It’s a way of asserting that, yes, we too participate in the pageant of American history, but in our own particular, shared, and (from an outsider’s perspective) perhaps even peculiar way.

What It Means to Be Italian American Today

If Italian American identity has any enduring validity—which, of course, I believe it does—it has to be sought out where it actually exists, and not simply in the cultivation of nostalgic reminiscences of where it once was. Where it exists, it seems to me, is in the rhetorical strategies that continue to center Italian Americans for themselves, as well as for those outside the cultural confines of the Italian American household, community, or diasporic enclave.

The final chapters of Italian American history and culture are yet to be written. What will have to be added or perhaps even deleted is difficult to predict. What Italian American identity and indeed ethnic identity means in America—given the election of the first African American president, an Italian American woman quite recently two heartbeats away from that presidency, and a population in which former minorities are well on their way to becoming majorities—is hard to imagine. But I believe it will be the ongoing rhetorical flourishes of American society that will offer a significant key to these questions because, in the final analysis, what rhetoric does is give voice to inchoate identity and make it sing.

It is rhetoric that allows Celie in Alice Walker’s 1982 novel *The Color Purple* to step out into creation and proclaim: “I’m pore, I’m black, I may be ugly. . . . But I’m here” (205). It is rhetoric that allows Stephen Dedalus in James Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* to proclaim: “Welcome, O life! I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race” (1916, 299). And it is rhetoric that allows the Italian American both to formulate and understand the beauty of a simple nickname like *Moglie di Bagnarol* or to see the humor (when perhaps nobody outside the community does) in the simple phrase “*Ma, tu sei italiano!*” when applied to the father of the country. ▼

Sources

Author’s note: I have changed most personal names and omitted place names in my field notes and in this article. Although my infor-

mants didn’t generally ask me to avoid identifying them, a few—especially older folks whom I interviewed about the evil eye—did, and as most of my fieldwork occurred in small towns and even smaller communities, it seemed fair to protect their identities. At times, a parish priest might disapprove of my informants’ activity; other informants may not wish to risk being thought of as “superstitious.” My fieldwork was predominately completed in western New York. It began in 1983 and continues to this day. The majority of my accounts arise from interview notes, augmented by audio transcripts.

Abraham, Nicolas and Maria Torok. 1986.

The Wolf Man’s Magic Word: A Cryptonymy. Theory and History of Literature, Volume 37. (Nicholas Rand, Translator). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Buonanno, Michael. 1984. *Becoming White: Notes on an Italian American Explanation of Evil Eye.* *New York Folklore* 10(1–2):39–53.

Danesi, Marcel. 2004. *A Basic Course in Anthropological Linguistics.* Toronto: Canadian Scholars’ Press Inc.

Engel, William E. 1992. *Cities and Stones: Montaigne’s Patrimony.* *Montaigne Studies: An Interdisciplinary Forum* (Philippe Desan, editor). Hestia Press: Volume IV. 180–198.

Joyce, James. 1916. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man.* New York: B.W. Huebsch.

Mormino, Gary R., and George E. Pozzetta. 1990. *The Immigrant World of Ybor City. Italians and Their Latin Neighbors in Tampa, 1885–1985.* Champaign: University of Illinois Press.

US Census Bureau. 2008. *The Statistical Abstract of the United States.*

Walker, Alice. 1982. *The Color Purple.* New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Michael Buonanno is professor of English and anthropology at the State College of Florida—Manatee/Sarasota. His fieldwork in Sicily and his own Italian American community in western New York has led to publications in the *Journal of American Folklore*, *New York Folklore*, and *The World Observed: Reflections on the Fieldwork Process* (University of Illinois Press). He team teaches an online course in the Italian American experience with his sister, Laurie Buonanno, at Buffalo State College and is currently coauthoring a text based on that course.

From the Killing Fields: Art and Healing in Asian America

BY ANDREA LOUIE

What I remember most is that when the red candles melted into the asphalt parking lot, they looked like pools of blood.

I was 18 years old—a Chinese girl who had grown up on the fringes of Amish country in Ohio—when I entered Kent State as a freshman in journalism. Our classes took place in Taylor Hall, the building around which an anti-Vietnam war protest had taken place just over a decade before.

On May 4, 1970, members of the Ohio National Guard fired into the crowd, killing four and wounding nine, including students, in a parking lot. Every year the lot is closed for an all-night candlelight vigil. In the morning, the pooled wax evokes the killing that took place there and in Asia, an image that still powerfully resonates for me.

What incited that protest was President Nixon's April 30 announcement of incursions into Cambodia. For many Americans, Cambodia meant only a far away jungle where too many soldiers were dying, a place where we shouldn't have been at all. Cambodia was suffering its own civil war from 1970–75, and Nixon feared Communist expansion there. From 1975–79, the country suffered brutally under the maniacal Pol Pot and his Khmer Rouge regime, with "Killing Fields" across the country; as many as 2.5 million died.

Among the survivors was Arn Chorn. Born into an illustrious musical family, he was nine when Pol Pot came to power. Chorn and hundreds of other children were sent to a Buddhist temple; a master musician trained him and four others to play the flute and the *khim*, traditional Cambodian dulcimer. Perversely, the children had to perform lullabies for their captors.

Chorn survived by showing no emotion and repressing the horrors that he witnessed. He eventually escaped through the jungle into Thailand, stricken with cerebral malaria and weighing only 60 pounds. In a refugee



Children of Bassac is a performance troupe of teenagers who study folk and classical dance with Master Artist Ieng Sithul, a popular performing artist who survived the genocide. Photo by Long Chean. Courtesy of Season of Cambodia.

camp, Chorn met the Rev. Peter Pond, who eventually took him to New Hampshire, adopting him and 15 other Cambodian children.

Ten years ago, Chorn-Pond founded Cambodia Living Arts, a Phnom Penh-based nonprofit organization dedicated to reviving traditional art forms and inspiring contemporary artistic expression. The organization also supports the music teachers who helped Chorn-Pond survive the horrors of the Khmer Rouge, who killed an estimated 90 percent of Cambodia's performing artists.

"It's important for us to revive and preserve the cultural heritage of Cambodia, which lost so many of its cultural masters during the Killing Fields and in the devastating economic decades afterwards," said Phloeuon Prim, executive director of Cambodia Living Arts. "It's also important for us to heal and to move forward, inspiring young people to make new and modern work."

The organization is planning the "Season of Cambodia" arts festival in spring 2013 in New York. Partnering with such institutions as the Brooklyn Academy of Music, Film Society of Lincoln Center, and Asia Society, the festival will feature an impressive spectrum of the traditional arts.

"It's important to have high-level cultural

presentation, but it's just as critical to connect with the local community, especially Cambodian Americans," said Prim.

The Asian American Arts Alliance (a4), a nonprofit organization that has supported Asian American artists and arts groups for 30 years, will connect these new master artists from Southeast Asia with the local grassroots arts community, many of whom are immigrants and refugees as well. Linking young Cambodians with others with a history of violent conflict (such as Vietnamese Americans and the Jewish community) is exciting and filled with promise.

For many of us who graduated from Kent State, our college experience is inextricable from the shootings of May 1970. Today, it is a privilege to be among those who, along with the Season of Cambodia, are working to promote understanding and healing through the arts. ▼

Andrea Louie is the executive director of the Asian American Arts Alliance (a4) and a writer.



DIALOGUES WITH TIME

BY ROMAN TUROVSKY-SAVCHUK

*Murmur, murmur, murmur in the forest,
The fog is covering the fields,
The fog is covering the fields, the fields.
A mother is sending her son away:
Go, my son, go away from me.*

At the age of seventeen I was transplanted from my birthplace of Kyiv, Ukraine, to New York. A dreamy European city in front of my eyes was replaced by New York, with all its severity of lines and colors, unforgiving yet intriguing. I've painted since my childhood, learning visual precision and honesty, developing a firm faith in harmony, beauty, and perfection. My new reality was rough and fearsome. And I knew that I was being transformed. My new reality brought new simplicity and roughness into my work. I painted nudes, craving love, music, and spiritual fulfillment. All of these eventually came, bearing happiness for the émigré/exile/refugee, transforming him into an American:

Come back, my son, come back to
me, my boy,
So I would wash your head.
Mother, my head could be washed
by rains,
And my hair shall be combed by feral
winds.

There has always been music in my family. My father is an artist-painter, but he was also a fine classical baritone in his younger days. Our house was always full of interesting guests, of all kinds of arts. The grown-ups were infinitely more interesting than children of my own age. The former were bearers of the historical weight of

the place where I was growing up. Their sense of history intoxicated me, inexorably, forever, even though I was unaware of it at the time. It manifested itself much later in my music.

I naturally studied painting from an early age, and it would always remain my main calling. Inexplicably, I remained indifferent to music, despite being surrounded by it, until the age of fourteen, when I had an epiphany upon hearing “Trauermusik Beim Tode Siegfrieds” in Wagner’s *Götterdämmerung*. It opened the floodgate of music. I went on to study painting and music after coming to New York. I studied lute with Patrick O’Brien, who also taught me the basics of harmony and counterpoint. I began composing for myself during the 1990s, concentrating on the baroque idiom and my chosen instrument, the baroque lute. This instrument doesn’t tolerate gratuitous dissonance, and my compositions naturally took on the style and character of the baroque era.

Descartes once said that when he was a seminarian, he was told by one of his professors that if one gets a really good idea, it must be immediately ascribed to a long dead authority. Mythopoeia ran in my family, so I decided on a whim to invent a mysterious and previously unknown historical figure to which I would ascribe my compositions as genuine baroque music, and miraculously, they were taken as such. In the mid-1990s, I wrote out some pieces in a nice baroque hand, signed them “Sautscheck,” the German transmutation of the second half of my surname, and sent them to some

overseas lutenists—total strangers at that—without a return address or explanation. The music was clearly in a baroque style, but not always in character, being grim and morose as would have befitted the music of an entirely different era.

Then I lost track of all this for more than five years. Eventually the rumors of mysterious and interesting lute music trickled back to me, so armed with a PC and the internet, I produced some paramusicological mythology, explaining the range of styles from 1680 to 1840 with four generations of purported composers, all from the same family. This caper later resulted in a few musicological scandals, which gave me some professional repute as a competent “baroque” composer and a modicum of respect from lutenist colleagues, while causing considerable irritation for the few detractors, who were oblivious to the literary mystification/hoax culture prevalent in Europe since the late eighteenth century.

After many flame wars and a few op-ed accusations of Ossianic immorality—some accusers were oblivious of the quotations from Beethoven, Reger, and Giazotto that I’d used in a baroque context—I earned some great friends for whom music’s quality is paramount to its pedigree. Not least of these are Luca Pianca, the founder of Il Giardino Armonico, who premiered my pieces in his concerts at several international festivals, and American lutenist Robert Barto, who is featured in several of my video installations.

Then came other momentous developments. One was the growth of the



Roman Turovsky-Savchuk playing his lute. Photo by Luba Roitman.

internet, which gave me a way to connect with many colleagues worldwide, and another my renewed interest in Ukrainian musical culture in general, and its baroque period in particular. Ukrainian folk music is unique in many respects. The vast majority of it is in the minor keys. Even the happy music is more often than not still minor, only at a faster tempo. It is also probably the best documented of all folk music, with many compendia collected since the eighteenth century. Ukrainian folk music had a period of popularity in Western Europe around 1800, and it left its mark on some composers, not the least Beethoven. The literary qualities of its texts are astounding, their imagery profound. Its texts are often hair-raisingly violent, as well as breathtakingly lyrical. This music is powerful. I didn't choose it: it chose me. This reconnection with

Ukrainian music was a true epiphany, from which I—as a displaced individual—gained a sense of total rootedness in that Old World, paradoxically in harmony with my American identity built in the tribulations of immigration.

My familiarity with existential angst was counterbalanced with happiness found in cultural memory, the memory of old songs amid new forms: bridges, highways, and skyscrapers of the New World. It later found expression in several video installations for which I also composed and produced the soundtracks. These installations were built around a clear central principle, according to which each sequence represented an increment in the voyage through forbidding space, where the only available means to remain afloat were certain personal cultural memories, remnants, or fragments of beauty in the

decidedly unbeautiful universe. In my case, these means were the auditory memories of my early childhood, specifically the memories of polyphonic laments sung by girls while crossing the river in the evening to milk the cows grazing on the other side.

In 2000, I undertook some research into the history of *Torban*, the Ukrainian variety of the lute. The literature for this instrument did not survive, as it was largely an oral culture, and so I began to use Ukrainian melodies in my compositions as reconstructions of this lost musical microcosmos. In time I began to experiment with progressively earlier musical styles—early Renaissance and late medieval—in combination with those Ukrainian folk melodies that were archaic in character and could easily be manipulated using the compositional techniques of the fifteenth and sixteenth

centuries. The milkmaids' choirs of my early memories were a perfect match to diminutions and variation cycles for lute in the style of Joan Ambrosio Dalza, Francesco da Milano, or John Dowland. This project has been nearly ten years in the making and now numbers more than five hundred pieces. I initially called these pieces "Cantiones Sarmaticae," which were later augmented with "Cantiones Ruthenicae" and "Cantiones Sarmatoruthenicae," "Balli Ruteni" and "Balli Sarmatici," in a nod to Sarmatism, a cultural movement in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries.

Each of these cycles was progressively more adventurous and complex, so I later gave them the collective title of "Mikrokosmos," in an insolent lutenistic challenge to Béla Bartók's homonymous keyboard cycle. In the process of composition, I discovered not only multiple structural similarities between Ukrainian dance melodies and Renaissance dances from Western Europe, but also evidence that some late Renaissance melodies survived in Ukrainian folk music. I was also struck with the medieval sound of the folk polyphony of the Polissya region of Ukraine, from which my family came. These observations became inspirations, and the music flowed—in strict style, but with unusual cadences and forbidden intervals of the land. Such were my Dialogues with Time.

This music has gradually earned respect from lute players, and many colleagues who were total strangers to me, connected only by the internet, began to perform these pieces, record them, and eventually film them for YouTube. Among these musicians I should mention Robert Barto, Luca Pianca, Rob MacKillop, Christopher Wilke, Ernst Stolz, Daniel Shoskes, Stuart Walsh, Jindřich Macek, and Trond Bengtson. Most of them I have not met in person to date. I have also had several collaborative electroacoustic projects with Dutch avant-garde composer, lutenist, and carillonneur Hans Kockelmans, who has written a number of counterparts to my scores.

The most rewarding aspect of it all has been the totally unexpected appreciation of Ukrainian music by musicians who had no familiarity with Ukrainian culture. I was equally surprised by the sensitivity with which they interpreted this material.

All of these projects remain works in progress, and in the meantime, I have put all of my music online for lutenists' free use. The projects involving Ukrainian Renaissance lute may be found at <http://www.torban.org/mikrokosmos.html> and the baroque lute project at <http://www.torban.org/torban4c.html>.

In 2003, I made the acquaintance of Julian Kytasty, the finest traditional Ukrainian epic singer and *kobzar-bandurist* in the West. We became good friends, and he later became my teacher. He eventually asked me to accompany him in his projects centered on the baroque period and occasionally to sing in them. We have had unusual concepts for our concert programs, drawing from material rarely touched nowadays, such as penitential chants and psalms and songs about violent historical events, evil and treachery, marital and erotic mayhem, and the miseries of war in a land that was split between two empires (Russian and Austro-Hungarian), whose inhabitants were forced to kill each other senselessly by callow foreign royalty.

Julian and I received a folk arts apprenticeship grant in 2008 from the New York State Council on the Arts, which enabled us to work together for two years on the traditional epic style and repertoire, which by then had become one of my main interests. Through Julian, I also met Nina Matvienko and Mariana Sadovska, two great Ukrainian folk singers of our time. I also began many virtual friendships with great folk singers, notably with Natalya Polovinka and Volodymyr Kushpet. In the spring of 2009, I undertook a journey to Kyiv, after a thirty-year absence. There I had good fortune of meeting Taras Kompanichenko and Eduard Drach, the finest carriers of the epic singer-*kobzar* tradition in Ukraine, and was able to adapt some of their repertoire to the baroque lute

Ukrainian Ethnomusicological Online Resources

<http://torban.org/pisni/>

<http://gomin.uazone.net/>

<http://proridne.com/>

<http://pisni.org.ua/>

<http://www.youtube.com/user/kkceh>

<http://www.youtube.com/user/mitka48>

for my own use. They also inspired several variation sets on Ukrainian melodies in baroque and early classical styles.

After the period of fakeloric music artificially imposed on Ukraine during the Soviet era, there is now a real revival of the epic tradition in Ukraine, with *kobzar* guilds established in Kyiv and Kharkiv and many talented young musicians studying not only performance, but also lutherie. There is also a revival afoot of the traditional folk polyphony, and there are several excellent choirs specializing in that repertoire—notably Bozhychi, Hurtopravtsi, Drevo, Strila, and Korali—as well as ensembles that specialize in Ukrainian early music. All of these groups face many difficulties in the cultural wars stemming from three centuries of forced Russification of Ukraine, as well as hostility from the commercial media and music establishments and the large Russian minority, which still harbors anti-Ukrainian sentiments. But the groups active in authentic folk music are multiplying, and there are grounds for cautious optimism that this music will live on. ▼

Roman Turovsky-Savchuk is an American lutenist, composer, and painter. Born in Ukraine, he has lived in New York City since 1979. His work is informed by both the American reality and Ukrainian cultural memory. He is currently completing a series of video installations, as well as radio broadcasts of his music for Dutch radio. Examples of his work can be seen on his web site, <http://turovsky.org>.

Why I Love the PO!

BY VARICK A. CHITTENDEN

When I was a boy of 10 or so in the 1950s, a daily trip to our little post office was part of many townspeople's routine. The mail would come in around 9:30 in the morning, so on school vacations or Saturdays, I'd try to get there early, in case something really special would come. Maybe it was a letter from cousins in Iowa, a seed catalog in February, or a copy of *Boy's Life*...to me! But I was not alone. By the time the letters, magazines, newspapers, and ads were sorted into the 50 or so boxes, there might be a dozen people huddled together in the "lobby." Actually, that's a stretch. Our post office in those days was a room at the east end of Nona Weller's house. Nona was postmistress for nearly 20 years. In those days, another load of mail would arrive around 2:00 p.m., and the scene would be repeated.

The US Post Office is an independent agency of the federal government responsible for providing postal service in the United States. It is one of the few government agencies explicitly authorized by the US Constitution. Now known as the US Postal Service, it traces its roots to 1775 during the Second Continental Congress, when Benjamin Franklin was appointed the first postmaster general. Since then, nearly every community—and urban neighborhood—in the country has had a post office to serve local businesses and households. The Postal Service reports that there are about 34,000 such brick-and-mortar offices nationwide.

For me, stories of the Hopkinton post office are still vivid. The first postmaster in town was Thaddeus Laughlin, a pioneer tavern keeper who began his duties in 1808, only six years after the town was founded. From 1821 to 1975, my forebears ran a general store that included the post office in a separate room. My great-great grandfather, great-grandfather, and great uncle were all postmasters; my grandfather, J. H. Chittenden, was postmaster from 1898 to 1930. I remember tales about men who would walk two or three miles to town in subzero weather to pick up their veteran's pension checks

or of housewives coming to mail letters to daughters who had moved away with their young families. A favorite story among the loungers in the store was of one man who would send an order out in the morning mail only to come back that afternoon to see if his order had arrived. Then there was a store customer who, thinking he would save lots of money, ordered 25 pounds of oleomargarine from a mail-order house. When it came, he was too embarrassed to come pick it up, and it melted in the post office, revealing his secret.

Since its first years, for many, the post office has been much more than a place to purchase stamps or money orders or send a package. It's been a gathering place and a social center in lots of communities, especially in rural America. That's why there's been such hue and cry in recent months about the Postal Service's cost-cutting decision to close as many as 2,000 post offices, with thousands of others under review for their viability. Small town newspapers everywhere—and even the *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal*—have been following the story closely. In fact, given the current economic climate, we can understand the Postal Service's dilemma: costs have skyrocketed, and income has tanked. We're told that there's been a 20 percent decrease in first class mail volume alone in the last five years. To solve their problem, they also propose to fire employees, eliminate services, and raise rates.

For rural communities all over the country, however, the loss of their post office would be significant. It's not just about nostalgia. While rural households have long had mail delivery—RFD (Rural Free Delivery) began in some places as early as 1896—the post office still provides some necessary services not met elsewhere. It's true that more people today rely on FedEx and UPS for packages and use e-mail for messages. But there are vast parts of America where courier service and broadband don't, and most likely won't, exist. In addition, for the disproportionately aging population in rural communities, the costs and conditions of traveling farther will

not only make trips to the post office more inconvenient but more unlikely.

Gathering at the post office was what I would now call "social networking." And, it was face-to-face and nearly instant. You could learn about whose barn had burned or the twins born to a neighbor's daughter in the night before, about who needed help with their haying or where to go to buy seed potatoes. You could plan for a church supper or start a flower fund for a deceased friend. If these institutions go, that kind of intimate exchange will be missed.

Finally, the loss of a post office will be one more blow to small towners' pride of place. As populations have dwindled, the vitality of these towns has suffered. Schools have centralized and closed; churches have merged and closed; retail shops and tradesmen have given up and closed. Main Streets are boarded up, and people travel great distances to work and shop. With all these changes has come a loss of identity. Zip codes, area codes, user names, and passwords supplant our connections to real places. Without a post office and a postmark, we are like everybody else.

My hometown post office closed in 1989, well before the current round in play. When it did, my feisty mother and some of her neighbors refused to submit so easily. Realizing that the Postal Service relied mostly on zip codes for delivering the mail—theirs had been 12940—they continued to write "Hopkinton, NY," now with "12965" on their letters. That's because their mail now came to the post office a few miles away and would be delivered by a rural letter carrier anyway. A small act of rebellion is good for the soul. That's what we may have to resort to now. ▼

Varick A. Chittenden is professor emeritus of humanities at the State University of New York in Canton and the TAUNY Center project director for Traditional Arts in Upstate New York. Photo: Martha Cooper



Poetry on the Porch

BY STEVE ZEITLIN

My family and I love August in New York. Parking is easy, and we even get a seat on the subways. But the first week of August every summer, we, too, flee the sirens and horns, abandoning the cacophonous clatter of City Lore's First Street and First Avenue offices for a week at the beach in Garden City, South Carolina. My wife and fellow folklorist Amanda Dargan's parents rent the house, and all of her sisters and our nieces and nephews pile in, spending afternoons and evenings on the screened-in porch overlooking the sand dunes, the beach, and sea.

Among our traditions is an evening spent reading poems on the porch, a tradition Lucas Dargan, Amanda's dad, eagerly anticipates, with his at-the-ready *101 Favorite Poems*, published in 1929. But we all bring a few poems down to the beach to read, and Aidan Powers, now 10 years old, comes equipped with a full set of Shel Silverstein's ingenious poems from books like *Falling Up*. (One of the Silverstein lines delivered on poetry night has even become a kind of family expression: "We can be friends forever," I joke with Aidan. "There's really nothing to it. I tell you what to do, and you do it!")

Masterpieces and ditties are read side by side. Poems from the English Romantics like Shelley, Keats, Wordsworth, and Byron are read side by side with cowboy poetry and nonsense verses. One family story reminded Lucas of an old limerick that he mostly recalled: "A wonderful bird is the pelican / His bill holds more than his belly can...." Then Lucas forgot a line, which we were able to recapture thanks to the internet, available even at the beach in recent years. "Ah, that's it! 'He can take in his beak / Food enough for a week / But I'm damned if I see how the helican.'"

But the poems that waft onto the sea air that evening carry with them not only the finely wrought words of their creators, but the family stories and personalities and ethos of the family gathering. Each year,

for instance, Amanda's sister Sarah reads "The Minuet" by Mary Mapes Dodge in honor of her mother: "Grandma told me all about it / Told me so I couldn't doubt it / How she danced / my Grandma danced / Long ago." She reads that poem every year, because it reminds us all of a story that Frances, now 94, loves to tell of how she once jumped up on a table at the Junior Senior ball and danced to Cab Calloway's 1931 hit "Minnie the Moocher."

We could have guessed what poem would come next. Lucas, a forester and environmentalist, never misses a chance to read Shelley's "The Cloud": "I am the daughter of Earth and Water, / And the nursling of the Sky; I pass through the pores, of the ocean and shores; / I change, but I cannot die. . ." Then he adds each year, "I just think it's amazing that a poet could capture the hydrologic cycle so well."

Then my nephew Patton Adams, who lived and worked in Beijing and speaks Chinese, recites a poem by Li Po, "Quiet Night Thoughts," among the most quoted poems of the Tang dynasty.

床前月光
疑是地上霜
舉頭望明月
低頭思故鄉

Before my bed
there is bright moonlight
So that it seems
Like frost on the ground:

Lifting my head
I watch the bright moon,
Lowering my head
I dream that I'm home.

"I thought it would be appropriate for poetry night at the beach," Patton later explained in an e-mail, "because the moon was shining on the water; because of the extreme contrast between a frosty tundra and Garden City in August; and because being at the beach in the summer with

my grandparents is one of my models for 'home.'"

In *The Second Life of Art*, Italian poet Eugenio Montale writes about how the journey of art is an "obscure pilgrimage through the conscience and memory of men..." He suggests that music, painting, and poetry exercise their powers outside the moment of creation, when they free themselves from "that particular situation of life which made them possible." It is in precisely those moments when the poem is appreciated in situations, and for reasons the poet could not even have imagined, that the "circle of understanding" closes and "art become[s] one with life...."

The poems on the porch were composed at different points in human history, but as part of their "obscure pilgrimage," they sojourned for a few moments on a porch in Garden City. Here they became part of the way family members share what they love with one another, and, in the process, share something of themselves (since, in some sense, you are what you love).

The evening wouldn't be complete without my daughter Eliza reciting John Masefield's "Sea Fever" from memory: "And all I ask is a merry yarn from a laughing fellow-rover, / And quiet sleep and a sweet dream when the long trick's over."

"Oh my God—look at that beautiful sky," Amanda says. We look up to see the moon casting its reflection on the water. Then Amanda's sister tells us that supper is on the table, and the poetry is put to bed. ▼

Steve Zeitlin is founding director of City Lore. Thanks to Amanda Dargan for her help with this essay.



Yuri Yunakov:

2011 National Heritage Fellow

BY PETE RUSHEFSKY AND ETHEL RAIM

The Center for Traditional Music and Dance (CTMD) has been pleased to work closely for many years with pioneering Bulgarian Romani saxophonist Yuri Yunakov. Yuri is a featured performer in our Touring Artists program and a major innovator, whose music is rooted in the traditions of the cosmopolitan Thracian hinterlands of Istanbul. In June 2011, the National Endowment for the Arts bestowed upon Yuri the prestigious National Heritage Fellowship, the nation's highest honor for lifetime achievement in folk and traditional arts.

In the spring of 2009, we sat down with Yuri to learn more about his musical heritage and central role in the development of the electrifying genre known as Bulgarian wedding music. This profile of Yuri is based on what was shared in that exchange. Special thanks to Cathie Springer for translating during our meeting.

A Musical Dynasty in Thrace

Of Turkish Roma (Gypsy) descent, Yuri was born with the name Hussein Yunakov in 1958 in Haskovo, a city in the Thracian region of southeastern Bulgaria. For centuries Thrace has been a rich melting pot of culture—a cosmopolitan borderland filled with Turks, Bulgars, Macedonians, Greeks, Roma, Sephardic Jews, Armenians, Albanians and others.

Cigarette production remains a major industry of Haskovo, with the government-

owned company Haskovo-BT a large processor and exporter of tobacco and cigarettes. Tobacco factories were an important employer of the residents of the Haskovo *mahala*, or Romani quarter. Most of the musicians of Haskovo were employed by the tobacco factory and supplemented their incomes through wedding performances on the weekends.

The Yunakov family is well known through the region for their musicianship. Yuri's grandfather, "Kemence" Ali Yunakov, was a renowned violinist and singer from Sliven, Bulgaria. (In Turkish tradition, master musicians are given an honorific name referring to their instrument—in this case *kemence*, the Turkish word for violin.) Yuri's paternal grandmother Aishe was from the border region of Greece and Bulgaria.

Born in the great Mediterranean port city of Izmir, known as Smyrna prior to the Greco-Turkish population exchange of 1922, Yuri's maternal grandfather Ismail was a *kasap* (butcher), quite a respectable livelihood in Haskovo. Yuri noted that his grandfather purchased the animals he butchered and then sold them, distinguishing him from less prosperous *kasaps* who were paid to slaughter but never profited from buying and selling the animals. Ismail's wife, Yuri's grandmother, died rather early.

In his popular ensemble, Kemence Ali was backed by Yuri's father, "Dancho" (whose name was also Hussein), on a B-flat

Albert-system clarinet, and Yuri's uncles on accordion and *dmale*, large double-headed drums (known as *tapans* in other parts of the Balkans). Depending on the occasion, the ensemble might also feature brass instruments such as trumpets and trombones. The group was augmented from time to time by Armenian and Jewish musicians: in particular, Yuri remembers Armenian *oud* players. The ensemble performed a mix of Roma and Turkish repertoire, mainly at Roma weddings—they were rarely hired for Bulgarian affairs—and made occasional appearances on Turkish-language radio.

Traditionally, a Roma wedding in Thrace spanned much of a week. The events started on the Tuesday before the nuptials, with the bride performing a "show-and-tell" of the dowry her bridegroom was to receive. The next day, the women would gather for a ritual bath of the bride at a local *hamam* (Turkish bath). Two bands would be hired by the bride's father on the Saturday of the wedding—one would play for the women, the other for men (larger, enterprising ensembles could provide musicians for both parties). There was also a place for music provided by *zurna* (a double-reed wind instrument) accompanied by *dmal*, used to commemorate the bride's departure from her family's household. On the Monday after the nuptials, the women would gather at the house of the bride to drink, talk, and sing.

Men and women would dance separately.



Bulgarian Romani saxophonist Yuri Yunakov, performing at Lincoln Center. Photograph by Richard Conde. Courtesy of Center for Traditional Music and Dance Archive.

A variety of dances were performed: line choreographies such as *pravo horo*, *kasapiko horo* (butcher's dance), *elenino horo* (Greek dance), *paidushko*, and what Yuri called the "Gypsy 9/8" slow dance, as well as *cocek* circle dances. Musicians would also be expected to provide music to entertain guests at the banquet table, drawing on a repertoire that included Turkish classical forms, such as *peşrev* and, less frequently, *saz semai*.

Over time, Dancho took command of his father's ensemble and introduced changes in instrumentation and repertoire. Brass instruments were eliminated, and a drum kit and electric bass were introduced. (Despite increasing use of a kit drum, young Yuri got his start playing *tapan* in the ensemble.) Electronic amplification was another innovation. Weddings became two-day affairs, and the wedding party a mixed group, with men and

women dining and dancing together. The variety of dances performed diminished, as well: among line dances, only *pravo horo* and *kasapiko horo* were now commonly performed at weddings.

Yuri's Musical Development

When Yuri was eight, he joined a *bitov* ensemble being organized at the local *zariya* (cultural center) by Mitko Angelov. *Bitov* music was removed from the typical music of Thrace, where it was rare to see instruments such as *gadulka* (lap fiddle), *gaida* (bagpipe), *tambura* (lute), and *kaval* (end-blown flute).

While these instruments were traditionally played by solo instrumentalists, in the 1940s, mixed-instrument *bitov* ensembles began performing frequently on Bulgarian radio and recordings, employing standardized pitch and virtuosic performance styles. As

was common throughout Eastern Europe, larger national and regional folk orchestras were later assembled across Bulgaria (including Philip Koutev's State Ensemble for Folk Songs and Dances) that employed Western arrangements of folk music.

Yuri recalls Angelov as a musical visionary who attracted many young people to Bulgarian folk music. He came to Yuri's school and went from class to class recruiting young musicians. When Yuri expressed interest in *kaval*, Angelov provided one there on the spot, and within two hours, Yuri was able to play music (he had already learned some Bulgarian music from his father on clarinet). Yuri was the only Roma in the ensemble; aside from a couple of young Turkish colleagues, the group was all of Bulgarian ethnicity. Over one hundred youth joined the ensemble, which also featured a dance

group and performed throughout Haskovo. Performing with the *zariya* ensemble during the week, Yuri continued to play weddings with his father's ensemble on the weekends. He remained with the *zariya* ensemble for four or five years. During this time, Yuri also initiated a short but successful foray into professional boxing that brought him several national titles.

Eventually, Yuri's older brother Ahmed took over leadership of the ensemble. With Dancho moving over to saxophone, the new band—named Aida after a large local hotel—featured Ahmed and Yuri on Boehm-system clarinets, as well as electric guitar, bass guitar, two accordions, drums, and two male singers. Aida performed a mix of Bulgarian, Greek, Turkish, and Roma music. Although he was happy to be relieved of the responsibility of managing the ensemble,

Dancho died prematurely, when Yuri was only seventeen.

Through his work with Ahmed, Yuri's reputation soon grew among leading Romani musicians working to create a new style that the University of Oregon's Carol Silverman describes as emphasizing "virtuoso technique, improvisation, fast speeds, daring key changes, and eclectic musical sources such as jazz, rock, Turkish, and Indian musics, as well as Balkan village music." Yuri attracted the attention of accordion virtuoso Ivan Milev from the town of Mladost. Milev convinced Yuri and Ahmed to join his band. They played with Milev for a number of years before returning to their own family ensemble. Like Yuri, Milev has since immigrated to the United States and is very active in New York's Balkan music scene.

Yuri's time with Milev had a big impact on his career. Milev encouraged Yuri to focus on saxophone, rather than clarinet, and Yuri worked with Milev to create a nuanced and virtuosic technique for the saxophone that complemented the other major melody instruments, clarinet and accordion. Yuri credits accordionist Neshko Neshev's father as the first wedding music saxophonist he knew of, but according to Silverman, it was Yuri himself who "created the saxophone's role in this style."

While for many years, Bulgaria's Communist government tried to suppress the growing popularity of Roma wedding music, the government eventually relented and sanctioned a festival dedicated to the genre in Stambolova. Even as it recognized a national craze that had its roots in Turkish and Roma wedding music, the totalitarian



Yuri Yunakov at Lincoln Center. Photograph by Richard Conde. Courtesy of Center for Traditional Music and Dance Archive.

government simultaneously actively censored unsanctioned forms of the music.

Trakija and Beyond

After a strong showing in his first Stambolova festival, Yuri was approached by clarinetist Ivo Papasov, the leading wedding musician in the country, to join his band Trakija. He agreed only reluctantly, as he feared upsetting his relationship with Ahmed. Through his performances with Trakija, beginning in 1983, Yuri became famous throughout Bulgaria, performing frequently on radio and TV and for weddings attracting thousands of attendees. As Silverman puts it, "In the 1980s, Yunakov and his band Trakija were household names in Bulgaria, and people would wait months or even years to engage them for weddings, concerts, and other events. They were the equivalent of rock stars in the West, with many bookings and thousands of fans." The popularity frequently created backlash with the government, as so much of the wedding music scene operated outside of the authoritarian government's control. Yuri and Papasov were twice imprisoned for their musical activities.

In 1989, with the help of Joe Boyd, a renowned American record producer based

in England, Papasov's band was brought to the United States for the first time to perform for the Queens Ethnic Music and Dance Festival organized by the Center for Traditional Music and Dance (then known as the Ethnic Folk Arts Center) at Bohemian Hall in Queens. This was only the ensemble's second performance outside of Bulgaria, following a concert in London. During the American visit, the Papasov ensemble performed on David Sanborn's national TV program, *Night Music*. A leading jazz saxophonist himself, Sanborn was so struck by Yuri's playing and horrified by the condition of his instrument that he presented Yuri with a new saxophone.

Since immigrating to the United States in 1994, Yuri has been in great demand on both coasts as a musician of unstoppable energy and power. While playing for weddings and family gatherings in the Bulgarian, Turkish, and Macedonian Romani communities, he continues to perform around the world fronting his own ensemble, as well as reuniting with Papasov from time to time for tours and recordings.

Despite his renown on world music stages across the world and the great demand for his music within the Roma community, Yuri has had to find other entrepreneurial ap-

proaches to support his family. He recently opened up a livery company in New Jersey. He also participates in CTMD's Touring Artists program, which creates performance opportunities for leading New York-based traditional artists at major venues across the country. ▼

Discography

Recordings with Ivo Papasov

Orpheus Ascending (Hannibal/Rykodisc)
Balkanology (Hannibal/Rykodisc)
Together Again: Legends of Bulgarian Wedding Music (Traditional Crossroads)

Recordings by the Yuri Yunakov Ensemble

New Colors in Bulgarian Wedding Music (Traditional Crossroads)
Balada-Bulgarian Wedding Music (Traditional Crossroads)
Roma Variations (Traditional Crossroads)

Pete Rushefsky is executive director of the Center for Traditional Music and Dance. Ethel Raim cofounded the Balkan Arts Center, now the Center for Traditional Music and Dance, and continues to serve as CTMD's artistic director.



To continue to receive *Voices*
and enjoy the full range of
New York Folklore Society programs,
become a member!

For more information turn to page 48
or visit our web site:

www.nyfolklore.org/about/member.html

Remembering Jean (1964–2011)

Reflections by “Las Mujeres” (The Folklore Girls)

BY EILEEN CONDON, ELENA MARTÍNEZ, AND HANNA GRIFF-SLEVEN

What follows is a series of remembrances by Eileen Condon, Elena Martínez, and Hanna Griff-Sleven, three of folklorist Jean Crandall's many friends and colleagues in the field of folk arts in New York State. Special thanks to Jean's brothers and sisters—Beth, Rob, Trafton, and Sarah—for their permission to incorporate the obituary they wrote for their sister just after her untimely death in November 2011, in the section which concludes this piece.

From Eileen:

Dear Jean,

First, I have to apologize. At various past meetings in restaurants of “Las Mujeres de Folklore,” Hanna and Elena and I all tried cajoling you into being the next *Mujer* to be profiled in my “In Praise of Women” column in *Voices*. “No WAY!” was the usual reply. And although you meant it, because you were too modest to be comfortable in any extended spotlight

(save that for the traditional artists!), we’re nevertheless taking our collective recent loss as something of a “Yes, way,” after the fact, not because we’re fine with it, but because it’s customary. Folklorists know about the importance of custom and ritual, to remember and show respect. So, incomprehensible as your passing still seems to us all—to your close friends, to your close family of brothers and sisters and nieces and nephews and grand-nieces, to the many artists and students whose lives you touched, to your colleagues in the field—it’s your turn to get praises lavished upon you, despite your previous objections. Given the circumstances, though, I imagine you might understand, and cut us a little slack.

The timing was bad. November 1st was *el Día de los Muertos*, the Day of the Dead. You had devoted so much of your life to supporting and advocating for Mexican

folk artists, immigrants, and arts. Mexican holiday customs and foods, altars, *papel picado*, *piñatas*, rock-star *muertos*, mirrors, mats, palm miniatures, painted animal carvings, handmade Nativity sets, filigreed earrings, embroidered tapestries, handmade paper hangings, pop-art magnets, wrestling masks, beaded rings and bracelets—your folk arts programs, your house, and later, your store, were chock full of the art and the soul of Mexico. At 47, in the midst of being so fully alive, you had a heart attack—while busily packing up your car to be ready to leave for an upstate migrant affairs conference the next day. You had recently returned home from a birthday party that dear ones had thrown for you in Oaxaca. You had dropped off the ankle-biting black kitten, Spock, that very morning at the vet, for neutering. (Day of the Dead, the perfect day for this procedure, as we had both noted!) You adopted Spock because no one else could handle him. And you cursed the day, from time to time, threatening to return him, which I half dreaded and half hoped for. I had bottle-fed and raised Spock as a foundling, but a fourth cat in a studio apartment is, let’s face it, wacko. No one else could make room for Spock, so you did. You refused at first (the rational impulse), then called back later to say, okay, you would give it a try.

Adopting Spock and his older feline brother Loki was a rehearsal for the next phase, after all: adopting a Mexican boy or girl. All the prospective adoptive aunts and uncles and cousins were waiting excitedly along with you for that big day. So there Spock was, probably just blinking his way out of heavy anesthesia at Dutchess County SPCA, gonad-free, unbeknownst to himself, when in between phone calls and text messages and the freak



Jean Crandall with Kuchipudi-style Indian classical dancer Kantham Chatlapalli, and Kantham's students, at Spirit of Beacon Day celebrations, Beacon, NY, September 2011. Photo by Sandesh Viswanathan.



Jean Crandall in her fair-trade Mexican folk arts store, La Mula Chula, in Rhinebeck, New York, July 2010. Photo by Rob Crandall.

Halloween snowstorm's knocking the power and trees and wires down at your house, calling the electric company, sending funny text jokes and photos about the whole situation, somewhere in the midst of all that ordinary living, you had a heart attack, and we lost you. And here we remain, struck by lightning, the power to make much sense of this knocked out of us all.

People spend years cultivating belief in what we can't be sure about, after death. Odd, how hard it can be, to cultivate belief in what we already know to be true intellectually, and by evidence—the gathering at your sister's in Hastings, your beautiful memorial in Poughkeepsie, and your ongoing physical absence. It reminds me of my favorite line from my folklore students' papers: "The *fact* that it was the *truth* made it all the more believable." Facts don't work that way. You must just be in Oaxaca, really, or down in Hastings for a while, or in Tarrytown, or Cambridge, or down south, or in Vermont, just a little longer than usual. We haven't seen you for a while. I would say you are in all of those places, especially Poughkeepsie.

I'm glad you had been realizing a bunch of dreams in fairly short order over the

past few years: La Mula Chula in Rhinebeck (fieldwork+fair trade, yes!), getting a garden put into your backyard (thanks, Maura!), field trips and visits to Mexico, waiting for new life to come into your life, and into everyone else's, via the adoption process, working through all the paperwork to make that happen. You continue to inspire me. Your life proclaimed to all of us all the time—live! Live it up, laugh, keep loving, no matter what happens.

— Eileen

P.S. At the end of November, I talked to Elena, asking her what she would want to say about you in this piece we were going to put together. This is what she shared as we reflected over the phone.

From Elena:

When I first came back to New York after Oregon, at that first folk arts Roundtable that I attended, everyone got introduced. That was 14 years ago—I met Hanna and Jean for the first time, and we really connected.

I worked for Jean in the Poughkeepsie and Rockland folk festivals, and then the folklore world got away from the production of festivals. There are not as many festivals going on now; everyone has moved on. With Jean, it wasn't just a friend relationship, it was working together. I could work with her well because she was cynical about the folklore structure, about people who took themselves too seriously. We could kid around on the same wavelength in that way.

We were friends who also worked together. All of us Folklore Girls have this, and it strengthened all of us. Eileen and Jean had the Dutchess County link, a double relationship of working and hanging out. Jean lived in Poughkeepsie, and my family in Wappingers also saw her. I went to a lot of concerts with her. She was good at pushing me to see more: Lucinda Williams, Los Lobos, Richard Thompson. Levon Helm at the Beacon Theater—the best concert I ever saw in my life. She was always getting tickets, for all kinds of

shows, concerts, events at the Bardavon Opera House in Poughkeepsie. Jean was the catalyst.

Jean took her training as a folklorist really seriously; it was a big ethical point for her, along with the way she presented artists, and later, presented them in her store. She was very much into working directly with artists. How many times did artists actually stay with her! If she was going to do this—this was how it was going to be done.

We attended a bunch of Clearwater festivals. We could laugh at the silliness and corniness of *A Mighty Wind*. We saw that together in Rhinebeck. Maybe that summed up a lot for her. She had the ability to laugh at the scene like that. Amazing, how close she was to all her nieces and nephews. Despite their all being so different, and in some cases, uninterested in folk stuff. Jean was so playful and fun that she bridged such gaps easily.

We shared a love of chocolate—we went to the exhibit on chocolate at the Museum of Natural History. Like most fancy exhibitions, not so good, all on form, no substance, great video and technical and interactive stuff, but not much substance. We bought chocolate, went out on the front steps, and just ate chocolate. Our underlying themes: chocolate and music. Jean pushed people to go places. Jean was generous. She had a really scathing sense of humor. Eileen and Jean playing very bad congas at our house in the Bronx—that got us in trouble with the neighbors.

When you're close friends you get to know your friends' quirks. Jean was always running late, always getting lost, even with a GPS—that was part of her. She would just take a wrong turn. Always. With her, it sort of got to a point that you knew wherever you went, that would happen.

From Hanna:

Last night I was cooking dinner and reached for a jar of orange blossom honey to add to the sweet potatoes I was making. Jean had given me the jar for my birthday last winter. I opened the jar and inhaled this

most fragrant stuff and got such an intense memory of my friend Jean. I broke down and cried for a bit, mourning my friend.

I knew Jean for 14 years as a colleague and great friend. We first met when I was a program assistant in the Folk Arts Program at the New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA); her organization, the Dutchess County Arts Council, was an applicant and I had to evaluate Jean's programs; observing her work was a pleasure. She was organized, informed but most importantly, so engaged with her work. I loved seeing her work with all her constituents; she had a way with connecting with people of all backgrounds.

When I left my job at NYSCA, and took the position as director of Public Programs at the Museum at Eldridge Street, it was Jean whom I hired to help me coordinate the annual Egg Rolls and Egg Creams festival. She was terrific: forging collaborations with the local Chinese and Orthodox Jewish community. Being neither Chinese nor Jewish never daunted Jean; she found a common language and helped make our festival most successful. She chose wonderful artists to represent the eclectic culture of the Lower East Side.

I loved working with Jean so much that when I got a grant to take a 13-piece klezmer band upstate on a 10-day tour in fall of 2007, I hired Jean to help me once again. Jean proved to be the right choice. She drove one of the vans, helped me with all the logistics of the drive, the concerts, the feeding, and tending to our wonderful musicians. It was a wonderful week of music and bonding.

In addition to her outstanding skills and abilities, Jean was an exceptionally lovely person and a good friend; and her ability to nurture close and caring relationships set her apart. She had a wicked sense of humor and adventurous musical and food tastes. One of my favorite things to do with her was check out new and old music (we both adored Richard Thompson and got to see him a few times together). We got to see Bob Dylan play at a little league park in Poughkeepsie, heard great jazz at



Portrait of Jean Crandall in Briarcliff, NY, 2004. Photo by Rob Crandall.

the Bardavon Opera House in Poughkeepsie, and in the City. I depended on her to keep me up on who was putting out a new album when. We also had great foodie adventures. We both liked to cook and liked to check out food in unexpected places. My husband and she bonded over a Sri Lankan dinner that proved too spicy for Paul, but he sweated (literally) it out just to hang out and get to know Jean and Elena Martínez who had joined us that evening. Jean, Elena, Eileen Condon, and I tried very hard to meet for dinner and drinks every six weeks (wished so much it could have been more). In fact, we had one scheduled for the Sunday after Jean passed away (a belated birthday toast for her).

Moreover, I always appreciated Jean's balanced approach to her job, keeping it in perspective while cultivating these other aspects of her life. Her opening of La Mula Chula, her beautiful Mexican import shop in Rhinebeck, NY, was a way for her to make a living from knowing and bonding with the amazing folk artists she met in Mexico. Her kindness, enthusiasm, and generosity were infectious, and she will be missed by the many people whose lives she touched, and selfishly, by me. ▼

POUGHKEEPSIE — Jean DeGrace Crandall, 47, died on November 1, 2011, at her home in Poughkeepsie, New York, where she was a longtime resident. Born in White Plains, NY, on October 10, 1964, she was the daughter of the late Robert Wilson Crandall and Therese DeGrace Crandall. She is survived by her sisters Elizabeth Crandall Barnes and Sarah Crandall Knox and brothers Trafton Milford Crandall and Robert Wilson Crandall, Jr., and her beloved nieces and nephews Melissa, Alice, Carolyn, Grace, Douglas, Katherine, Bennett, Joseph, Rory, and James and two great-nieces Lucy and Clara.

Jean grew up in Briarcliff Manor, NY. She graduated from Briarcliff High School in 1982 and earned a BA from the University of Vermont in 1986. She also earned a Masters in Folk Studies from Western Kentucky University in 1995, and an MS in Education (ESL) from SUNY New Paltz, NY, in 2008.

Jean worked as the Folklorist for the Dutchess County Arts Council and as a consulting folklorist for the Westchester Arts Council and other local organizations. She was a board member of the New York Folklore Society. Most recently she worked as a Tutor Advocate for the Mid-Hudson Migrant Education Outreach Program in New Paltz. Jean was also the owner/operator of La Mula Chula in Rhinebeck, NY, a store featuring fair-trade Mexican folk art, which she imported herself. Jean was fluent in Spanish and travelled frequently to Mexico, where she had developed personal relationships with the artists whose works she sold.

Jean was a true community activist and philanthropist. Jean was warm hearted and altruistic in nature and had a special commitment to the immigrant community of the greater Poughkeepsie area. She will be greatly missed by many.

Within the next year, the Crandall family plans to create a foundation in Jean's name to sustain Mexican folk arts and the social justice causes dear to Jean's heart. For further information, contact Sarah Knox at sarahknox@mac.com.

Lost Treasures

BY JOHN THORN

To give an idea of how large a story a small artifact may tell, and how rich in association it may prove, allow me to present a baseball pin no larger than a dime, along with a common nursery tale.

“Three wise men of Gotham went to sea in a bowl,” went the Mother Goose rhyme; “and if the bowl had been stronger, then my rhyme had been longer.”

Mother Goose’s Histories or Tales of Passed Times was first published in London about 1775, based upon English and French sources. Not a propitious beginning for a baseball story, but look at the accompanying photograph, of a pin worn by members of the Gotham Base Ball Club of New York in the 1850s. Let’s track the story back to 1460, when the “Foles of Gotham” were first mentioned in the *Tonneley Mysteries*, and a century later, when the absurd doings of the village’s people (seven miles from Nottingham, England) were collected in a book, *Merrie Tales of the Mad Men of Gotham*.

The simplicity of the inhabitants was legendary. One absurdity attributed to them was the building of a thornbush round the cuckoo to secure eternal spring; another was an attempt to rid themselves of an eel by drowning it. But the archetypal tale of Gothamite behavior was when King John intended to establish a hunting lodge nearby. The villagers, fearful of the cost of supporting the court, feigned imbecility when the royal messengers arrived. Wherever the king’s men went, they saw the fools of Gotham engaged in some lunatic endeavor. When King John selected another spot for his lodge elsewhere, the “wise men” boasted, “We ween there are more fools pass through Gotham than remain in it.”

How did this tale come to resonate with the Gotham Base Ball Club, formed in 1837, as perhaps the game’s first organized club, eight years before the self-proclaimed pioneers, the Knickerbockers? Why did they name themselves after the proverbial wise fools? Gotham,

understood today as Batman’s hometown, is also a common synonym for New York since our English cousins began to refer to those “fools” who sailed from the mother country (three men in a tub) to make their fortunes in New York as residents of the “New Gotham.” The most richly evocative of all the city’s nicknames, it was, like Yankee Doodle, originally intended by its English coiners as an insult.



Washington Irving also applied the name of Gotham to New York in 1807, in some of his *Salmagundi* letters from Mustapha-Rub-a-Dub Keli Khan. (“Rub-a-dub-dub, three men in a tub...” is the way another variant goes.) And in the subsequent craze for all things Irving, Gotham was seized upon as a badge of honor for New Yorkers and a rebuke to John Bull.

Proper businessmen scorned the young men who played baseball in the New York area around 1850 for acting like fools, trying to extend their youth beyond the time when men should give over childish things. So the Gothams, in defiance against the British, cricket, and their elders’ puritanical attitudes toward play, named themselves for the legendary fools of the mother country and made up this little badge of honor for its members. This pin was issued to Henry Mortimer Platt and donated to the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1939 by his daughter. For me, this was the most splendid piece in the Hall. In renovations to the Hall before its 1993 enlargement, this pin, long on display, was lost—and therein lies another arrant tale.

In the 1980s the National Baseball Library was cramped for space and pressed for cataloging services. Some large boxes were filled with unrelated items of mixed provenance and scant documentation. In one such box, packed loosely among some truly notable curios (I recall Cy Young’s rookie contract from 1890) was a thin wooden stick, with irregular hand-hewn notches along part of its perhaps 10-

inch length. With unquestioning confidence that only comes with ignorance, I snorted at finding this insignificant piece of kindling, in a plastic bag without any tag indicating that it had ever been accessioned. “I know you’ll take anything here,” I laughingly announced to some library staffers, “but I thought at least it had to have something to do with baseball!”

All of us were puzzled by the stick; none of us knew how it had entered into the collections or why it was being retained. I chalked this up to the democratic, if not overly discriminating, collections policy of the early Hall of Fame. This endearing commitment, as baseball’s attic, to accept even the humblest offerings from fans is the magic that brings the multitudes to Cooperstown. I thought no more about the stick for five years, until I was reading through Henry Chadwick’s scrapbooks, at the New York Public Library—and then the stick became The Stick. There, in Volume 20, dominated by cricket stories, I found the following innocuous note:

Previous to 1746, the score was kept by notches on a short lath: hence the term notches for runs. The notching-knife gradually gave way to the pen, and the thin stick to a sheet of foolscap.

The fool’s cap belonged on my head. I had dismissed as inconsequential what was surely a scorer’s stick from an exceedingly early game of baseball, an artifact earlier than Doubleday or Cartwright or anyone you might name. This stick, perhaps the most resonant of all items relating to the game’s prehistory, is now lost, too—in part because I failed to hear its story at a time when it might have been recognized as a treasure, and saved. ▼

John Thorn is the author and editor of many books, including *Baseball in the Garden of Eden* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2011). He lives in Catskill, New York. Copyright © John Thorn.



Follow Spot: Growing the Ranks

BY KRISTEN ANDRESEN

Several years ago, Kaisha Johnson was doing what arts administrators do: attending regional conferences, engaging in dialogue with colleagues, taking in new work. But she noticed something was missing: People like her.

“I was surveying the field, and I was seeing a lack of diversity among administrators,” recalls Johnson, director of touring artists at the Center for Traditional Music and Dance. “On our stages, certainly there’s a diversity of work, but what was being presented onstage was not reflecting what was going on behind the scenes. I wanted to reach out to women who felt like they were working alone and formalize a network where we could support one another’s work.”

She turned to Alison McNeil, who was working with Arts Presenters at the time, and together they formed Women of Color in the Arts. The group has grown to include more than 100 members who represent all segments of the field—presenters, managers, agents, arts educators, fundraisers and development professionals—and it now includes representation from The Netherlands, Colombia, Brazil and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

“These women are feeling isolated in their work, too,” McNeil says.

Because of WOCA, they aren’t alone. Its members are engaged in everything from casual networking and idea-sharing to more formalized mentorship and profes-

sional development programs. Johnson and McNeil are in the process of establishing a pilot program to introduce young women in the Washington, D.C., area—ranging from junior high school to college—to the idea of arts administration as a career. It is their hope that this will “help diversify the pipeline.”

They’ve also created a brown-bag lunch series, led by members who are experts in areas of importance to WOCA, such as building strategic partnerships. It has been so popular in the Washington area that they’re planning a similar series in New York.

“We’ve had some ‘aha moments,’” McNeil says. “Being able to come together to meet and network and being able to hear



WOCA, which convened at APAP|NYC 2011, has more than 100 members. Photos by Jacob Belcher /Association of Performing Arts Presenters.



lessons learned from the host and the featured speakers allows us to go back to our organizations and approach things a little differently than we would've before."

A website that serves as an online forum for members to discuss issues and help one another with career networking is in the works, and WOCA's first meeting at APAP|NYC 2011 was a resounding success.

Though WOCA has well-defined core objectives (see sidebar), McNeil and Johnson predict that the group and its programming will continually evolve as members' needs change and the ranks grow.

"This is all about enhancing contributions to the performing arts field that could ultimately make it more diverse in a lot of ways," Johnson says. ▼

Voices extends its thanks to Alicia Anstead, editor-in-chief of *Inside Arts*, the magazine of the Association of Performing Arts Presenters (www.APAP365.org) for permitting a direct reprint of this article from the Spring 2011 issue. For more on WOCA's continuing development and programs, visit their website at <http://www.womenofcolorinthearts.org>.

WOCA's Objectives:

- Creating an online network to discuss issues in the field, specifically affecting women of color
- Creating a community to share information about career opportunities
- Organizing annual interest group sessions to fellowship and create agendas at the regional booking conferences (WAA, Arts Midwest and PAE) and at the national Arts Presenters conference
- Facilitating panel discussions at conferences, specifically targeted to encouraging diversity in the field and addressing the necessary sensitivity needed for implementing more diversity on stage
- Providing mentorship opportunities for new and midlevel administrators



Down to the Depths

BY LIBBY TUCKER

During the 2011 hurricane season, New Yorkers have gone through an unusual amount of stress. Many people's basements have flooded, and towns such as Margaretville and Burtonville have suffered severe damage. With our governor's new "Labor for Your Neighbor" program, more of us can travel to flood-soaked parts of our state to lend a hand. Many of us who have bailed out our own flooded basements would welcome the chance to help our fellow New Yorkers, and some of us have found basements to be interesting places to visit. After years of teaching at Binghamton University (BU), I have learned that basements seem to provide a home for mysterious, elusive campus ghosts.

Many of my students at BU have loved to tell and hear ghost stories, and the best of those stories have come from personal experience. Basements—dark, chilly, silent spaces—have furnished especially good locations for students' encounters with ghosts. I have heard many students express dismay about hearing spectral sounds and seeing strange sights while doing laundry in their residence halls' basements late at night. When they are all alone close to midnight, and eerie thumping sounds come from the dryer, uncanny experiences sometimes follow.

One of the spookiest places down in the depths of Binghamton University's campus has been the sub-basement of O'Connor Hall, where Alice, a friendly member of the custodial staff, once fainted and fell off a ladder while cleaning a light fixture. After she woke up, Alice claimed that the spirit of a young man named Michael had passed through her body. Students have visited the spot where she fell off the ladder, noting its location next to a sign proclaiming, "DANGER. NO ADMITTANCE. FOLLOW CONFINED SPACE ENTRY PROCEDURE BEFORE ENTERING." They have also noted that a cold breeze blows out through

this firmly locked door. Why would a breeze blow *out* of a confined space? Inquiring young minds want to know!

Of course, any locked door with a "NO ADMITTANCE" sign offers a folkloric challenge. Just as Pandora could not resist opening her box, and Bluebeard's wife could not resist opening the door of the locked room where her fellow wives' bodies lay, some students have not been able to resist trying to open the locked door in the basement of O'Connor. Finding that the lock did not yield to pushing and prodding a few years ago, two students asked me if I could get permission to open the door. I tried but did not succeed, so the space behind the door remained a mystery. I did learn, however, that this space belonged to our campus's underground tunnel system. Knowing that it was part of a tunnel made that part of the sub-basement even more attractive to the students who longed to visit it.

Finally, last spring a group of students in my "Ghosts in American Culture" class obtained permission to enter the forbidden space in O'Connor's sub-basement. The head of our physical facilities department kindly offered to take them on a tour: not just a tour of the lower regions of O'Connor, but one that encompassed all of the most interesting hidden, deep-down spaces of the campus. This tour was very helpful to the students, because it gave them a chance to prepare an oral presentation with a set of slides that all of the other students and I were eager to see. Wearing hard hats, carrying cameras, and clutching notebooks and pens, the students set out with their tour guide late one cold spring evening.

What they found—not surprisingly—was water, lots of water. Deep down beneath the basements of some buildings, rainwater had formed dark, Stygian pools. Because the buildings had been well planned, with plenty of room for runoff, this water did no damage. Intrigued by

these dark pools beneath their campus's dry buildings, the students took many pictures. Later, they noticed that some of the pictures contained small, glowing spheres of light, which ghost-hunters call orbs. Did these orbs show that ghosts haunted the basement, or were they just offshoots of digital photography? This question provided a good subject for discussion in class later on.

While the underground pools and orbs were exciting, the best part of my students' tour was their entry into the forbidden room of O'Connor's sub-basement. At last, a look at the room that had been locked for so long! The students discovered that the room was dark, dusty, and full of calcified spiders. On its floor lay countless burnt-out light bulbs, and near the room's entrance was an old, broken chair. Could these light bulbs and the chair have a relationship to what happened to Alice years ago? When she had her ghostly experience, she was reaching up to clean a light fixture. Aware of this connection to an important campus legend, the students took photos of the chair and light bulbs.

Besides photographing the forbidden room, the students picked up a souvenir: one of the light bulbs that had lain on the room's floor for so many years. They presented the light bulb to me as a gift on the last day of class. I cherish this gift and would be glad to show it to anyone who can come in to visit my office. During floods and other times of stress, we need good spirits. ▼

Libby Tucker teaches folklore at Binghamton University. Her book *Haunted Halls: Ghostlore of American College Campuses* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2007) investigates college ghost stories. Her most recent book is *Children's Folklore: A Handbook* (Westport: Greenwood, 2008).



Jewish Activities on Christmas:

An Online Case Study

BY MU LI

I miss New York City at Christmastime. It's not the tree in Rockefeller Center or the ice skaters, the gray snow or the windows at Lord and Taylor's. It's eating Chinese food and going to a movie on Christmas Day, a New York Jew's ritual.

—Molly Jackel, 2005

In the minds of many people around the world—both Christians and non-Christians—Christmas means Santa, exchanging gifts with family members and friends, a family dinner of turkey, carols, and a decorated Christmas tree. No matter how secular elements in American society and popular culture have whittled away at the religious meanings of Christmas—and even many Christians now consider Christmas an American holiday, a secular holiday, or a cultural holiday—my online observation suggests that most Jewish people, especially Orthodox Jews, still consider it an important Christian holiday, if not the most important one. The religious nature of Christmas leaves many people of other religions outside the nationwide celebration.

Jews constitute one of the largest non-Christian groups in the United States, and they have generally not acculturated to mainstream Christmas traditions. For reasons both religious and historical, most Jewish people maintain their traditional holiday observations, such as Hanukkah, the Festival of Lights, which is determined by the Hebrew calendar but falls in late November or December. As Jonathon Ament writes in “American Jewish Religious Denomina-

tions,” a report based on the 2000–2001 National Jewish Population Survey (NJPS) for the United Jewish Communities, “Most American Jews identify as Jews through a denominational prism, unlike the experience in other large Jewish population centers such as Israel or the former Soviet Union (FSU). The demographic characteristics and Jewish connections of those who identify and affiliate with Jewish religious denominations therefore take on special importance in the American setting” (2005, 3).

The National Jewish Population Survey is a nationally representative survey of the Jewish population living in the United States—more than 4.3 million—administered to a group of approximately 4,500 respondents. Interviewing for NJPS took place from August 21, 2000, to August 30, 2001, and was conducted by telephone, using a random sample of telephone numbers in all fifty states and the District of Columbia. Among all respondents, 34 percent called themselves Reform Jews; 26 percent self-identified as Conservative; 13 percent described themselves as Orthodox; 2 percent considered themselves Reconstructionist; and the other 25 percent were “just Jewish.” Therefore, nearly 75 percent of these American Jews prefer to identify themselves as Jews through particular Jewish denominations. No matter which form of Judaism is claimed, religion clearly plays an important role in the everyday lives of many American Jews.

The above data accord with the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey. According to the 1990 survey, 82 percent of Jewish

households never have a Christmas tree, and less than 3 percent of families where both spouses are Jewish have a Christmas tree (Kosmin 1991). According to one blogger, Tracey R. Rich, and several of her friends, many Jewish families with small children have Christmas trees to keep their children from feeling deprived or left out of the aggressively marketed Christmas season (2007). The survey findings seem to indicate that some number of Jewish families choose to deny or downplay the Christmas trees they had.

During my online research on Jewish Christmas traditions, I also conducted a similar investigation of Chinese observations of the holiday. Like Jews, most Chinese people follow the lunar calendar and celebrate Chinese New Year (Spring Festival). My online and face-to-face Chinese interviewees—around 150, representing many professions and different ages and immigration statuses—regard the Christmas celebration as entertainment only. Nevertheless, surrounded by a large population of Christians and widespread Christmas celebrations and work holidays, both of these outsider groups have gradually invented new customs to build their own Christmas.

According to Ament's analysis of the 2000–2001 NJPS data, the populations of both Reform and “just Jewish” groups, who are thought to be much more flexible in interpreting and enacting Jewish tradition, are experiencing a rapid increase, while those of the Orthodox and Conservative groups are consequently declining (2005). In this

article, I primarily discuss Jews who identify themselves as Reform or “just Jewish.” To many of these North American Jewish families (which may include non-Jewish members)—especially those living in New York City—Christmas means going to a movie theater and enjoying dinner at their favorite Chinese restaurant. This emerging custom is depicted in Brandon Walker’s 2007 video *Chinese Food on Christmas*, which has been seen by more than 1,780,000 viewers on YouTube alone. The video spoofs Brandon Walker’s dull life at Christmas, when because of his Jewish identity, the only things he can do are go to a movie theater and eat Chinese food like other Jews.

If forced to choose either the movie or the Chinese food, the Chinese dinner seems to be more significant. Jews may not always go to films, but Chinese food is indispensable on this special vacation day. As Ferrir commented online, “We come here [to eat Chinese food] every Christmas. It’s my treat to my family” (Poole 2005). Meanwhile, B-Side wrote on his blog that he and his friend Jash spent more than three hours looking for an open Chinese restaurant in the Los Angeles area, and at last they had to order take-out Chinese food. B-Side complained of the closed restaurants, “Point is, no Chinese restaurant with ‘Cohen’ in its name can be closed on Christmas in a Jewish neighborhood of a stereotypically Jewish city. IT’S JUST NOT ALLOWED” (2007). In some cases, when those Jewish people move out of the United States, or even New York City, the difference between the local Chinese food and that of their hometown will make them homesick. Mooselet complained online of the Chinese restaurants in Australia, as she missed the flavors of New York, where she grew up (2008). To many Jewish people who do not strictly keep traditional kosher foodways, Chinese food has become an inseparable part of a Jewish Christmas.

But why is Chinese food involved in this new—distinctly unorthodox—Jewish tradition, rather than some other ethnic food—and why is Christmas different from other Christian holidays? Besides the simple fact

that Chinese restaurants are seemingly open all the time, some promising explanations are certain features of Chinese food and Jewish people’s concerns, including Jewish identity, acculturation, and community solidarity.

Connections between Jewish and Chinese Food

Although Chinese food is a central part of the Christmas tradition for many less conservative Jews, especially those in New York City, the tie between these American Jewish people and Chinese food continues past Christmas. Chinese food and Chinese restaurants have become a part of their everyday life in many parts of North America. As Kim Vo reported on *Mercury News* on Christmas Eve 2006: “When Jews are 3 years old—from the time they’re ready to eat real food—they go to Chinese restaurants,” declared Alan Sataloff, CEO of the Albert L. Schultz Jewish Community Center in Palo Alto. “It’s either matzo ball soup or won ton soup.” Jessica Carew Kraft claims that many Jews have effectively ritualized the Chinese meal and made it an integral part of modern Jewish life in America. Indeed, she noted, “Many Jews say they mastered chopsticks before they learned the Hebrew alphabet” (Kraft 2002). In a culinary arts forum, Mizducky commented that her parents took her to the local Chinese restaurant for the first time in 1958, when she was two years old (2008).

Why do these Jewish people like Chinese food? Two Jewish sociologists, Gaye Tuchman and Harry Levine, note some possible reasons, although they do not differentiate groups of Jews by their denominational affiliations. One explanation is the specific ways that Chinese food is prepared and served, which help Jews and their children to find Chinese food more attractive and less threatening than other *treif* (non-kosher) foods. Chinese restaurants also rely on some ingredients, such as garlic and chicken, that are familiar to Eastern European Jews, and Chinese cuisine does not mix milk and meat. In addition, the similar injustices of anti-Semitism and racism against Chinese,

and the formerly low position of Chinese people in American society, made Jews feel safe and comfortable in Chinese restaurants (Tuchman and Levine 1993, 388–92).

Moreover, according to Tuchman and Levine, Jews in the twentieth century understood Chinese restaurant food as a cosmopolitan and urbane symbol. For many Jews in New York City, eating in Chinese restaurants signified that they were not provincial or parochial Eastern European Jews, not “greenhorns” or hicks, but American—more specifically, open-minded, modern New Yorkers (Tuchman and Levine 1993, 392–4). What is more, as Tuchman and Levine note, many second- and third-generation Jewish immigrants identify themselves as modern American Jews, or New York Jews, by getting together to eat Chinese food to reminisce about the “soft and gentle flavors of the past,” since “eating Chinese” became an established New York Jewish custom, a part of daily life and identity for millions of Jews (1993, 394–402).

In a similar vein, Donald Siegel explores the Jewish-Chinese culinary connection and the reasons why many Jews are interested in eating Chinese food. His findings are similar to those of Tuchman and Levine, but Siegel particularly focuses on similarities between kreplach and wontons and emphasizes the proximity of Jewish and Chinese immigrant communities in New York City between 1880 and 1920. He argues that shared neighborhoods may have resulted in shared culinary experiences and the transmission of recipes (Siegel 2005). Siegel also creatively attributes Jews’ culinary adaptations to ancient Jewish communities of China, particularly the Kaifeng Jews in Henan province, China. He describes a student of his from China, whom he suspects may be a descendent of the Kaifeng Jewish community because his surname is Lee (Lee and Jin are thought to be surnames that replaced original Jewish names). The student grew up without eating pork or shellfish, and on special occasions, his family cooked lamb stew with onions and peppers, a dish thought to be a traditional Sephardic meal with origins on the Iberian Peninsula (Siegel 2005).

Jewish Christmas and Chinese Food

Although the above reasons are convincing explanations for why Chinese food is popularly accepted by many Jewish people, they still fail to answer my earlier questions: why is Chinese food involved in this Jewish tradition, rather than some other ethnic food, and why is Christmas unique? In other words, why do an increasing number of Jews recognize Chinese food on Christmas as their own tradition—and why do some Jewish people even protest outsiders' invasion of this tradition? As Adam Gerard remarked online, he has seen many non-Jews (primarily Christians) at the movies and Chinese restaurants on Christmas, which makes him and his Jewish friends angry at the “greed” of Christians who are not satisfied with their own tradition. These interlopers cause theaters to be packed and restaurant waits longer, which ruins the Jewish tradition and “holiday.” To his Christian friends, Gerard suggested, “You stick to your presents, and we’ll stick to our Chinese food and a movie. Everyone will be happy. Please?” (2004)

Tuchman and Levine would argue that the underlying reason that Jews “eat Chinese” is to create a new Jewish identity in the New World, an identity that cannot be confused by mainstream Americans, even if the religious tie is loose in these Jews' daily lives. Lia Lehrer, a young Jewish writer and blogger, actually defined American Judaism specifically in terms of Chinese food and a movie: “As minyans and minyans of Jews gather in local Chinese restaurants and celebrate the day with egg drop soup and moo shu tofu and rent *V for Vendetta*, they’ll be practicing the newest branch of Judaism: American Judaism.” Lehrer juxtaposed Christmas with Hanukkah and other traditional Jewish holidays, concluding that the holiday Chinese dinner functions as a central American Jewish tradition: “We have sedarim on Passover, we eat latkes on Hanukkah, and, most importantly, we eat Chinese food on Christmas” (2007). Nonetheless, a Jewish Christmas—related to Chinese cuisine—is clearly different from the Christmas celebrated by Christians, and also distinct from

the deliberate non-celebration of those Orthodox or Conservative Jews who do not recognize Christmas at all.

So why do less conservative American Jews celebrate Christmas in this particular way—and why do they continue celebrating in this way? The answer may lie in the dilemma some Jews face: whether to acculturate to the American mainstream or maintain their distinct ethnic and religious identity. In *Christmas at Shalom Hunan*, an eight-minute interview video shot in 2004, many interviewees (all are Jewish except one) reported that they like Christmas, and some said that they exchange Christmas gifts with their Christian friends (Padmewan 2007). An elderly Jewish woman pointed to the change in attitudes toward the Christmas tree from her generation to her children's and grandchildren's generations. Decorating a Christmas tree in her childhood brought scolding from her rabbi father, but her children and grandchildren, although they maintain their Jewish identities, celebrate Christmas as well as Hanukkah and have their own Christmas trees. As time passes, more Jewish people may acculturate into the American mainstream of Christmas holiday celebration.

Nevertheless, many Jews also express explicit hesitation to this acculturating process, and some intend to deny this process. To many American Jewish families, with far-flung adult children living far from their parents, the Christmas vacation is a convenient time to get the whole family together. Scheduling a family gathering during Christmas, however, makes some Jewish families—particularly those with strict religious beliefs—feel “a vague sense of guilt,” since they are afraid of being recognized as celebrating Christmas (Rich 2007). To release this tension, these Jewish families “often repeatedly remind each other that ‘we’re not celebrating Christmas, it’s just a convenient time to have a family get-together’” (Rich 2007). This hesitation may even explain why Jewish people choose to use Chinese chopsticks when they are eating Chinese food, rather than asking for forks and knives in Chinese restaurants as

many other Americans do, especially in the western United States (Li 2002, 339–343): they actually intend to display their religious and ethnic difference from mainstream Americans, primarily Christians.

This dilemma of acculturation is also illustrated by Jews' choice of Chinese food. As Tuchman and Levine argue, Chinese food in the past acted as a tool to assist them to become Americans or New Yorkers—but this effect can be extended to other cuisines, if those foods are viewed as similarly cosmopolitan. Many Jewish people mention in their blogs or online comments that they eat or will eat Vietnamese food on Christmas, instead of Chinese food (for example, Andrea 2008, L. 2007, Modern Girl 2008). This flexibility indicates an evolving sense of what it means to be a cosmopolitan American. Some scholars, such as Steven M. Cohen and Samuel Heilman, regard this developing but continuous cosmopolitan ideal as an integral part of Jewish identity. They contend that Jewish people, especially those after the first or second generation in this country, are a people without a national home, since Israel was founded in 1948, decades after many European Jews had arrived in the United States. These contemporary American Jews consider their modern identity cosmopolitan, identifying themselves as “world citizens” (Cohen 1984).

Foodways and American Jewish Identity

Foodways always display and create identity, in both past and modern societies. Michael Owen Jones asserts that “eating practices reproduce as well as construct identity,” suggesting that by eating Chinese food, Jewish people not only represent themselves as Jews and cosmopolitans, but also are shaped by Chinese food (2007, 130). As I mentioned above, Siegel points out the similarity between kreplach and wontons. Tuchman and Levine also observe similarities between traditional kosher cuisine and Chinese food. These similarities make Chinese food acceptable to most Jewish people, but at the same time, by eating Chinese food on Christmas Day, Jews become outsiders

to mainstream American culture. Paradoxically, eating Chinese food on Christmas both identifies Jews as American and prevents them from completely acculturating. A few characteristics of the American Jewish practice of celebrating Christmas with a Chinese meal mark Jews' dual identity as simultaneously exotic and acculturated to American society. Both the celebration and the identity it helps to build are 1) non-traditional or exotic, 2) enacted in public, and 3) explicitly secular.

The traditional main course in most American families on Christmas is turkey, which is not a part of Chinese cuisine. In Bob Clark's 1983 comedy *A Christmas Story*, a Christian family orders duck at a Chinese restaurant after a neighbor's dogs steal their Christmas turkey. In Clark's movie, eating Chinese food on Christmas is funny and ridiculous, and it only happens in extraordinary circumstances. Indeed, Chinese restaurants are still exotic—especially on the cozily domestic Christmas holiday—in the minds of many American people. A commenter on Ian McNulty's blog article "Traditional?" about the Jewish Christmas tradition wryly remarked: "I think this was actually popularized more when *A Christmas Story* came out—Dinner eaten by the dogs? Head for a Chinese restaurant!—and has been transformed into a Jewish thing" (Liprap 2008).

For many Jewish people, however, the Chinese restaurant is also a symbol of acculturating to the American ethnic mainstream: going to a Chinese restaurant makes Jewish Americans feel not Jewish, but white. In Philip Roth's 1969 novel *Portnoy's Complaint*, Alex Portnoy remarks on the relation of Jewish and Chinese: "To them [Chinese people] we are not Jews, but white—and maybe even Anglo Saxon. No wonder they can't intimidate us. To them, we're just some big-nosed variety of WASP" (90). Moreover, the Chinese are the only ethnic group wishing many American Jews "Merry Christmas," which reminds them of their acculturated American identities. Aaron regards this formality as a memorable part of celebrating the holiday at a Chinese restaurant:

The best part of my family's Chinese-food-on-Xmas tradition is that every year as we're exiting the restaurant filled with outwardly Jewish-looking Jews (usually featuring a rabbi or two, as well), the restaurant staff never fail to wish us all a Merry Christmas. I look forward to it each year. The probably Buddhist Chinese servers wishing the rabbis and congregants a Merry Christmas. It's American; it's brilliant (2009).

Being a Jew and being an American are compatible in the minds of many Jews, and the compatibility is displayed and fulfilled in Chinese restaurants.

A second characteristic that confirms American Jewish dual identity is the public location of the Christmas celebration. Eating at a Chinese restaurant and watching a movie in a theater are both non-domestic activities, while most American Christian families prefer a private family celebration at home. Pleck considers the family-based tradition as America's way to integrate newcomers (as well as the rural poor) and socialize them as American citizens, which ultimately promoted national unity (2004, 46). Nonetheless, the public nature of Jewish Christmas practices are private and family-oriented in some senses. Since a majority of Christians celebrate at home during the Christmas season, formerly public places—such as streets, restaurants (especially those owned by non-Christians), and movie theaters—become a temporary "private" area. As blogger Bill Sobel noted, even the usually noisy and crowded casinos in Atlantic City are practically empty on Christmas, except for Jews, Indians, and Asians (2006). Chinese restaurants in many regions have only Jewish customers on Christmas, which creates a temporary Jewish space (Walker 2007). In addition, eating at a Chinese restaurant on Christmas Day is not a personal activity, so much as a family or ethnic behavior: an ethnic custom or ritual implying Jewish acceptance of the American family-based idea.

The third characteristic—an explicitly secular, "everyday" approach to the holiday—marks the contradiction between Jewish Christmas and traditional American Christmas observances. Eating Chinese food

is not an event limited to Christmas for most Jews, but rather a common, ordinary feature of everyday life. A Jewish interviewee of mine, who describes herself as not religious, tells me that her family in New York goes to Chinese restaurants every Sunday. They eat chow mein, wonton soup, eggrolls, fried rice, sweet-and-sour chicken, and kung pao chicken every weekend—and also on Christmas. But most American Christians eat Christmas dinners that are distinct from their everyday dishes. Turkey with all the trimmings is definitely not typical for an ordinary meal, but prepared for Christmas (and Thanksgiving) only (Schlechter 2007).

Jewish people do not typically elevate Christmas above other ordinary days, but conversely, a dietary style that regularly embraces Chinese food reduces the importance of one Jewish New Year tradition. Tuchman, Levine, and especially Siegel have emphasized that the wonton is similar to the traditional treat kreplach. Kreplach is usually served with a holiday meal, whereas wontons—serving many American Jews as a substitute for kreplach—is always available in Chinese restaurants. Hence, the symbolic and ritualistic significance of kreplach in Jewish culture is unexpectedly weakened by the secular and regular availability of wontons.

A Chinese Christmas—with Jewish Customers

The interaction between Jewish and Chinese people not only constructs a New World Christmas tradition for some Jewish groups, but also shapes the holiday customs of Chinese Americans or Chinese living in the United States, especially owners and employees of Chinese restaurants. While Jewish Christmas practices boost the business of Chinese restaurants and serve to demarcate owners and workers as identifiably "Chinese," the interaction between these two ethnic groups also reshapes the identity of Chinese people in the New World into "American Chinese" or "Chinese American." Due to their marked racial features and skin color, Chinese acculturation in North America has been a long and difficult

odyssey, even more than for Jewish people. In addition to racial differences, religious beliefs have motivated exclusion and discrimination against Chinese people. Chinese people who converted to Christianity have historically enjoyed more acceptance from American society (Carnes and Yang 2004).

For many Chinese restaurant owners and their employees, however, the Jewish Christmas tradition unintentionally postpones or hampers their religious practice. To cater to these Jewish customers, Chinese restaurants near large Jewish communities regularly keep open during the whole Christmas season, unlike many other local restaurants, especially those in the suburbs, which close for the holiday. As Andy Wong, owner of a Chinese restaurant in Seattle named Sea Garden, remarked, “We want to keep our customers happy, we don’t want to miss this day” (Wong 2006). Simon Zeng, another restaurant owner, mentioned that his restaurant stays open until 3 a.m. to cater to more customers on Christmas Day (Wong 2006). The owners and staff—many Christian—keeping these Chinese restaurants running on Christmas are unable to celebrate this holiday like most of the American public and are left outside of the nationwide celebration.

While this growing Jewish tradition hampers the religious acculturation of some Chinese, it does serve to promote a Chinese element within the Christmas celebration. The Kung Pao Kosher Comedy is one of the best examples: “Kung Pao Kosher Comedy started it all in San Francisco, mixing comics and Chinese food for an annual December event that has grown from one stand-up comedy showcase to eight. Then Chopshticks followed suit in Palo Alto. Now Meshugenah Christmas is making its debut” (Vo 2006). This type of comedy event, held in Chinese restaurants such as the Ming and New Asia restaurants in San Francisco and also in New York City, actually combines the two features of a Jewish Christmas: Chinese food and a light entertainment (similar to a movie). Since the show is performed in the restaurant, the newly emerged Kung Pao Kosher Comedy makes the Chinese restaurant a multiethnic and cosmopolitan

place, where the provincial Chinese—both the people and culture—disappear. By sharing the comedy, the Chinese owners, workers, and any Chinese customers also become part of a joint, secular American Christmas celebration. Cosmopolitan Jewish identity therefore promotes the birth of a cosmopolitan Chinese and Chinese restaurant culture.

In addition to the comedy shows, some Chinese restaurant owners have introduced traditional Chinese lion dance troupes on Christmas, even though the lion dance is typically performed during the Chinese New Year celebration in January or February (Wong 2006). This innovation brings traditional Chinese cultural meanings into a fundamentally Western tradition, but it also indicates that some Chinese in America may have accorded Christmas the same cultural connotation as Chinese New Year or that they are gradually regarding Christmas as containing the same meaning.

Finally, Jewish dietary preferences—particularly on Christmas—have greatly influenced the menu of Chinese restaurants in North America. Jewish people, especially seniors and middle-aged people, prefer Cantonese dishes to other regional cuisines of China, such as the spicy food of Szechuan and Hunan (Mortart 2006). Although some Chinese restaurants frequently introduce new dishes, many Jewish people, even young people, stick to their preference for Cantonese food (which also happens to be more kosher) and refuse the suggestions of waiters (Padmewan 2007). These entrenched dietary habits actually narrow the range of Chinese regional cuisines available to the Jewish community and encourage restaurant owners to adapt and develop more “American Chinese” dishes, rather than bringing in more typically Chinese foodways.

As many researchers have noted, food plays a central role in Chinese life and culture, and the Chinese restaurant is the symbol of China and Chinatown to many foreigners and to Chinese themselves (Simoons 1991). Hence, this acculturating process of Chinese restaurants implies the emergence of a new Chinese diaspora in

contemporary North America, promoting the transformation of Chinese people into Chinese Americans. Through the interaction between some subgroups of Chinese and Jewish people, cosmopolitan Jews trigger the cosmopolitan feelings of Chinese and stimulate them to identify themselves as insiders in their adopted country.

Communication between Ethnic Cultures

Generalizing about the Christmas activities of either Jewish or Chinese American remains premature, with further research needed. Not all Jews go to Chinese restaurants on Christmas; some prefer to stay at home with their families or keep strictly kosher at home or in Jewish restaurants, rather than substituting Chinese food. It is also possible that the simple availability of Chinese restaurants is the only reason that non-Christians like Jews choose Chinese food on Christmas; if there were other ethnic restaurants available around Jewish neighborhoods, Jewish people might switch from Chinese to other ethnic food. But according to my review of blog entries, comments, and online articles, I believe that longer hours of operation could not give birth to a tradition, let alone keep it alive over a considerably long period. People need more reasons and passion to create and maintain a tradition.

The sheer quantity of articles and comments about Jewish activities on Christmas indicates that the tradition of Chinese food on Christmas has existed historically, contemporarily, and functionally. As Noyes notes, there are “three traditions”: tradition as a communicative transaction, tradition as a temporary ideology, and tradition as communal property (2009). When traditions are created by more than one cultural group or expand beyond a national border, the interaction between two groups or cultures will not be simple or superficial, but complicated or deep. In the case discussed in this article, I would like to consider the communication between Jewish and Chinese groups in a broad, comprehensive, and cultural way, rather than at the individual and economic

level—even if I am taking a risk in doing so.

It is clear that the developing tradition of Chinese food on Christmas is shared by a small group of people—less conservative Jews and workers in Chinese restaurants—rather than embraced as an accepted custom by either all Jews or all Chinese in the United States. In contemporary North America, interethnic and interracial acculturation is significant and sensitive issue. A. L. Kroeber provides an insightful definition of acculturation:

Acculturation comprises those changes produced in a culture by the influence of another culture, which result in an increased similarity of the two. The resultant assimilation may proceed so far as the extinction of one culture by absorption in the other, or other factors may intervene to counterbalance the assimilation and keep the cultures separate. When we consider two cultures bombarding each other with hundreds or thousands of diffusing traits and appraise the results of such interaction, we commonly call it acculturation (1923, 425).

The case of Chinese food on Christmas presents an example illustrating how cultural assimilation or ethnic acculturation is accomplished by the efforts of active people of small groups representing different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. The process is communicative, ideological, artistic, and unique. As Zilla Jane Goodman, a professor of religious studies at the University of Colorado, remarked in an online article, a Chinese repast on Christmas was not something she “practiced growing up Jewish in South Africa. The trend appears to be a uniquely American phenomenon” (Morgan 2007). ▼

References

Blogs and Other Online Sources

Aaron. January 19, 2009. Comment on From Flanken to Fortune Cookies: Jews and Chinese Food on Christmas. <http://jwablog.jwa.org/jews-and-chinese-food-on-christmas> (accessed March 2, 2009).

Ament, Jonathon. February 2005. American Jewish Religious Denominations. 2000–1

National Jewish Population Report Series, North American Jewish Data Bank. http://www.jewishdatabank.org/Archive/NJPS2000_American_Jewish_Religious_Denominations.pdf (accessed January 22, 2011).

Andrea, Cousin. December 25, 2008. Comment on Christmas Means Chinese Food. <http://gitell.wordpress.com/2008/12/24/christmas-means-chinese-food/> (accessed March 2, 2009).

B-Side. December 25, 2007. L.A. Chinese Dining on Christmas: A Modern Travesty. <http://www.bsideblog.com/2007/12/la-chinese-dining-on-christmas.php> (accessed March 2, 2009).

Gerard, Adam. December 28, 2004. Chinese Food and a Movie: The Jewish Christmas. http://www.voteprime.com/archive/2004_12_01_bloggerArchive.html (accessed March 2, 2009).

Jackel, Molly. December 21, 2005. Wonton Christmas. <http://www.metroactive.com/bohemian/12.21.05/dining-0551.html> (accessed March 2, 2009).

Kraft, Jessica Carew. May 19, 2002. Don't Ask, Just Eat. <http://www.newvoices.org/features/dont-ask-just-eat.html> (accessed March 2, 2009).

Lehrer, Lia. June 15, 2007. Seinfeld, Jdate, and Chinese Food: New Definitions of American Judaism. http://www.uscj.org/Koach/koc_5767_tamuz_llehrer.htm (accessed March 2, 2009).

Liprap. December 24, 2008. Comment on Ian McNulty, 'Traditional?' <http://blogofneworleans.com/blog/2008/12/24/traditional/> (accessed March 2, 2009).

Mizducky. March 14, 2008. Why Jews Like Chinese Food. <http://forums.egullet.org/index.php?showtopic=113757> (accessed April 2, 2009).

Modern Girl. December 5, 2008. Comment on The Jewish Love Affair with Chinese Food. <http://octogenarian.blogspot.com/2006/08/jewish-love-affair-with-chinese-food.html> (accessed March 2, 2009).

Mooselet. December 29, 2008. Comment on Christmas Means Chinese Food. <http://gitell.wordpress.com/2008/12/24/christmas-means-chinese-food/> (accessed March 2, 2009).

Morgan, Ryan. December 17, 2007. Holiday Traditions: A Lo Mein Christmas. <http://www.dailycamera.com/news/2007/dec/17/a-lo-mein-christmas/> (accessed March 2, 2009).

Mortart. August 29, 2006. The Jewish Love Affair with Chinese Food. <http://octogenarian.blogspot.com/2006/08/jewish-love-affair-with-chinese-food.html> (accessed March 2, 2009).

Padmewan. December 17, 2007. *Christmas at Shalom Hunan*. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9ApHwQqLYcg> (accessed March 2, 2009).

Poole, Lisa. December 25, 2005. Chinese Food is a Popular Choice of Holiday Dinner. http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2005-12-25-chinese-food_x.htm, (accessed March 2, 2009).

Rich, Tracey R. 2007. What Do Jews Do on Christmas? <http://www.jewfaq.org/xmas.htm>. (accessed April 3, 2009).

Sobel, Bill. December 25, 2006. What Do Jews Do on Christmas? <http://nymieg.blogspot.com/2006/12/what-do-jews-do-on-christmas.html> (accessed March 2, 2009).

Vo, Kim. December 24, 2006. Oy, Christmas Tree! Chinese Food, Jokes a Respite for Jews. http://www.mercurynews.com/religion/ci_4896334 (accessed March 2, 2009).

Walker, Brandon Harris. December 1, 2007. *Chinese Food on Christmas*. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w1uZ_W7atDE&feature=related (accessed April 4, 2009).

Wong, Brad. December 23, 2006. A Growing Christmas Tradition—Chinese Food. http://www.seattlepi.com/local/297050_restaurant23.html (accessed March 2, 2009).

Published Sources

Carnes, Tony, and Fenggang Yang, ed. 2004. *Asian American Religions: The Making and Remaking of Borders and Boundaries*. New York: New York University Press.

Cohen, S. M. 1984. *American Modernity and Jewish Identity*. New York: Tavistock.

Heilman, S., and S. M. Cohen. 1989. *Cosmopolitans and Parochials: Modern Orthodox Jews in America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Jones, Michael Owen. 2007. Food Choice, Symbolism, and Identity: Bread-and-Butter Issues for Folkloristics and Nutrition Studies. *Journal of American Folklore* 120:129–77.

Kosmin, B. A., Sidney Goldstein, J. Waksberg, N. Lerer, A. Keysar, and J. Scheckner. 1991. *Highlights of the CJF National Jewish Population Survey*. New York: Council of Jewish Foundations.

Kroeber, A. L. 1923. *Anthropology*. New York: Harcourt.

Li, Li. 2002. Cultural and Intercultural Functions of Chinese Restaurant in the Mountain West: An Insider's Perspective. *Western Folklore* 61(3–4):329–46.

Noyes, Dorothy. 2009. Tradition: Three Traditions. *Journal of Folklore Research* 46(3):233–68.

Pleck, Elizabeth H. 2004. Who Are We and When Do We Come From? In *We Are What We Celebrate: Understanding Holidays and Rituals*, 43–60. Ed. Amitai Etzchi and Jarel Bloom. New York: New York University Press.

Roth, Philip. 1969. *Portnoy's Complaint*. New York: Random House.

Schlechter, Aaron. 2007. *The Great American Christmas Book*. New York: Overlook Press.

Siegel, Donald. 2005. *From Loksben to Lo Mein: The Jewish Love Affair with Chinese Food*. Lynbrook, NY: Gefen Books.

Simoons, Frederick J. 1991. *Food in China: A Cultural and Historical Inquiry*. Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press.

Tuchman, Gaye, and Harry Gene Levine. 1993. New York Jews and Chinese Food: The Social Construction of an Ethnic Pattern. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 22(3):382–407.

Mu Li is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Folklore at Memorial University of Newfoundland, Canada. His research centers on ethnicity, diaspora, and online community, with a current focus on Chinese in Newfoundland.

Discovering Community Summer Institute

A Vermont Folklife Center Program



SAVE THE DATE: June 25-29

for the Vermont Folklife Center's week-long summer institute for educators, **Discovering Community: Students, Digital Media, and Place-Based Learning**, which will be held this year in Middlebury, Vermont.

The *Discovering Community* summer institute offers participants basic hands-on experience learning the methods of community-based research, the process of making a documentary, and the skills of working with digital media—in a school setting.

For more information go to our Web site www.discoveringcommunity.org or contact Gregory Sharrow at the Vermont Folklife Center, by e-mail (gsharrow@vermontfolklifecenter.org) or by phone (802) 388-4964.

“The personal gain of realizing... that there are millions of stories in our own backyard that are ten times more interesting than *People* magazine is something that I will cherish.”

-Sarah Wolfe-Gordon,
Elementary Educator

Sailmaker

BY PAUL MARGOLIS

Long before engine-powered vessels came on the scene, the wind provided propulsion for boats and ships of all sizes, and sailmakers designed and stitched together fabrics to catch the wind. The art and craft—and now the science—of sail making date back thousands of years. The Chinese were probably the earliest sailmakers; their slatted bamboo sail designs date back to 3000 BC. Around 2000 BC, Arab sailing vessels used sails as they traded between ports in the Persian Gulf. In Europe, Greek sailmakers provided the square sails for trading and military vessels that plied the Mediterranean around 1200 BC. Sails, as we know them today, started to appear around 1600, when ships became larger and seaworthy enough to explore the as yet uncharted parts of the world.

Charles “Butch” Ulmer, the President of UK-Halsey Sailmakers, is the second generation of Ulmers in the sail-making business. His father, Charles, Sr., founded the business in 1946, after having worked for another City Island loft. Butch went to work for his father in 1965, after he got out of the Navy.

Forty years ago, there were a half dozen places on City Island that made or repaired sails and did canvas work. Today, UK-Halsey is one of two remaining sailmakers. Their facility on City Island, at the northern end of the Bronx on Long Island Sound, is across the street from the site of a former boat yard that turned out America’s Cup contenders and built wooden minesweepers and other small vessels for the Navy in the two world wars. Butch’s business is part of an international group that has sail lofts in Hong Kong, South America, Europe, and the Middle East.

“As an industry, sail making has gone through a total change,” Butch said, reflecting on the four and a half decades that he’s been in the sail-making business. “When I was a kid, sails were made out of cotton, and the work was done by eye and hand. They were weak materials, given to rotting and ripping under high wind loads.” In the sail loft, the entire sail was laid out on the loft

floor full-scale, and it was cut to conform to the design that had been hand-drawn to the shape and size. “Today, that’s all done by computer.”

Materials have changed dramatically over the past several decades: “Sails are made of Kevlar—the material of bulletproof vests—and other high-tech materials. They are more inelastic than canvas or Dacron sails of 30 years ago. Sometimes there will be some hand finishing, but mostly it’s a computerized process,” said Butch. He showed me a rigid piece of a sail that was a semi-transparent, high-tech fabric with a mesh of carbon fibers running through a Mylar “sandwich.” The new, high-tech sails are made in one piece and “cooked” in a heat chamber so that all of the materials bond together.

Butch doesn’t consider himself a sailmaker in the strictest sense of the word. “I’m a sailmaker in that I’m conversant in the ways that sails are designed and made.”

So, what has remained the same, or at least somewhat recognizable, from the old days? It is still possible to have sails made from Dacron; there are even polyester fabrics dyed to look like canvas sails, made for classic sailboats that have no need for the latest high-tech products. While those sails are also computer-designed, they are still sewn by hand-operated machines, and the finishing is done on them with waxed thread pushed through the stiff fabric by hand.

Butch showed me a Dacron sail, laid out on the floor of the loft, that was being sewn together on a sewing machine located in a pit that allowed the operator to sit at floor level and move the fabric along under the needle of the machine. That was certainly handwork, even if it was done with an electrically-powered sewing machine.

The sewing machines, which have been



Butch Ulmer, president of UK-Halsey Sailmakers, in his City Island sail loft. Photo by Paul Margolis.

unchanged for the better part of a century, along with “palms”—leather straps that go around the hand and have steel-reinforced sections for pushing needles through sailcloth—are still part of the sail loft’s equipment. Sections of tree trunks are still used to receive the pounding of the male and female parts of a grommet, the eyelets in sails and canvas.

“Sails,” said Butch, “do the same thing as always; they just do it better, since rigs and boats are far more sophisticated now.” Even though today’s sails are made of high-tech materials, they still serve the same purpose as they always have: to catch the wind and propel sailing vessels. ▼

Paul Margolis is a photographer, writer, and educator who lives in New York City. Examples of his work can be seen on his web site, www.paulmargolis.com.



Fishing Partners: Remembering Cory Weyant

BY NANCY SOLOMON

One of the reasons that folklorists like me choose to bring local fishermen and baymen to schools is because we believe that the best education comes from interacting with rich knowledgeable tradition bearers who can teach us about their tradition. I first began working with bayman Cory Weyant of Freeport, New York, in 1987, first as an ethnographer and then as a partner with the Freeport school district. Cory, who passed away in March 2011, was a natural born storyteller and educator, regaling any audience, young and old, with stories about crabbing, eeling, clamming, and trawling—traditional activities he learned as a boy growing up on the “Nautical Mile” of Freeport. After a year of learning about the bay, we decided it might be a good idea to teach the children of Freeport how baymen continued the traditions of their waterfront community.

Cory mastered the art of presenting to schoolchildren and began photographing more activities of his fellow fishermen and baymen. From this partnership which lasted

over 20 years, I, too, learned many things. Cory would ask for things he felt would help him tell his story, such as a chart of fish caught in local waters, or some clamshells from different types of clambers (we have five types of clams on Long Island). He also knew what he expected the students to know before his visit, so we prepared a student maritime magazine with glossary terms, stories we had collected from other fishers, and word games to help them remember terms Cory would use in his presentation.

We also learned how much more meaningful the science curriculum became to students. Often the teachers would say that they had little understanding of the fishing seasons and migratory patterns of wildlife and fish before Cory came into their classroom. They also said the programs opened students’ minds to the natural world in a way that the students could connect to. They also commented that sometimes a shy boy or girl would express themselves during

and after Cory’s visits, as they related to his adventures on the water.

Eventually the school programs became Cory’s programs. However our work continued, as regulations began to affect the ability of fishers and baymen to make a living year round. We advocated on his and other baymen’s behalf, especially when public hearings were held during the time when fishermen were on the bay working. When the Village of Freeport tried to move the traditional docking area to another part of town, I was able to gather a group of working and retired fishermen to protest at the Village Hall meeting and also to contact local and regional newspapers. Eventually the plan was defeated. When the Town of Hempstead planned to remove the remaining bay houses where baymen like Cory stored their traps and gear, it was through research on the house’s cultural significance, and media and advocacy that the houses were preserved. With these continued efforts, our work as folklorists becomes more than just school-based “show and tell” and leads to long-lasting commitment by communities to preserving tradition.

Sadly, my partnership with Cory ended in March, when he died in a tragic boating accident. In reflecting on our work together, I am reminded that the best partnerships are those where both parties learn from each other and grow in their appreciation of each other. We also ask you to get to know your local fishermen and become their advocate. ▼

Nancy Solomon is executive director of Long Island Traditions, located in Port Washington, New York. She can be reached at (516) 767-8803 or info@longislandtraditions.org.



Bayman Cory Weyant on his garvey with his eel traps. Weyant died in a tragic boating accident on March 2, 2011. Photo by Nancy Solomon, 2003. Courtesy of Long Island Traditions.

Essere Vecchi é Brutto

BY FRANK CAMPAGNA

I was born in East Harlem—then Italian Harlem, now Spanish Harlem—in 1937. I went to Catholic school in East Harlem. We lived there until I was fourteen years old, and then my parents sold their tenement house, and we moved to Somers, New York, in northeastern Westchester County. Many of my father's stories that I recall were told while we lived in New York City, because my married siblings lived in or near our tenement house and, by tradition, always came for Sunday dinner. When we moved to the country, it was a distance to travel, and my older siblings came to dinner on Sunday far less often.

My father was born on November 30, 1894, in Corleone, Sicily. He came to America in 1899, when he was four years old. He went to school here in America only to the fourth grade, or so he said—that means he started work at ten years old, and not at fourteen, the legal age at that time. According to the 1910 census, he was a full-fledged mechanic repairing sewing machines, with tool and die making experience, by age sixteen.

In 1916, he started his own business producing macaroni on a mass scale and made a good deal of money. He sold the business and went into real estate in 1923. The 1929 stock market crash took its toll, and after trying several business ventures without success, he drove a private limousine for Bainbridge Colby, who had served as secretary of state under Woodrow Wilson. My father returned to tool and die making in 1940, working in a defense plant. My father loved reading newspapers. He was a district leader of the Democratic Party in New York City, but turned to the Republican Party when we moved to Somers. My father believed in the candidate over the party. He

was always up on politics, especially local politics and politicians.

My father, "Papa," as we affectionately called him, was born Domenico Campagna. Despite having only a fourth grade education, he was able to pass on to his children sound advice and a clear understanding of life: its joys and responsibilities. As the youngest of his eleven children, I lived alone with my parents after the last of my siblings married, and I became more attentive to them as they were approaching old age. Life was not easy for my father as he began to age. I can remember, as a teenager, my father rising from his chair and muttering in Sicilian, "*Essere vecchi é brutto*" ("Being old is ugly"). He often used this expression when maneuvering gave him difficulty or pain. It was a clear reminder to me of his aging. His fear of aging and possibly being a burden to his children weighed heavily on his mind.

When I visited my parents' homeland in Sicily in 2008, I was impressed by the fact that old age had its place. Families we visited eagerly shared their homes and hospitality with their grandparents and other aged relatives. What has happened to our culture here in America? Often looked upon as a burden, senior citizens are many times ignored and distanced from family—filling our nursing homes, assisted living quarters, and adult day care centers—when they could be a source of comfort, bringing their support and experience to family life. It concerns and saddens me.

It is the memory of my father at the dinner table commenting on life's lessons, often punctuated and embellished with folktales, that makes me long for his wisdom and company. The American writer

Flannery O'Connor spoke a simple but profound truth when she said, "A story is a way to say something that can't be said any other way. . . . You tell a story because a statement would be inadequate." One folktale that my father often told at the dinner table remains with me to this day. It is the story of an aging, widower farmer:

As the aging farmer grew older, he could no longer handle the chores of the farm, so he asked his son and daughter-in-law to move in with him to help care for the farm. The old farmer lived at the house, and over time, became what the daughter-in-law perceived to be a burden and at times a nuisance. She often complained to her husband about her father-in-law's interference with her housework.

The son and daughter-in-law agreed to send the old man to a convent where the nuns would care for him. The son explained to his father their decision and soon afterwards made plans to take his father to the nearby convent. With no means of transportation and his father too old to walk the distance, the son carried his father on his back. Halfway on the journey, the son decided to rest by a large rock. He placed his father on the rock and once again began to explain the reason for both his and his wife's decision to leave the old man in the care of the nuns.

The old farmer's only reply was, "I will miss my home, but I understand."

The old farmer remained quiet for the rest of the journey and lived out his days in the convent. Years passed and the son, now in his twilight years, faced the same situation as his father—being a widower, too feeble to take care of the farm. He, too, had his son and daughter-in-law move in with him to help care for the farm. He, too, continued to live at the house, and over time,



Papa at the head of the table with his family, circa 1948, in his home at 165 East 107th Street, in the neighborhood now known as Spanish Harlem. Photo courtesy of the author.

he, too, became a burden and a nuisance to his daughter-in-law. His son, faced with the same problem as his father had faced with his grandfather, decided to take his father to the same convent to live the remainder of his life.

Midway there, by the same rock his father had rested at on his journey, the son began to explain again his decision to have his father leave his home and live in the care of the nuns. The father interrupted his son and explained, “Resting on this same rock, on a similar journey, I spoke the same words to my father, so explain no more.”

The son thought about what his father told him, and realizing he, too, had a young son and that someday he may be faced with the same situation, carried his father back to the farm and never again spoke of having his father leave the farm.

In *Filipino Popular Tales* (1921), Dean S. Fansler noted similar tales with the

theme of respecting old age. According to Fansler, my father’s story may have had its roots in the thirteenth-century French fabliau “La Housse Partie,” with a variant given by Ortensio Lando, an Italian novelist of the sixteenth century. One can extract many arguments for and against the moral of this folktale and even say it no longer has any meaning in today’s society. But to me, it brings to mind my father rising from his comfortable chair and lamenting, “*Essere vecchi é brutto.*” Being old is unpleasant—and oftentimes filled with difficult decisions.

When Papa became a widower, he decided to live with my sister, with the promise of her care. Although she fulfilled her promise, Papa felt lonely and missed his home in the country and its familiar surroundings. Not long after that, Papa met a lady friend and, after a short courtship, asked her to marry him. My sister and

others in the family were concerned with Papa’s impulsive decision. Papa wanted my thoughts on his decision to marry. I did have some reservations, but I decided to support him. I’m sure Papa’s story of the widower farmer played a role in my decision. Papa married his lady friend, my stepmother, and lived out his life in his country home. I will always remember Papa—especially his ability to express his thoughts with a simple folktale to bring me to a place of understanding. ▼

Frank Campagna retired in 1987 from IBM, where he worked as an advisory process engineer, and became a consultant to his family’s marketing and publishing services business, Tri-State Associated Services in Kingston, New York. He has devoted his retirement years to genealogy, self-publishing three books on his family’s history. He is an avid woodworker and member of the Friends of the Red Hook Public Library in Red Hook, New York, where he has lived for thirty-five years.

A Report from an Embroiderers' Gathering

BY ELLEN McHALE AND LISA OVERHOLSER

The New York Folklore Society, with the support of a Mid Atlantic Folk Arts Outreach Project grant, successfully organized an Embroiderers' Gathering in Ithaca, New York, on November 28–30, 2011, at the History Center of Tompkins County. Over this three-day period, the New York Folklore Society hosted visiting textile artist Vera Nakonechny, as well as visiting folklorist Amy Skillman, in an exchange with local artist Enikö Farkas and host folklorists Ellen McHale and Lisa Overholser. Paul Kawam, Micro-Enterprise Coordinator at the Mohawk Valley Resource Center for Refugees in nearby Utica, as well as four weavers from the Karen refugee community, were also present as part of the Gathering.

The Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation's Folk Arts Outreach Program is an initiative designed to strengthen the region's folk and

traditional arts infrastructure, and to make a long-term artistic contribution through the exchange of practice and ideas by traveling folklorists and traditional artists from home locations to host sites in other states or jurisdictions within the mid-Atlantic region. This Folk Arts Outreach Program exchange arranged by the New York Folklore Society was between two master embroiderers from the Mid-Atlantic Region who were both born in Eastern Europe. It was designed to encourage conversations about embroidery skills and styles from two countries, to share experiences and techniques for preserving embroidery traditions, and to explore outreach possibilities for a next generation of artists. Both Vera and Enikö have devoted years to researching and preserving the differing techniques, clothing styles, and regional variants within their respective Eastern European needlework traditions.

It was anticipated that an exchange between these two master artists, who had been working in similar ways within their own communities, would encourage them in their own work and might spark inspiration for new ventures.

Themes which ran through the entire exchange included the following: preserving the history and variation of textile arts, issues of collecting and preserving textiles, exhibiting work, and the impact of displacement of cultural groups. Of particular value was the discovery of the commonalities of experience between Vera Nakonechny and Enikö Farkas as post-World War II refugees from Soviet Bloc countries, and with the recent refugee experiences of the Karen. Friendships and linkages were made between all of the individuals involved, and plans were made for continued contact in the upcoming year. Besides being able to focus on an important part of women's folklore, the outreach provided opportunities to plan for a statewide textile program which can reach across ethnic and geographic boundaries. The New York Folklore Society, as a statewide service organization, found two of its mandates to be addressed in this exchange: the work of NYFS as a statewide agent drawing linkages from throughout the state, and the mission of the Society to be a service organization providing support to artists. This outreach project provided an important professional development opportunity and an opportunity for the Society to reach outside its geographic borders to link together like-minded individuals.

Benefits of the Two-State Exchange

The first day of the project was devoted to a direct conversation between Enikö Farkas



Enikö Farkas demonstrating an embroidery stitch for Vera Nakonechny. Photo by Sally van de Water. Courtesy of Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation.

and Vera Nakonechny. Enikö and Vera were able to show each other some of their work and discuss common techniques, motifs, and issues. The importance of regional differentiation and identity was also discussed, and both artists acknowledged the necessity of identifying regional motifs within their respective national traditions.

Discussions in this first afternoon of exchange also focused on archival techniques and preservation strategies. Vera, with the help of her husband George, had created a wonderful catalog of her items, compiled in a binder with samples of stitches, diagrams completed with specialized graph paper, and step-by-step instructions with illustrations for specific stitches. It was clear that Vera had thought long and hard about how her tradition would be passed on in her absence, and that she had devised a method of preserving what she saw as the tradition, which was very much focused on the items and stitches themselves. She had also clearly marked each stitch with a regional identification. Other points of discussion centered on the use of acid-free materials in storage and ways to publicize their work, particularly in their respective homelands.

As with every Artist Outreach Project, part of the exchange was designed to be open to a public audience. The public aspect of the outreach program was an exhibition of textiles and a reception on the second day of the exchange. Held at the History Center of Tompkins County, the two embroidery artists mounted an exhibition of their work and developed a participatory aspect to the exhibition by offering hands-on opportunities to try one's skill at a particular embroidery stitch or to try Ukrainian weaving on Vera's eight-harness loom. Outreach to the public was made by the History Center of Tompkins County through press releases to local media, and Enikö invited her colleagues within the embroidery community, as well as her embroidery students enrolled in her class at the local community center. Attendance for the afternoon workshops numbered at least 40 persons. This public program provided an opportunity for interested individuals to learn techniques of embroidery and weaving from the artists, and several individuals took the opportunity to do so.



Enikö Farkas and Vera Nakonechny study Vera's notebook of embroidery patterns, with folklorists Amy Skillman and Lisa Overholser. Photo by Sally van de Water. Courtesy of Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation.

Through a special initiative by the New York Folklore Society, a group of weavers from the Karen community in Utica had been invited to participate in the exchange. This group of weavers from Myanmar (formerly Burma) is sponsored by the Mohawk Valley Center for Refugees' micro-enterprise program and is working to develop a weaving cooperative in Utica. Attending the workshop were Master weaver Ah Mu, her daughter Ta Be Than, and two other weavers, Wah Mu and Paeray Htoo. Upon their arrival, they set up a tradi-

tional back-strap loom which is worked in a seated position, and both demonstrated and offered the opportunity to others to try their traditional weaving. The Utica-based weavers also brought samples of their work which they added to the exhibition of textiles.

As the afternoon progressed, the numerous needle artists and the general public had many opportunities to interact on several levels: for example, Vera demonstrated weaving techniques on her eight-harness loom and worked with the Karen weavers to show them



Sharing textiles. Vera Nakonechny and Enikö Farkas. Photo by Sally van de Water. Courtesy of Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation.



Group photo from the Embroiderers' Exchange. Pictured here are Ta Be Than, Enikö Farkas, Paeray Htoo, Micro-Enterprise Coordinator Paul Kawam, Ah Mu, Vera Nakonechny, and Wah Mu. Photo by Sally van de Water. Courtesy of Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation.

techniques of working on this type of loom; a young woman tried on clothing designed by the Karen women and modeled them for her friends; and Eniko conducted an embroidery lesson with a half dozen participants of all ages. The atmosphere was congenial and celebratory as friends, family, and colleagues stayed for an extended period of time.

Benefit to All Partners

This outreach project was successful on several levels. Vera Nakonechny and Enikö Farkas, two senior master artists were able to connect and share like experiences. The two women soon also found commonalities within their personal experiences, exploring these experiences informally over several shared meals during the two-day exchange. These two accomplished needle artists have taken their passion to a higher level to become collectors of historic textiles and techniques. Both have returned to their countries of birth to seek out patterns, clothing variations, and textile techniques. That they were able to connect on

the level of both artist and collector was an important aspect to this exchange.

The Karen weavers benefited through finding common ground with other textile artists and especially with Vera and Enikö, who had also experienced refugee status. As newly arrived residents of Utica, they were pleased to learn of American interest in their Karen cultural traditions, and Vera and Enikö clearly expressed to them the importance of preserving and maintaining traditional arts and culture even when faced with the difficult task of adjusting to life in America. As spokesperson for the group, Paul Kawam expressed that the four Karen weavers were thrilled to participate and experienced renewed purpose towards their own micro-enterprise endeavor. The Karen sold several of their woven items during the public presentation portion of the exchange, providing an opportunity for them to see that their weaving might be attractive to an American market.

The New York Folklore Society learned of strategies and programming directions

and about other statewide programs. NYFS has been planning for increased work with refugee populations, and this exchange provided both models for future programs and an opportunity to reach out to the Mohawk Valley Resource Center for Refugees. In the final session, folklorist Amy Skillman's description of her work on statewide exhibitions in Pennsylvania provided an important model for similar work in New York. Based on their experiences at the gathering, all of the artists were able to engage in planning for future collaborations of a regional or statewide nature.

This exchange reinforced the knowledge of the importance of artist-to-artist mentoring as a professional development opportunity. During this outreach program, the power of the shared artistic experience became perceptible and transformative. ▼

Ellen McHale is the executive director of the New York Folklore Society. Lisa Overholser is the New York Folklore Society's staff folklorist.

New York and the Sea

BY DAN MILNER

The retreat of the continental ice sheet that once lay 1000 feet thick upon Manhattan resulted in the deposition of a terminal moraine and the formation of the outwash plain below it, creating the landmass that would eventually become the vast bulk of Brooklyn, Queens, and parts of Staten Island. This new land formed a barrier that can sap the strength of wild ocean waves, sheltering ships from Atlantic gales. In doing so, it vastly increased the size of the New York shoreline and created one of the world's greatest natural harbors.

Burrows and Wallace estimate in their Pulitzer Prize-winning history, *Gotham*, that “by the second or third decade of the 18th century...perhaps one out of every four or five adult male residents of New York earned his livelihood as a mariner.” Shortly after the dawn of the 18th century, New York surpassed Philadelphia both in population and shipping. In 1818, the Black Ball Line commenced sailing between New York and Liverpool on a specific schedule throughout the year, the first shipping company committed to predictable departures.

The Black Ball ships are good and true
To me way-aye-aye, hurrah!
 They are the ships for me and you
Hurrah for the Black Ball Line!

Just take a trip to Liverpool,
 To Liverpool, that Yankee school.

The Yankee sailors you'll see there,
 With red-top boots and short-cut hair.

Even at that point, Philadelphia could have caught New York but the opening of the Erie Canal in 1825 meant that the City of Brotherly Love would forever be in Manhattan's wake. One of the most endearing of all New York sailor songs appeared shortly afterwards, as William Main Doerffinger notes in *Songs of the Sailor and Lumberman*, “the new dance, the polka, came out of Bohemia and became the craze.”

Shipmates, if you'll listen to me,
 I'll tell you in my song
 Of the things that happened to me
 When I came home from Hong Kong.
To me way, you Santy, my dear honey!

Oh, you New York gals, can't they dance the polka!

As I walked down through Chatham Street
 A fair maid I did meet,
 Who kindly asked me to see 'er home,
 She lived on Bleeker Street.

Says I, “My dear young lady,
 I'm a stranger here in town!
 I left my ship just yesterday
 And for Boston I am bound.”

“Now, if you'll only come with me,
 You can have a treat,
 You can have a glass of brandy, dear,
 And something nice to eat.”

When we got inside the house
 The drinks were passed around.
 The liquor was so awful strong
 My head went round and round!

When I woke up next morning
 I had an aching head.
 There was I, Jack, all alone,
 Stark naked on the bed.

With a flour barrel for a suit,
 I wandered most forlorn.
 Till Martin Churchill took me in
 And sent me round Cape Horn.

“Larry Maher's Big 5-Gallon Jar,” a song about another Manhattan trickster became popular during the Civil War era after Chatham Street printers published it on song sheets. Larry, according to a lyric from the pen of G.W. Watson, was an innkeeper who sidelined as a sort of personnel recruiter and travel agent.

Come, all you jolly sailors bold, that lives
 both near and far;
 I'll sing you a short ditty concerning Larry
 Maher:
 He keeps a slop-up boarding house, and
 sells rot-gut to tars,
 And the scourge of New-York City is his
 big five-gallon jar.
*So, if you want chain-lightning, step into Larry
 Maher's,
 And he'll serve you with abundance from his big
 five-gallon jar.*

When first I came to New York, I came
 here on a spree,
 And hearing tell of Larry's place, I went
 the sights to see:

Some drunken shells in the corner, more
 swilling at the bar,
 And Larry was supplying them from his
 big five-gallon jar.

Now one glass of Larry's beverage will
 make your heart to ache,
 And when you get keeled over your cash
 he'll surely take;
 But when you wake next morning, you'll
 be far outside the bar,
 Removed away to Liverpool by gallus
 Larry Maher.

You may talk about Jamaica rum, and
 Monongahela too,
 Or all the poteen whiskey made from
 Cork to Killaloo:
 For, it's a mere cypher, and far below
 the par;
 For, it can't come up to Larry and his
 big-five-gallon jar.

Now this jar is inexhaustible; for, when
 it is all done,
 Larry can replenish it, in the snapping
 of a gun;
 Some camphene and laudanum, alum-
 water and coal-tar,
 Composes this good beverage of, gallus,
 Larry Maher!

I took one glass of Larry's stuff, and my
 heart was up for fight,
 When an M.P. took a run at me and
 knocked me higher than a kite;
 He slipped the darbies on me, and the
 Tombs not being far:
 I bid farewell to Larry and his big five-
 gallon jar.

Maher may have been an actual shanghaier or, perhaps, a well-liked local publican—and the song just a joke. In either case, he was a certainly a known character in old New York. Don't go looking for his tavern, though. It rests very deep underneath the Manhattan anchor of the Brooklyn Bridge! ▼

Dan Milner teaches Storytelling in Song at NYU and Landscapes of New York City at St. John's University. A cultural geographer and former ranger in the National Park Service, he recorded “Larry Maher's Big 5-Gallon Jar” for the Smithsonian Folkways CD, *Irish Pirate Ballads* in 2009.



The New York Folklore Society Features “Legends and Tales” at Its 2011 Annual Conference

BY LISA OVERHOLSER

On Saturday, November 12, 2011, the New York Folklore Society hosted its Annual Conference around the theme of “Legends and Tales.” The conference was held at Binghamton University and included graduate student presentations, a public sector folklore panel, storytelling, readings, and great discussions.

The morning began with two graduate student panels, “The Fabled and the Fabulous,” and “Legendary Transformations.” The papers presented were thoughtful explorations into a range of topics, including folkloric perspectives on Shakespeare, the blues, film narratives, and legends, both historical and urban. Each paper session was followed by a lively question-and-answer period.

The keynote for the conference was presented by Dr. Elizabeth Tucker, folklorist and professor of English at Binghamton University. “Haunted Halls, Mansions, and Riverbanks: Legends of the Southern Tier” drew upon Tucker’s wealth of research into the folklore of the Southern Tier, and she shared many local hauntings, sightings,

and legends that she had collected over the years.

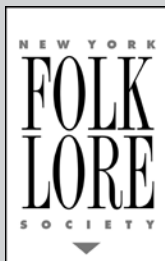
Next, novelist Jaimee Wriston Colbert, also on the faculty at Binghamton University as professor of English and creative writing, read from her work, *Shark Girls*. The novel, set in Hawaii where Colbert grew up, weaves bits of local folklore into a story about a girl attacked by a shark.

We were pleased to invite two esteemed

panelists, Dr. Kay Turner and Dr. Constance Sullivan-Blum, to contribute to the public sector folklore panel “Collecting Narratives after Disaster Strikes.” Since 9/11, Dr. Kay Turner has been documenting the spontaneous memorials which have dotted New York’s urban landscape. Her ongoing documentation has resulted in her most recent program on the 10th anniversary of the attack on New York’s Twin Towers. Dr. Constance

Publish in *Voices!*

See page 43 for
submission guidelines.



Jaimee Wriston Colbert reading from her work, *Shark Girls*. Photo by Ellen McHale.



Kay Turner, folklorist at the Brooklyn Arts Council, speaking about her work collecting narratives of 9/11. Photo by Ellen McHale.

Sullivan-Blum has been documenting the Southern Tier's Flood of 1972, when Hurricane Agnes caused widespread flooding. "Transformation from Tragedy: Survivors Remember the Flood of 1972" is a local history project capturing the stories of the flood and will result in a documentary film in 2012. Both panelists discussed their work as public folklorists in documenting such pivotal events and collecting the narratives associated with them.

Following an informal reception, the conference concluded with an outstanding performance by internationally known storyteller Milbre Burch. "Changing Skins: Folktales about Gender, Identity, and Humanity" highlighted the wealth and persistence of gender-bending folktales and cultural expressions around the world. Her engaging and energetic performance piece was provocative and underscored the power inherent in the telling of tales. ▼

Lisa Overholser is staff folklorist at the New York Folklore Society, where she manages the mentoring and professional development program and contributes to many other projects and initiatives. She holds a PhD in folklore and ethnomusicology from the University of Indiana.

Submission Guidelines for *Voices: The Journal of New York Folklore*

***Voices: The Journal of New York Folklore* is a membership magazine of the New York Folklore Society (www.nyfolklore.org).**

The New York Folklore Society is a nonprofit, statewide organization dedicated to furthering cultural equity and cross-cultural understanding through programs that nurture folk cultural expressions within communities where they originate, share these traditions across cultural boundaries, and enhance the understanding and appreciation of folk culture. Through *Voices* the society communicates with professional folklorists and members of related fields, traditional artists, and a general public interested in folklore.

Voices is dedicated to publishing the content of folklore in the words and images of its creators and practitioners. The journal publishes research-based articles, written in an accessible style, on topics related to traditional art and life. It also features stories, interviews, reminiscences, essays, folk poetry and music, photographs, and artwork drawn from people in all parts of New York State. Columns on subjects such as photography, sound and video recording, legal and ethical issues, and the nature of traditional art and life appear in each issue.

Editorial Policy

Feature articles. Articles published in *Voices* represent original contributions to folklore studies. Although *Voices* emphasizes the folklore of New York State, the editor welcomes articles based on the folklore of any area of the world. Articles on the theory, methodology, and geography of folklore are also welcome, as are purely descriptive articles in the ethnography of folklore. In addition, *Voices* provides a home for "orphan" tales, narratives, and songs, whose contributors are urged to provide contextual information.

Authors are encouraged to include short personal reminiscences, anecdotes, isolated tales, narratives, songs, and other material that relates to and enhances their main article.

Typically feature articles range from 1,000 to 4,000 words and up to 6,000 words at the editor's discretion.

Reviews and review essays. Books, recordings, films, videos, exhibitions, concerts, and the like are selected for review in *Voices* for their relevance to folklore studies or the folklore of New York State and their potential interest to a wide audience. Persons wishing to review recently published material should contact the editor. Unsolicited reviews and proposals for reviews will be evaluated by the editor and by outside referees where appropriate. Follow the bibliographic style in a current issue of *Voices*.

Reviews should not exceed 750 words.

Correspondence and commentary. Short but substantive reactions to or elaborations upon material appearing in *Voices* within the previous year are welcomed. The editor may invite the author of the materials being addressed to respond; both pieces may be published together. Any subject may be addressed or rebutted once by any correspondent. The principal criteria for publication are whether, in the opinion of the editor or the editorial board, the comment constitutes a substantive contribution to folklore studies, and whether it will interest our general readers.

Letters should not exceed 500 words.

Style

The journal follows *The Chicago Manual of Style*. Consult *Webster's Third International Dictionary* for questions of spelling, meaning, and usage, and avoid gender-specific terminology.

Footnotes. Endnotes and footnotes should be avoided; incorporate such information into the text. Ancillary information may be submitted as a sidebar.

Bibliographic citations. For citations of text from outside sources, use the author-date style described in *The Chicago Manual of Style*.

Language. All material must be submitted in English. Foreign-language terms (transliterated, where appropriate, into the Roman alphabet) should be italicized and followed by a concise parenthetical English gloss; the author bears responsibility for the correct spelling and orthographics of non-English words. British spellings should be Americanized.

Publication Process

Unless indicated, the New York Folklore Society holds copyright to all material published in *Voices: The Journal of New York Folklore*. With the submission of material to the editor, the author acknowledges that he or she gives *Voices* sole rights to its publication, and that permission to publish it elsewhere must be secured in writing from the editor.

For the initial submission, send an e-mail attachment or CD (preferably prepared in Microsoft Word and saved as Rich Text Format).

Copy must be double spaced, with all pages numbered consecutively. To facilitate anonymous review of feature articles, the author's name and biography should appear only on a separate title page.

Tables, charts, maps, illustrations, photographs, captions, and credits should follow the main text and be numbered consecutively. All illustrations should be clean, sharp, and camera-ready. Photographs should be prints or duplicate slides (not originals) or scanned at high resolution (300+ dpi) and e-mailed to the editor as jpg or tiff files. Captions and credits must be included. Written permission to publish each image must be obtained by authors from the copyright holders prior to submission of manuscripts, and the written permissions must accompany the manuscript (authors should keep copies).

Materials are acknowledged upon receipt. The editor and two anonymous readers review manuscripts submitted as articles. The review process takes several weeks.

Authors receive two complimentary copies of the issue in which their contribution appears and may purchase additional copies at a discount. Authors of feature articles may purchase offprints; price information is available upon publication.

Submission Deadlines

Spring–Summer issue	November 1
Fall–Winter issue	May 1

Send submissions as Word files to Eileen Condon, *Voices* Editor (e-mail preferred):
nyfs@nyfolklore.org

or
New York Folklore Society
P.O. Box 764
Schenectady, NY 12031

From Girl to Goddess: The Heroine's Journey through Myth and Legend by Valerie Estelle Frankel. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2010. 366 pages, introduction, appendix, notes, bibliography, index, \$35.00, paper.

Valerie Estelle Frankel begins the introduction of *From Girl to Goddess: Heroine's Journey through Myth and Legend* with her own journey of how she came to write this book. This journey begins like many of the tales she presents, with a child of wonder, who sets out on an adventure to learn more about the stories she loves and eventually gains the wisdom of understanding them. Inspired by Joseph's Campbell's theory of the hero's journey, Frankel assigns herself the task of exploring the similarities and differences between the hero's and heroine's journeys and challenges herself to prove that the heroine's journey is no less important than that of the hero. Those unfamiliar with or rusty regarding Joseph Campbell's theory need not worry, Frankel provides summaries of his theories as they apply or contrast to the heroine's journey.

The book is divided into two main sections: "Steps of the Journey" and "Archetypes." These two sections are in turn broken down into sub-sections, chapters, and sub-chapters. Each chapter begins with the telling of a tale through the combination of quotes and the author's own interpretation. Frankel analyzes the myths, folk tales, and legends as they relate to the particular step of the heroine's journey by utilizing the work of Joseph Campbell and other scholars including: folklorists, psychologists, symbolicists (author's term), and feminists. As each analysis is developed, variants of tales and additional tales relevant to that step of the journey are introduced. Historical and contemporary contexts are provided to show how the tales reflect the lives of women in the past and present. For the second section on "Archetypes," Frankel proffers her own list of female archetypes expanding on the popular triple-goddess: maiden-mother-crone, and the less-known archetypes of Antonia Wolf.

Frankel's use of tales is not exhaustive. Tales were chosen for their relevance to the step of the journey. The author returns to a previous tale several times if it is the best example to illustrate her point, rather than attempting to highlight as many tales as possible. Frankel did make an effort to include a diversity of tales from throughout history including: ancient myths, biblical tales, and stories from around the globe. Literary tales of singular authorship were included along with traditional tales of cultural genesis.

This book is a fantastic resource for anyone interested in folktale scholarship, regardless of a desire to learn about the heroine's journey. Those new to folktale scholarship will gain an understanding of the history of this field, while trained folklorists will find this work to be a wonderful refresher. Frankel demonstrates how to properly recognize both tale types and motifs and includes an appendix of Aarne-Thompson's Folktale Types and selected motifs for those unfamiliar with these works. But this book goes far beyond motif spotting to successfully combine the work of many scholars to show how myths, folk tales, and legends could and should be analyzed.

Yet, this book is more than a useful text for college students, or amateur and professional folklorists. It is an empowering book for women of all ages. I had previous experience with the many myths and folktales contained in this text, along with most of the scholarship used by Valerie Frankel. There was little in this book that surprised me. What did surprise me was the sense of camaraderie I felt with the featured heroines. Like the women who have told these myths and folk tales throughout the centuries and across the world, I recognized myself within them. This book is a must read for all women and should be given to all young maidens as they begin their own heroine's journey through life.

—Claire Aubrey
Independent folklorist

Oral History, Oral Culture, and Italian Americans, edited by Luisa Del Giudice. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009. 288 pages, introduction by the editor, bibliographical information after each chapter, appendix, \$89.00, hardcover.

There are many ways to tell a story, and as editor, Luisa Del Giudice looks at oral history as an angle of convergence in her collection of essays, *Oral History, Oral Culture, and Italian Americans*." Selected from the 2005 Annual Conference of the American Italian Historical Association (AIHA), the essays in the book convey Italian American stories from both historical and cultural perspectives. The volume is prefaced with gracious thanks to its 15 contributors and presents an overview of their experiences in academia, community, and the public sector and their pursuits toward a greater understanding of Italian American history, ethnography, and folk tradition. It continues with 251 pages of essays by artists, musicians, cultural anthropologists, and scholars of history and literature. The varied stories come together in a fascinating picture of the cultural practices of this unique, yet varied, ethnic group as Italians have migrated to live in the United States. Extensive bibliographies at the end of each essay are helpful for those who would like to dig more deeply or follow each author's trajectory of research. A thorough index also makes this more possible. For scholars and lay people interested in pursuing the roots of a culture that has, for the most part, been modernized, the book is accessible and authentic. Most of the essays maintain the storytelling voice that they present in their subjects, and some are so personal and direct that, to an Italian American, they may seem like a visit with family. To those in the field, the essays may seem like a visit with a family of folklorists. Many of the authors will be familiar names to those who know today's standard-bearers of Italian American folklore and tradition.

The collection of essays is divided into three sections, beginning with the introduction, by Del Giudice, an independent

folklorist and founder-director of the Italian Oral History Institute, a California non-profit educational organization, which was established in 1994 and dissolved in 2007. Del Giudice defends oral culture and oral history, in recognition that the majority of immigrants during the mass migration from the late nineteenth century to the immediate post-World War II periods were illiterate. Peasants and laborers who brought their religious and folk traditions to the United States settled in tightly knit communities where they re-created the culture of their lives back home. Even as the rural villages of their homeland emptied out as a result of this emigration, Italian immigrants encapsulated their regional cultures and dialects in the neighborhoods they made in America in an effort to create a home away from home. This collection represents a few of the remaining stories of those who remember what life was like for new immigrants and for those who remained in Italy before and during World War II. It also addresses

the synthesis of culture that occurred, post migration.

Part II of the book deals with oral history. It includes five articles by Alessandro Portelli, Ernesto R. Milani, Marie Saccomando Coppola, Sefano Luconi, and B. Amore. Portelli, Milani, and Saccomando focus closely on the way the medium reflects the message. Using the voice of a storyteller, Portelli recounts the conflicting accounts gathered from survivors of the massacre at the Fosse Ardeatine in Rome. The author argues that, unlike written histories, which are static, oral histories may change as people are influenced by the popular press and other people's telling of an event. Through dramatic and riveting examples, he shows how "mis-memory," or remembering a story as it was heard, whether the telling of it was true or not, becomes fact, or at least the dominant narrative.

In a similarly dramatic voice, "Breaking the Code of Silence Woman to Woman,"

Marie Saccomando Coppola tells her own personal story of the reception of her work as a folklorist—by its subjects. Her use of the first person narrative is a deliberate nod to the feminist idea that the personal is political; but in Coppola's case, the form had unforeseen consequences. "As a student of oral history, I innocently believed I was ennobling her life story," she says of the aunt in Sicily who is the subject of her study and PhD thesis. "She [her aunt], on the other hand, believed I had betrayed her and the entire family," says Coppola. After employing the feminist tradition of Tillie Olsen, Adrienne Rich, and others who tell the dark stories of a woman's suffering, Coppola recounts the stinging backfire of those whose secrets she told. Rather than being destroyed by it, Coppola works with this accusation of betrayal and argues that secrecy is another layer of the cultural narrative of Sicilian women. She does so in a powerful and riveting story.

Are you...

New to the New York Folklore Society? Missing back copies of the journal?

You can order the complete set or fill in the gaps in your collection.

Members: Order at the *members-only discount*.

To join the New York Folklore Society,
see the inside back cover.

Single Issues

Date or volume: _____

\$8 \$10 nonmembers \$ _____

New York Folklore

1975 – 1998

32 issues

\$85 \$95 nonmembers \$ _____

Selected back issues of *New York Folklore Quarterly* from 1946–1974 are available. Please contact the New York Folklore Society for selected issues.

TO ORDER

Publications subtotal \$ _____

Shipping and handling

Add \$4 for 1 to 5 issues,

\$20 for complete sets. \$ _____

Total \$ _____

Enclose check payable to New York Folklore Society and mail to New York Folklore Society, P.O. Box 764, 129 Jay St., Schenectady, NY 12301.

Name _____

Shipping Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Essays by Ernesto R. Milani and B. Amore parallel the others in this chapter as they look at the way the medium affects the message. Milani looks at “Il Corriere del Pomeriggio,” the newsletter of the Gruppo Lontanese of San Rafael, Marin County, California, and offers insights to how, for 20 years, it has been a clarion for the people of Lontano who remain interested in their regional traditions. It offers a good example of how local efforts with very low production value may provide the cultural markers that scholars need to study the everyday lives of ordinary people. Amore, like Saccomando, personalizes her study, “Twice-Told Tales: Art and Oral Histories from the Tenement Museum and Ellis Island.” She incorporates stories and descriptions from what she found at both museums and in their archives. She also offers descriptions of her own art project that incorporated what she learned about the immigration experience into collage and installations that were later displayed at the Tenement Museum in New York City and at a SoHo gallery. How the art connects to the overall Italian experience is subjective, but the presentation of her research at the museum and Ellis Island is a good entrée to what one might find in those places.

Luconi’s essay, “Oral Histories of Italian Americans in the Great Depression: The Politics and Economics of the Crisis,” while equally fascinating, stands alone in this section in its more objective style as the author connects economic pressures

to the voting patterns of Italian Americans during the two decades from 1932–1952. Today’s political analysts might do well to take note of some of Luconi’s points, as they face the same issues of voting patterns in a poor economy and a high jobless rate.

Part III of Del Giudice’s collection puts eight essays into the category of “Oral Culture.” “Cantastorie: Ethnography as Storytelling,” by Christine F. Zinni, examines the effects of recording methods on the stories being told. As in the articles of the previous sections, the focus is on methodology. However, the subject is the cultural figure, Maria Michela Tenebruso, rather than a historical event as those studied in the previous section. Zinni engages the reader in a lively narrative that, ironically, captures the very inflection, performance, and emphasis that her essay argues, is often lost in the written word. Her essay, combined with the films and interviews she describes, provides strong advocacy for oral histories and recording as a mode of transmission of culture, and she employs the voice of the personal narrative to add fuel to her argument.

Joanna Clapps Herman also uses personal references, what she calls stories from her “family’s myth cycle,” in an attempt to draw parallels to Homer’s *Odyssey*. While many examples of stories of her family are cross-referenced with moments in the epic poem, her essay lacks in allusion to a broader, shared experience, among Italian Americans both within the body of the essay and in its bibliography.

John T. La Barbera, speaks of his life’s work as a collector and a presenter of traditional Italian music. His testimony offers a fascinating perspective on the multicultural influences of his upbringing in New York City during the 1950s. Memories of his Italian grandfather playing music in his shoe shop on the Lower East Side evoked something different from what people saw in the Italian pop singers like Louie Prima and his cohort. He describes Sicilian Puppet Theater and the displays of culture during feasts and processions that were common in New York at the time and attempts to put all these influences together with later experiences in Italy, where he joined native Italian puppeteers and musicians. The essay, called “That’s Not Italian Music,” captures that elusive period when what was considered to be Italian transformed, as Italian Americans and Italians in Italy as well, adopted the musical and entertainment styles that were found in the United States.

Roberto Catalano and Enzo Fina also address the commercialization of traditional music and the difficulty in relating the music they played during 11 years of performing in Italy and the United States. Their essay, “Simple Does Not Mean Easy: Oral Traditional Values, Music and the Musicantica Experience” brings alive direct experiences like making a clarinet out of a stem of wild oat, pointing out how the common understanding of traditional Italian music does not pay homage to that. References to theorists like Gramsci and

VOICES IN NEW YORK

***A special benefit for
New York Folklore Society members***

You’ll receive 12 fantastic CDs and learn more about artists who are “under the radar”! Plus all the benefits of membership in the New York Folklore Society.



**JOIN US TODAY ONLINE AT
<http://www.nyfolklore.org/about/shop/membership.html>**

Oriana Fallaci, as well as numerous other scholars who have grappled with the phenomenon of globalized culture, ground the author's personal story in academia.

Other essayists in this section also employ the first person but make the personal connection to their argument less significant than it is for Zinni and Herman. Di Virgilio's "The Alms-Seeking Tradition of Sant'Antonio Abate in 1920's Western Pennsylvania," offers a poignant description of an agricultural tradition that disappeared in Italy as towns were abandoned by their residents for America, and tradition vanished, even in the United States as industrialization ensued. The respective works of Auguston Ferraiuolo and Sabina Magliocco are further abstractions of the cultures they describe, but theirs are grounded in scholarly research. Ferraiuolo's focus on the changing geography of Boston's North End would be useful to those in urban studies, as well as the ethnographer interested in the effects that a changing landscape has on culture. It gives a fascinating account of how the North End was alternately connected to and isolated from Boston proper at different points in history and makes the effects of landfill projects and highway construction palpable. Maguocco's documentation of the roots of *stregheria*, or witchcraft, among Italian Americans is an invitation to those interested in New World and New Age rituals among Italian Americans and the origins of these "vernacular magicoreligious practices" in Old World society. The essay's approach is similar to Ferraiuolo's, in that extensive research, rather than his own personal narrative, gives way to the author's theories about culture.

The final piece in the book, "Alessandra Belloni: In Her Own Words," is an interview with the artist and folk practitioner who was an inspiration and mentor to the editor Del Giudice. Del Giudice provides Belloni's original responses to questions in Italian and translates them into English as well. The interview is a sprawling and dramatic piece, which reflects the nature of Belloni, who was a former artist-in-

residence at Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City. Belloni also became famous for her modern interpretation of the spirit of Tarantella in dance and performance and for her revival of the spiritual connection with The Black Madonna and Italian women, both here in the United States and in her native southern Italy. Belloni was winner of the 2005 Italian Oral History Institute Award, along with John La Barbera, (also featured in this volume), and founder with La Barbera, of I Giullari di Piazza, "the only fully professional U.S.-based folk music ensemble devoted exclusively to presenting the oral traditions of southern Italy," according to the author. Del Giudice got to know Belloni's interpretations of these traditions as she featured the artist's works in a live performance series at UCLA, and later traveled with Belloni to Italy, where Del Giudice was a participant in the troupe. The original interview was recorded on audiotape in 1998, and transcribed at the close of 2006. Of the transcription process, Del Giudice says, "Listening at such a distance in time, to recover the actual words and intonation, inferable gestures, and other modalities, required the most acute sort of attention—and sometimes conjecture." This honest assessment of the process of collecting and interpreting oral histories, along with Del Giudice's intimate knowledge of her subject, her accomplishments as a scholar, and her excellent editing of this volume are evidence that the presentation in this book represents the truth, beyond reasonable doubt. It is also enjoyable reading, as is the book as a whole, for anyone interested in Italian American culture or the process of preserving the stories that have been told for generations in the past and who care about them being told, for generations to come.

—Ann van Buren, MA, MLIS
Freelance writer and teacher in New York's Hudson Valley

Send Your Story to Voices!

Did you know that Voices publishes creative writing, including creative fiction (such as short stories), creative nonfiction (such as memoirs and life/work stories), and poetry? We also publish artistic and ethnographic photography and artwork, in addition to research-based articles on New York State folk arts and artists. If you are one of New York's traditional artists or working in a traditional occupation—including fishing, boat building, traditional healing, instrument making, fire-fighting, or nursing, to name a few—please consider sharing with our readers. For more information, see our Submissions Guidelines on p. 43 or contact the Acquisitions Editor at nyfs@nyfolklore.org.

Become part of the
New York Folklore
Society's new project

Documenting Schenectady

*Are you a teen who is interested in
learning more about your community?*

*Do you like the arts, and are you curious
about what folk arts are?*

*Do you think you might like to work with
different kinds of media?*

Call us at 518/346-7008
Visit us at 129 Jay Street
or online at
www.nyfolklore.org

Join the New York Folklore Society today and become a subscriber to *Voices*

Join the New York Folklore Society and become part of a community that will deepen your involvement with folklore, folklife, the traditional arts, and contemporary culture. As a member, you'll have early notice of key events.

Annual Conference. People travel from all over to meet in a different part of the state each year for the NYFS Conference and Annual Meeting. Professionals in folklore and related fields join with educators and practitioners to explore the culture and traditions of the area. Lectures and discussions are balanced with concerts, dancing, and tours of cultural sites.

New York State Folk Arts Forums. Folk arts professionals, colleagues in related disciplines, and lay people come together each year to address a topic of special interest—whether it be folklore and the Internet, heritage tourism, cultural conservation, or intellectual property law.

Help When You Need It

Become a member and learn about technical assistance programs that will get you the help you need in your work.

Mentoring and Professional Development Program for Folklife and the Traditional Arts. Receive technical assistance from a mentor of your choosing. You can study with a master traditional artist, learn new strategies for marketing, master concert and exhibition production, organize an archive, or improve your organizational management.

Folk Artists Self-Management Project. If you're a traditional artist, you know the importance of business, management, and marketing skills to your success in the marketplace. NYFS can help you with workshops, mentoring, and publications.

Folk Archives Project. What could be more critical than finding a repository for an important collection? The NYFS is a leader in the preservation of our cultural heritage. Attend our workshops and order copies of NYFS books at a discount.

Consulting and Referral. The NYFS offers informal counseling and referral services to the members in the field. Contact us by telephone, e-mail, or letter.

Publications. Members receive discounts on all NYFS publications. Visit www.nyfolklore.org for current titles.

A Public Voice

The NYFS raises awareness of folklore among the general public through three important channels.

Print. *Voices: The Journal of New York Folklore*, published twice a year, brings you folklore in the words and images of its creators and practitioners. The journal's new look distinguishes it from other publications in the field. Read *Voices* for news you can use about our field and legal issues, photography, sound and video recording, and archiving.

Radio. *Voices of New York Traditions* is a series of radio documentaries that spotlight the folklife of the state, aired on public radio. Stay tuned!

Internet. Visit www.nyfolklore.org for the latest news on events in folklore. Updated weekly, the NYFS web site is designed to appeal to the public as well as keep specialists informed.

Advocacy

The NYFS is your advocate for sympathetic and informed attention to folk arts.

- We represent you on issues before the state legislature and the federal government when public policy affects the field. Visit the advocacy pages at www.nyfolklore.org to learn what we're doing and how you can help.
- The society partners with statewide, regional, and national organizations, from the New York State Arts and Cultural Coalition to the American Folklore Society, and frequently presents its projects and issues at meetings of professional organizations in the allied fields of archives, history, and libraries.

So Join!

Become part of a community that explores and nurtures the traditional cultures of New York State and beyond. Membership in the NYFS entitles you to the following benefits:

- A subscription to *Voices: The Journal of New York Folklore*
- Invitations to conferences, workshops, and meetings
- Updates on technical assistance programs
- Opportunities to meet others who share your interests
- Discounts on NYFS books

Plus the satisfaction of knowing that you support the only organization devoted to folklore across New York State.

Yes, I want to join the New York Folklore Society.

Name _____

Organization _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Country _____

Telephone _____

E-mail _____

- \$45 Basic member
- \$25 Full-time student
- \$25 Senior (65+)
- \$55 Joint (two or more at the same address)
- \$60 Organizations and institutions

Please add \$10 for additional postage for foreign memberships.

- New member.
- Gift membership. Introduce a friend or relative to the world of folklore!

Make a tax-deductible donation and help support the organization that supports folklore.

	2012	2013
Membership dues	\$ _____	\$ _____
Tax-deductible donation	\$ _____	\$ _____
Total enclosed	\$ _____	\$ _____

The amount of memberships greater than \$20 and all donations are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Make your check payable to New York Folklore Society and send it with this form to:

New York Folklore Society
P.O. Box 764
Schenectady, NY 12301

Thank You, New York Folklore Society Supporters!

The New York Folklore Society thanks the people and organizations that supported our programs and publications in 2011. Your help is essential to our work. If your local library is not listed among the institutional subscribers below, please urge it to join.

Alderman Library, American University, Antioch College, Arizona State University, Arkansas State University, Bibliotheque Universite Laval, Bloomsburg University, Brandeis University, Brooklyn College, Brown University, Buffalo Public Library, C. W. Post Center, Calpulli Mexican Dance Company, Cardiff University, Castellani Art Museum of Niagara University, Cayuga County Community College, Cleveland Public Library, Clinton Community College, COAHSI, College of St. Rose, College of William and Mary, Colorado College, Columbia University, Cornell University Library, Crandall Public Library, Cumbia Spirit School of Dance, Dowling College, Duaneburg Jr./Sr. High School, Duke University, East Carolina University, East Meadow Public Library, East Tennessee State University, Elmira College, Elsevier Science Bibliographic Databases, Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, Georg August Universitaet, George Mason University, Hartwick College, Harvard College, Haviland-Heidgerd Historical Collection, Hofstra University, Hudson Area Library, Huntington Library, Indiana University, Iowa State University, Jefferson Community College, Library of Congress, Long Island Traditions, Long Island University, Louisiana State University, Maison des Sciences de l'Homme Bibliotheque, Marshall University, Memorial University of Newfoundland, Mercy College, Miami University, Michigan State University, Mid County Public Library, Middlebury College, Monroe Community College, New York State Library, New York University, Newberry Library, North Country Community College, NYSHA Library, Ohio State University, Ohio University, Onondaga County Public Library, Paul Smiths College, Penn State, Plattsburgh Public Library, Port Washington Public Library, Queens Library, Rochester Public Library, Skidmore College, St. Bonaventure University, St. Johns University, St. Lawrence University, Stanford University, State University College – Oneonta, State University College – Plattsburgh, Steele Memorial Library, SUNY - Adirondack, SUNY - Albany, SUNY - Geneseo, SUNY - Stony Brook, Syracuse University, Tel Aviv University, Temple University, Texas A&M University, Traditional Arts

in Upstate New York, UCLA YRL Serials, Ulster County Community College, UNC Chapel Hill, Union College, United States Military Academy, Universite de Paris (1894), Universitetsbiblioteket I Bergen, University of British Columbia, University of California, University of Chicago, University of Colorado, University of Delaware, University of Houston, University of Minnesota, University of New Hampshire, University of Oregon, University of Pennsylvania, University of Pittsburgh, University of Rochester, University of Southern California, University of Texas at Austin, University of Toronto, University of Vermont, Utah State University, Utica College Library, Vassar College Library, Western Kentucky University, WHPR, Winterthur Museum, Yale University Library,

Supporting Members:

Karen Canning, Eniko Farkas, David Smingler, George Ward

Harold Thompson Members:

The late Jean Crandall, Joseph Alden Doolittle, Ellen Fladger, Gabrielle Hamilton, Karen Johnson, Alice Lai, Ellen McHale and John McKeeby, Geoffrey Miller, Jessica Schein, Elizabeth Tucker, Daniel Franklin Ward

Individual Members:

Pauline Adema, Said Al Siyabi, Beatriz Albuquerque, Ladan Alomar, Catherine L. Angell, Robert Baron, Raymond A. Baumbler, Dan Berggren, Gabrielle Berlinger, Robert D. Bethke, Lucey Bowen, John Brigham, Warren F. Broderick, Simon J. Bronner, Candace S. Broughton, Joseph and Carol Bruchac, Edward H. Bruhn, Beverly J. Butcher, Leslie J. Butcher, Rose Caccamise, Helen L. Cackener, Karen Park Canning, Varick A. Chittenden, William M. Clements, Francis Cleveland, Kathleen Condon, Jean Crandall, Elizabeth Disaviano and A. J. Bodner, Leila Durkin, Lynn Case Ekkfelt, Enikö Farkas, Jack Finkenberg, Mary Ann Fitzgerald, Ellen H. Fladger, Sean Galvin, Roger Geaniton, Robert Godfried, Paul Groff, Eric J. Hamilton, Gabrielle Hamilton, Lee Haring, Susan I. Hengelsberg, Joseph C. Hickerson, Amy Hillick, Robert J. Hoffnung, Muriel Horowitz, Karen B. Johnson, Robert

J. Kent, James Kimball, Melissa Ladenheim, Alice Lai and Eric Ball, Michael D. Leach, James P. Leary, Roselyn Leibowitz, Laura Lee Linder, Marsha MacDowell, Nicole Macotiss, Penelope Maguffin, Ruby L. Marcotte, Elena Martinez, John J. McEneny, Edward McGraw, Ellen McHale, Felicia McMahon, Phyllis S. McNeill, Geoffrey Miller, Colleen O'Connor, Patricia H. Park, Preston E. Pierce, Stanley and Christina Ransom, Paul Rosenberg, Dave Ruch, Dawn Saliba, Suzanne Samelson, Jessica Schein, Anthony Seeger, Jeff Shelby, Roberta L. Singer, Cindy and Robert Skala, David B. Smingler, Diane Hale Smith, Mary Struthers, Dare and Doug Thompson, John Thorn, Elizabeth Tucker, Gaetano Vaccaro, Tom van Buren, Gordon VanDeBogart, Brenda Verardi, George Ward, Daniel Franklin Ward, Lois Wilcken, Lynne Williamson, Robert Wright, Steve Zeitlin, Melanie Zimmer

Community Partners:

American Folklore Society, Binghamton University, Castellani Art Museum of Niagara University, Centro Civico of Amsterdam, Crandall Public Library, Glens Falls Genesee Orleans Arts Council (Go Art!), Long Island Traditions, New York Foundation for the Arts, Schenectady Arts and Entertainment District Schoharie River Center, The History Center of Tompkins County, Traditional Arts of Upstate New York, Union College

Corporate Supporters:

Good Search, Inc., National Grid, Stewart's Corporation, IBM Corporation

Foundation Support:

Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation, Paul and Anne van Buren Fund of the Maine Community Foundation, Rotary Foundation of Schenectady

Government Support:

National Endowment for the Arts, New York State Council on the Arts, Schenectady County Initiative Program (SCIP)

Individual Donors:

Elizabeth DiSavino, Susan Hengelsberg, Muriel Horowitz, Michael Leach, Cindy Skala

Voices

P.O. Box 764, Schenectady, NY 12301
(518) 346-7008 • www.nyfolklore.org

Nonprofit Org.
US Postage
PAID
Albany, NY
Permit #751

ISSN 0361-204X



9 770361 204003

“Music of the Erie Canal”

A Public Symposium hosted by the New York Folklore Society and the Erie Canal Museum
November 2-3, 2012 • Erie Canal Museum • Syracuse, NY

Call for Proposals

The Erie Canal was a magnificent feat of engineering and transportation in the history of the United States, but it also left a significant cultural legacy that was integral in shaping the American soundscape. New musical communities and institutions were developed as a result of new migration patterns, and thanks to the ease of mobility and communication that the canal fostered, it was also a prime catalyst in cultural transmission. Indeed, the Erie Canal not only created a whole new body of distinctly American musical forms, but it was also a prime example of the folkloric process in action.

The New York Folklore Society, in conjunction with the Erie Canal Museum, will be hosting a public symposium about the Music of the Erie Canal on November 2 and 3, 2012. We invite presentations, papers, and demonstrations on the Music of the Erie Canal. Possible themes include songs and the folk process; the creation of community; archives and collections; popular music of the Canal; and the Erie Canal as presented in music education, but we are open to other potential themes as well. Papers and presentations should be no more than 20 minutes in length; performances, demonstrations or lecture-demonstrations should be no more than 30 minutes in length. Poster presentations and other presentation formats will also be considered.

Individuals and groups are encouraged to apply; interested presenters and participants should complete the attached form.

Deadlines and Important Dates

Proposals Due	The final deadline for submission of proposals is June 29, 2012
Notification of Acceptance	By September 14, 2012
Symposium date	November 2-3, 2012

Questions? Please contact Lisa Overholser (lisa@nyfolklore.org, 518-346-7008) for more information.

Download Submission Form at www.nyfolklore.org/progs/cfp-eriemusic.html

This symposium is made possible in part thanks to a grant from the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, and general operational support from the New York State Council on the Arts, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the New York Council for the Humanities.