



# MOHAWK HUDSON FOLKLIFE FESTIVAL



**2022**



## Director's Welcome

I am excited and pleased to welcome you today to the 2nd annual Mohawk Hudson Folklife Festival!

The Mohawk Hudson Folklife Festival is the result of community-based research to identify traditional artists, community cultural experts, and community advocates through the Capital Region and Hudson Valley. Through the support of the Folk Arts Program of the New York State Council on the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts, New York Folklore has pursued cultural documentation and provided the resulting programming in several regions of New York State. Fieldworkers Anne Rappaport, Edgar Betelu, and Ladan Nikravan have provided their expertise to curate today's festival. Today's festival is brought in collaboration with the City of Albany and Discover Albany, and Humanities NY has provided support specifically for today's foodways demonstrations.

The Capital Region enjoys a rich tapestry of diverse communities, with many skilled individuals who are engaged in folk cultural activities. The performances and presentations you see here today may be the first time some of the artists have presented their art form outside of their communities. Come delight in the diversity of artistic and cultural expression that is found in the Capital District of New York. Enjoy the Festival!

Sincerely,  
Ellen McHale

## About New York Folklore

New York Folklore is a statewide organization, headquartered in Schenectady. We are a non-profit membership organization, open to all, concerned with furthering cultural equity and strengthening the understanding of the role of folk and traditional culture in our lives. New York Folklore supports folk and traditional artists, community cultural experts, community-based cultural organizations, and those who work as public folklorists throughout New York State. More information about New York Folklore can be found at [www.nyfolklore.org](http://www.nyfolklore.org).

## What is Folklore?

Folklore and folk arts are essential ways of communicating heritage. Every group of people that shares a sense of identity shares folklore as part of that identity. Folklore is a way that people comment upon and creatively make sense of their shared experiences. Examples of folklore and folk culture in New York State include geographically localized traditions such as Adirondack fiddling; culturally based expressive art forms such as African-American quilting or Karen weaving; and urban expressions such as hip hop style in clothing and performance. Folklore's dynamic is in the way you cook, the way you clothe yourself, and how you celebrate your favorite holiday. Folklore and folk arts expressions are so diverse that they may seem unrelated, but are connected through being transmitted orally or through example, and the importance that they have for the preservation of culture and heritage within communities.

# Performance Schedule

**11:00 am - 11:30 am**

Karen Music and Dance by Pinya and Eshue Aung

**11:45 am - 12:30 pm**

Puerto Rican Music by Tony and Rosario Madera

**12:45 pm - 1:30 pm**

Pakistani and Desi Music by The Desi Trio

**1:45 pm - 2:30 pm**

Albanian Dance with Tatijana Gjergji

**2:45 pm - 3:30 pm**

Congolese Music by Wa Lika

**3:45 pm - 4:30 pm**

Puerto Rican and Afro-Cuban dance with ArtPartners/Tsehay & Company

**4:45 pm - 5:30 pm**

Mixed Roots

# Food Demonstration Schedule

11:30 am -12:15 pm

Karen fried gourd and fish with Saw Dabu

1:30 pm -2:15 pm

Dominican empanada with Santa Cabrera

3:30 pm - 4:15 pm

Congolese samusa with Huguette Tshiamua

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# Demonstrators



## **Fatou Camara**

Fatou is a mother of two from Ivory Coast (Danane, Danané is a city in the far west of Ivory Coast). She came to the U.S. in 2016 and speaks both French and Koyate. She, like many women from Africa, learned how to braid African hair from her mother. Hair braiding is Fatou's primary occupation and she wishes to one day open her own salon.

## **Librada Ureña**

Librada is a visual artist who works primarily with canvas and acrylic. Her work reflects her Dominican heritage and community, while addressing themes of assimilation and gentrification. Librada studied art at the Altos de Chavón School of Design, College of the Atlantic, and University at Albany. She has lived in and worked in the Capital Region for the past six years.

## **Anusha Sekhar**

Anusha is a local artist based out of Clifton Park, NY. She specializes in Indian miniature painting, henna and live painting. Indian miniature painting has been around for centuries. They are traditionally small scale, colorful and highly detailed paintings that are inspired by Indian literature and religious texts.



## **Muhammad Ismail Muhammad Durdi**

Muhammad Ismail and his wife, Juma Gula, are both Turkmen rug weavers and jewelry makers. Originally from Kunduz Province in Northern Afghanistan, he and his family owned and operated a shop that sold fine Turkmen rugs. While rug-making tools are difficult to transport in resettlement, jewelry making tools are easier to carry. Muhammad Ismail has continued to make traditional Afghan jewelry after making a new home in Albany.

## **Sarah Bachinger**

Sarah's Pysanky for Peace Project is a powerful artistic activism project which spotlights the work of pysanky artists around the world. Sarah learned many Ukrainian traditions from her Baba (grandmother) including pysanky, cross-stich embroidery, and foodways. In addition to her traditional art, Sarah is an accomplished photographer and multimedia artist.

## **Jake Krohn**

Growing up and working on a farm in the Mohawk Valley inspired Jake's blacksmithing ventures. He is a second-generation metalworker. Jake trained in farrier science (horseshoeing), which led him to pursue blacksmithing further. As a farrier Jake works with a select group of clients in the area who no longer utilize iron shoes. His metalworking is focused on artistic endeavors. He occasionally hosts open forge demonstration at his studio. Jake has been a farrier and blacksmith for 13 years.

## **Efthimios Altin Stoja**

Efthimios (Altin) Stoja studied Byzantine/ Macedonian style iconography with master painters in Greece. Art that adorned the church walls of his father's village in Albania first inspired his career. Both his large-scale murals and smaller works appear in churches around the Capital Region including St Sophia Greek Orthodox Church, St Nicholas Ukrainian Orthodox Church and St Nicholas Russian Church. Altin makes his living as a professional iconographer and painter.

## **Asmah Hashimi**

Asmah is a henna artist of Afghan ancestry. She began practicing henna designs and decorations as a young girl by observing and learning from community members. Henna is a plant-based dye widely used for temporary body decoration in Afghanistan and other regions of south Asia. It is widely used in weddings to decorate brides and sometimes grooms as well as in social and holiday celebrations. This cultural tradition has been around since antiquity.

## **Latifa ali Muhammad**

Latifa is a local embroidery artist originally from Afghanistan. She grew up in Kabul, and began to learn from her mother when she was in her early teens. She remembers her mother always busy working on pieces of clothing or decorative pieces for friends and family. Embroidery is deeply rooted in Afghan culture. Delicate silk satin stitches are typically sewn on heavy silk, wool or cotton. Designs are intricate and precise and are not drawn on the fabric but instead minutely weaved in symmetrical and matched patterns.

## **Badilla Family**

**The Badila family** matriarch, Pamela, is an artist, dancer, and folk teller. Pamela and her late husband Elombe Badila, are co-founders of the Diata Diata International Folkloric Theatre. Badila has been a cultural pillar of Columbia County since relocating to Hudson in the late 1990s. She is joined at the festival by three of her children, Nkoula (NKODIA), Ntangou, and Ntchota.

**Nkoula(NKODIA)** is a multifaceted artist, gardener and activist. Her most notable work is her movement "Grow Black Hudson," reconnecting her Black and brown community to the ancestral healing associated with growing their own food. Her creations or Medicine adornments inspire people to express themselves with color and reflect her passions and cultural background.

**Ntangou Badila** is a Congolese visionary based in NY She has found fulfillment as a teaching artist for inner city high schools. Her art is largely influenced by life and women. Currently, she is cultivating her next body of works in her studio space at Second Ward.

**Ntchota Badila** is an artist and dancer. He creates unique abstract art on clothes and canvas. He draws inspiration from his family and heritage.



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# Community Cooks

## **Saw Dabu**

Saw Dabu was born in the Karen State of Burma and arrived in the United States in 2013. Today he lives in the City of Albany. He learned to cook traditional recipes from his parents including Talapot curry, one of his favorites. Talapot curry is a dish often eaten among Karen people!

## **Huguette Tshiamua**

Huguette Tshiamua was born and raised in Congo. Today she lives in the Capital Region with her husband and two children. She is trained as a respiratory therapist and is currently studying to become an esthetician. Huguette learned to cook by watching her older sister. The most important element of her cooking is the technique: long marinating and braising ensure meals are delicious and flavorful, making the most of spices and seasoning. Common ingredients Huguette uses are garlic, onions, fish, plantains, and spices.

## **Santa Cabrera**

Santa was born and raised in the Dominican Republic. She has cooked every day since she began learning. Her first teacher was her grandmother, followed by her mother – and eventually culinary school. She owned a catering business before moving to Albany three years ago. Her favorite traditional foods include La Bandera Dominicana, a dish of rice, beans, maduros, and meat, and Mangu, a popular breakfast of mashed plantains topped with eggs, sausage and other condiments.

# Performers



## **Ehsue Klay Aung and Karen Dance Group**

Ehsue Klay Aung was born and raised in the Mae la Refugee camp in Thailand. She lived in the Mae La camp until she arrived in Albany in with her husband and young son. Growing up in the camp, Ehsue began to learn dance from her mother and other elders. In Albany, Ehsue soon began to gather with other Karen refugees and started putting together small dance ensembles. The dancers are a combination of Karen women, some born in refugee camps in Thailand and others born in New York.

## **Tatiana Gjergji**

Tatiana is a first generation Albanian-American, her family were refugees of Albania and the former Yugoslavia. It was her roots and her family's experience that inspired her to open Noteworthy Resources of Albany (NWR). NWR supports folks of all ages, helping community members to find a sense of belonging. Tatiana is an experienced dancer. Albanian dance is performed at community events and celebrations. Common elements include circular movement and powerful rhythms. Additionally, Tatiana carries traditional herbal knowledge.

## **Mixed Roots**

Mixed Roots is a multi-part band which plays AfroBeat and Reggae under the leadership of drummer, George. George grew up in Accra, Ghana, where he learned and practiced traditional African beats. Gideon, the keyboarding specialist is originally from Nigeria. Guitarist Pete, is local to upstate New York, and the hand percussionist, TT, is from Ghana, the bass lines you hear are from Jah Red, who is local to the area. The horn section features locals Dave, Catherine, and Scott. The band plays with energy emerging from their mixed roots. For the Festival, they are also joined by Zorkie Nelson, a Ghanaian drummer from Schenectady and his son Felix, a talented dancer.

## **Desi Music Trio**

**Aurelius John** plays the, dholak, dhol and tabla and **Shaman Raphael** is a harmonium (also known as pump organ) player. Both grew up in the city of Lahore, capital of the Punjab Province in southern Pakistan. Aurelius and Shaman have been playing since they were young and routinely performs in the area along with other Pakistani musicians in religious and social gatherings. They will be accompanied by **Daniel Walayat**. Daniel was a member of the Tehrik e Niswan Theatre Group, where he performed and arranged the live music. He has toured extensively throughout Pakistan and the US. He also privately teaches a few students in the Capital Region and is regarded as one of the best singers in the region.

## ArtPartners/Tsehay & Company

ArtPartners/Tsehay & Company, Inc. was founded for the purposes of the advancement and preservation of the cultural arts. They are a community-based dance company composed of performers, musicians and support staff focusing on the enhancement of cultural arts in the Capital Region. This organization sees to afford to the community an opportunity to become familiar with the multi-cultural aspects of theatrical dance and music, through alternative programs, workshops and productions. ArtPartners seek to continue to provide a wealth of dance programs and services to the community which endorses our specialness to the cultural landscape of Albany.

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To receive our signature publication, *Voices: The Journal of New York Folklore*, and emails about special events and programs, become a member!

For more information visit our web site:  
[www.nyfolklore.org](http://www.nyfolklore.org) or call, 518-346-7008



## **Pinya Aung**

Pinya Aung plays the Tenaku harp and the Kana, instruments in the Karen musical tradition. Pinya was born and raised in the town of Hlaingbwe in Kayin State in southern Myanmar near the border with Thailand. The region has been marked by decades of political violence and persecution of the Karen and other minorities. Pinya and his family was forced to relocate to the Mae La refugee camp in Thailand and later arrived in Albany, New York. During his years in the Mae Le Refugee Camp he joined a local music and cultural organization and performed in many celebrations and community events.

## **Wa Lika Band**

Patrick Kasongo is a local Mohawk-Hudson musician who has been performing in festivities and social events in the region for more than a decade. His ensemble, Wa Lika interprets Congolese Rumba and Sebene. Patrick grew up in Kinshasa, Capital of the Democratic Republic of Congo and started playing music at a young age with a self-made one string guitar similar to Diddley bows found in the US blues tradition.

## **Tony and Rosario Madera**

Tony and Rosario have been married and playing music together for 48 years. In addition to playing salsa with Orquesta Sabor Caribe, they perform folk and traditional Puerto Rican music. Tony plays the keyboard and Rosario is the vocalist. Tony was born in Puerto Rico and raised in Brooklyn. He returned to Puerto Rico as a young man, where he met Rosario, and they have been playing together ever since.



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<https://www.nwralbany.org/>

**Friends of Tivoli Lake Preserve and Farm**

<https://friendsoftivoli.org/>

**Refugee & Immigrant Support Services of Emmaus, Inc.**

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# THANK YOU

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Humanities NY, Discover Albany, City of Albany, West Hill Refugee Welcome Center, Diane Mbombo Tite, Quill Harrison and Lin Yone.

# MEMBERSHIP

Become a New York Folklore member today! Members receive many benefits and help us support folklife in New York State. To join online, visit our website [www.nyfolklore.org](http://www.nyfolklore.org). email ([info@nyfolklore.org](mailto:info@nyfolklore.org)) for a new or renewal membership information. Give us a call at (518) 346-7008.

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