“The Wreck of the *Julie Plante*” and Its Offspring

What’s Your Watershed? Folklore and the Environment

Hello, Hannah! NYFS’ Upstate Regional Rep

Puerto Rican & Garifuna Drums

Democratizing the Folk Arts Workplace

American Public Folklore In Nanjing
According to New York State’s Office of New Americans, one in four New York State adults of working age are foreign born and almost one-third of New York’s business owners are immigrants. Our state’s diversity provides a tapestry of colors and patterns of culture, language, and arts that enriches us all. Although New York City has been historically the destination for immigrants, Upstate New York has most recently benefitted from newcomers. For example, in rural New York, Bhutanese farmers are providing expertise in dairy farms1 and providing their skills as yogurt makers for New York-based yogurt makers Siggs and Chobani. Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, and Utica have all turned to refugee and immigrant populations to revive their population bases, as the postindustrial situation has left vacant houses and dwindling school enrollments, where once there were vibrant communities. Newcomers to our state are repopulating neighborhoods once again, and corner grocery stores and restaurants are providing housewares, clothing, food, and spices that bring a global perspective.

On Saturday, April 8, 2017, the New York Folklore Society will explore some of the nuances of cultural encounter through a daylong symposium, CULTURAL MIGRATION: DISPLACEMENT AND RENEWAL. The symposium will take place in partnership with the Castellani Museum of Niagara University. It will begin with artists’ workshops (by invitation only), followed by a public event on Friday evening, April 7, 2017. Saturday’s sessions (April 8, 2017) will include formal presentations, as well as a conference format that encourages discussion and dialogue. We hope that you will “Save the Date,” and join us at the Castellani Art Museum of Niagara University. Details will be posted on our website, www.nyfolklore.org.

The New York Folklore Society, in collaboration with Green Worker Cooperatives (GWC), hosted the second in a series of workshops on October 23, in Brooklyn, on “Democratizing the Folk Arts Workplace: Forming a Worker-Owned Cooperative” with GWC’s Ileia Burgos. You can read about both workshops in this issue in a report from NYFS’s NYC Regional Representative Eileen Condon. Eileen is currently planning an artists’ meeting to take place at the same Oxford Street location. You’ll find more information on our website at www.nyfolklore.org/progs/conf.html.

At the 2016 annual meeting in New York City, NYFS members voted to allow electronic and paper voting. Previously, as per the New York Folklore Society’s Bylaws of 1944, voting could only take place in person with decisions made by a majority of annual meeting attendees. This change in bylaws allows us to take advantage of current technologies. If you are a member, please watch in the upcoming year for information regarding board member elections and bylaws adjustments. If you are not a member, please consider joining us! As always, if you have questions or concerns, or ideas for where New York Folklore Society can make a difference, please contact us at nyfs@nyfolklore.org.

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“...and disagreed with the folks at Crandall with the wealth of folk art in their own backyard and the possibilities of future programming.

Warren County is where the Hudson River rises into the Adirondack foothills. A place of hardscrabble farms, logging and wood lots, hunting and fishing, and 150 years worth of tourism. My journey that summer became more ethnographic in approach, searching for those activities, splashes of creativity, and their practitioners that helped define the region. It was about letting the region and its people speak for themselves, and taking the time to listen.

That summer, I first encountered the tied quilts of the Johnsburg United Methodist Women (UMW). Not overly structured in design, these tied quilts were made of lots of little scrap pieces of material, somehow coming together into a colorful whole. This fun-loving group of women raised money with church suppers and craft sales at locally affordable prices, proudly pointing out the “Ladies Aid Society” stained glass window, symbolizing generations of hard work in support of their small country church.

30 years ago I began my first consultant job as a folklorist in upstate New York.

Crandall Library wanted to expand their budding Folk Arts Program and agreed with the folks at the New York State Council on the Arts that a young folklorist working and studying in Washington, DC, could breathe new life into their program.

I was to conduct a Folk Arts Survey of Warren County, New York. The emphasis was on finding “folk arts” and those “folk artists” that could be a part of a festival or workshop series. My job was to inspire the folks at Crandall with the wealth of folk art in their own backyard and the possibilities of future programming.

From the Editor

“...we’re all better talkers than we are listeners.”

—Bruce Cole in Festival of the Adirondacks: Celebrating Living Cultural Traditions (1990)
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Cover: Read “Echoes of Familiar Rhythms: Puerto Rican & Garifuna Drums, by Elena Martinez on p. 26. Garifuna percussionist and dancer Chester Nuñez of Libana Maraza was moved by the bomba drums, so he began to dance (2013). Photo by Elena Martinez."
From the Editor (continued)

For the next several years, Johnsburg UMW worked closely with Crandall Library’s Folk Arts Project. We co-hosted an annual quilt and needlework show to document local textiles, and they provided a sampler tied quilt for our growing archive of folk culture. They also helped us experiment with ways to present local traditions to a general audience by participating in festivals, children’s workshops, and other activities.

I remembered being questioned by colleagues about the use of the label “tied quilt” rather than “comforter” and even about the validity of calling these quilts “folk art,” given the use of sewing machines rather than handwork.

I learned to rely on the wisdom of these women, who patiently told me, “Of course we all use sewing machines to make tied quilts—it makes the work go quicker.” One proudly showed me her Singer sewing machine, the same machine her grandmother used to make quilts at the end of the 19th century.

Looking back to that summer 30 years ago, I was the one to be inspired. I learned not to be limited by my own preconceived constructs, but to listen and to learn from the folk themselves.

Todd DeGarmo
Voices Acquisitions Editor
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Program text from “An Adirondack Quilt Show: A Celebration of the Tied Tradition,” Wevertown Community Hall, Saturday, August 13, 1988, 10-4 p.m. Rain or Shine.

Tied quilts have a long history in the Adirondack North Country. For generations, they have been used as bedcovers at home and in the lumber camp, placed in hope chests by prospective brides, given to neighbors in need, and sold to raise money for the local church.

Quilts are commonly three layers: the backing, batting, and top. The backing is often simple, not given much attention, since it is the underside of the quilt. The batting is the interlining, once only made of cotton or wool (though sometimes an old blanket was used). Bats are now also made of synthetic fibers, and said by some to make quilt care easier. The top is the decorative side of the quilt. Pieces of material are sown together into blocks, these blocks then used to form the overall design.

Tying and quilting are two different ways to fasten the three layers of a quilt. North Country families often practiced both techniques, but relied on tying for the enormous task of making their own bedcovers. In the tying process, spaced threads are passed through the layers of the quilt and tied into knots. Tying is quicker than quilting and allows a thicker batting to be used for a warmer cover.

A tradition of “waste not, want not” has influenced the choice of materials used in tied quilts. Scraps are commonly salvaged from family sewing projects. Other materials have included leftover scraps from making shirttails at a local factory, cloth grain bags that came in an assortment of prints and patterns, and even unworn portions of wool jackets and pants. New material, when used, is often bought on sale or donated.

Such scraps are preferred by many of the area’s longtime tied quilters. They like the effect of combining materials of many different colors and patterns, and say that the more little pieces you have, the better the variety, and the faster the top comes together.

Many area women learned to make tied quilts from older relatives. Pauline Waddell, who has tied quilts all her life, recalls learning the skill at home:

“I started in while I was a teenager or maybe a little bit younger, working on these quilts at night with my mother. We pieced them by hand. I guess that would be seen as kind of tame to teenagers now, spending your evening piecing quilts. But I did. Long winter evenings. That’s the way we spent our time.”

Others have learned within quilting groups. Some of the most common in this area are the United Methodist Women organizations. Located in Johnsburg, North Creek, North River, Wevertown, and Porter Corners, these groups help to support their churches while keeping alive the tradition of tied quilts.

These quilts have been used and enjoyed, not tucked away. Tops made a generation or more ago are given backing and batting, and are tied by the new generation. In some, colors are faded and materials are worn from constant use. Sometimes patches are added where the material has worn clear through. These are quilts used and loved by the present owners, to be passed on with pride to the new.

—Todd DeGarmo
I first came across this song in the 1990s, when local bookstore owner Larry House sent me the words, as published in Plattsburgh’s Press Republican newspaper. I was motivated to look up references to this French-Canadian ballad, which led to the discovery that it was the second poem in a book, The Habitant, written by Dr. William Henry Drummond in 1897. He called it “The Wreck of the Julie Plante: A Legend of Lac St. Pierre.”

THE WRECK OF THE JULIE PLANTE:
A LEGEND OF LAC ST. PIERRE
by William Henry Drummond, MD
©1897

On wan dark night on Lac St. Pierre,
De win’ she blow, blow, blow
An’ de crew of de wood scow “Julie Plante”
Got scar’f and run below—
For de win’ she blow lak hurricane
Bimeby she blow some more,
An’ de scow bus’ up on Lac St. Pierre
Wan arpent from de shore.

De captinne walk on de fronte deck,
An’ walk de hin’ deck too—
He call de crew from up de hole
He call de cook also.
De cook she’s name was Rosie,
She come from Montreal,
Was chambre maid on lumber barge,
On de Grande Lachine Canal.

De win’ she blow from nor’-east-west,–
De sour’ win’ she blow too,
W’en Rosie cry, “Mon cher captinne,
Mon cher, w’at I shall do?”
Den de Captinne t’row de big ankerre,
But still the scow she dreef,
De crew he can’t pass on de shore,
Becos’ he los’ hees skeef.

De night was dark lak’ wan black cat,
De wave run high an’ fas’,
W’en de captinne tak’ de Rosie girl
An’ tie her to de mas’.
Den he also tak’ de life preserve,
An’ jump off on de lak’
An’ say, “Goodbye, ma Rosie dear,
I go drown for your sak’.”

Nex’ morning very early
’Bout ha’f-pas’ two—tree—four—
De captinne—scow—an’ de poor Rosie
Was corpses on de shore.
For de win’ she blow lak hurricane,
Bimeby she blow some more,
An’ de scow bus’ up on Lac St. Pierre,
Wan arpent from de shore.

MORAL
Now all good wood scow sailor man
Tak’ warning by dat storm
An’ go an’ marry some nice French girl
An’ leev on wan beeg farm.
De win’ can blow lak’ hurricane
An’ s’pose she blow some more,
You can’t get drown on Lac St. Pierre
So long you stay on shore.

I now have the complete works of Dr. Drummond, including a signed first edition of The Habitant, with extra illustrations, and have also visited his home in Brome, Canada, a stop made during a visit to do storytelling at the nearby Brome Storytelling Festival. The most interesting account was given by

The scow schooner Alma depicted here is the same type of ship as the Julie Plante. Alma was constructed in 1891, transferred to the National Park Service in 1978, and designated a National Historic Landmark in San Francisco in 1988. Public domain photo, www.nps.gov/safr/learn/historyculture/alma.htm
his wife, May Harvey Drummond, who detailed the history of the song in a biographical sketch in the first pages of the 1908 edition of Drummond's book, *The Great Fight*.

William Henry Drummond was born April 13, 1854, near the village of Mohill, County Letirim, Ireland, also noted as the birthplace of the blind Irish harp player, Turlough O’Carolan. After about seven years, his father, an officer in the Royal Irish Constabulary, and his wife and family moved to Canada. When his father died after a few months, his mother was left to face the New World with four boys aged five to 11. Young William left school, studied telegraphy, obtained an appointment, and became an expert telegrapher. He was located at L’Abord-à-Plouffe, a small village on the banks of the Rivière des Prairies, at the back of Mount Royal, at that time a great center of the lumber trade. He came in contact with the *habitants*, or local inhabitants, and the *voyageurs*, and listened to their tales. According to his wife’s unpublished biography, Gédéon Plouffe, one of the older inhabitants, had entreated William to stay off the lake because of an approaching storm and told the tragedy, retold later as the “Wreck of the *Julie Plante*” on the “Lake of Two Mountains.” William heard the older man recite the words, “An’ de win’ she blow, blow blow!” which rang in his ears so persistently that in the dead of night, unable to sleep, he “sprang from his bed” and wrote the poem about the wood scow *Julie Plante*. He couldn’t find anything to rhyme with “Lake of Two Mountains,” so he changed it to “Lac St. Pierre,” just below Montreal. Drummond thought little of the poem at first, telling it to those who would listen; he sent a copy to the *Montreal Star* in December 1886. It became popular as a song in the lumber camps and spread from person to person. His wife, May Harvey Drummond, is quoted as saying the poem was first written about 1879.

Following this time, Drummond returned to school, then to McGill College, and on to Bishop’s Medical College, graduating in 1884. He moved around the Montreal area with his medical practice, finally ending up in Knowlton and the Broome area for four years. He met May Harvey in 1892, and they were married on April 18, 1894, and then lived in Montreal on Mountain Street. Drummond started writing and reciting poetry about this time, to excellent reception. Many of the pieces in *The Habitant* were written in his Montreal home. He sent his verses to Putnam Publishing Company, who brought out *The Habitant* in 1897 to a great response from the public. Curiously, he received letters from some outraged members of the public for including “*Julie Plante*” in his book, as they had been singing it for many years!
Other books followed. Phil-o-rum’s Canoe and Madeleine Vercheres in 1898, Johnnie Courteau and Other Poems, in 1901, The Voyageur, and Other Poems, in 1905, and The Great Fight, in 1908. He received numerous honors, including being elected a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature of the United Kingdom in 1898, and receiving the degree of LLD in 1902 from the University of Toronto. He died of a cerebral hemorrhage on April 6, 1907, and was laid to rest on the side of Mount Royal.

According to Jay Johnson, author of “The Age of Brass: Drummond, Service, and Canadian ‘Local Colour’”: “Drummond developed the habitant dialect into a conventional, highly formalized poetic medium which he could manipulate with great skill...” Drummond remarks that he has “the habitants telling their own stories in their own way, as they would relate them to English-speaking auditors not conversant with the French tongue.” His point of view was sympathetic, and he is quoted as remarking, “I would rather cut off my right arm than speak disparaging of the French-Canadian people.”

Correspondence with the Great Lakes Shipwreck Society brought forth an array of sunken boats, which may have prompted the initial story of the tragedy. The Emily, sunk in 1830, was thought to be a vessel that could have led to the story of the Julie Plante. The scow schooner, built in 1826, was lost on Lake St. Clair December 15, wrecked in a gale, with the loss of seven men. Lake St. Clair is a fresh water lake located between Lake Huron and Lake Erie.

Another scow schooner lost on Lake St. Clair was the Jules La Plante, lost in the 1800s, with only one man saved. Lee Murdock and other major folksingers say the boat sank in Lake Ontario. Some versions add “Off Grosse Pointe” to the Lak San Clair location. Most versions mention the archaic French-Canadian unit of measurement, “one arpent from the shore,” either the side of one acre, or 560 feet.

The poem passed into folk culture in Canada. The song is sung in Canada, and visitors from Hemmingford, Quebec, have told me they were required to memorize and recite the poem in elementary school. School music instruction books list “Julie Plante” as “a good song for students to sing.”

Early on, an article in the 19th century Harper’s Magazine entitled “A Family Canoe Trip” quoted the song. It was sung by Mr. A. W. Craig of Port Henry, NY, at the American Canoe Association meeting and was later adopted as the Club Song by the Association.

In September 1886, the poem appeared in the Winnipeg newspaper, Siftings. As a song, the words and music were included in The McGill University Song Book in 1896.

Franz Lee Rickaby included a fragment in his Ballads and Songs of the Shanty-Boy, in 1926. E. C. Back, in his 1941 Song of the Michigan Lumberjacks, reported that he had heard it from at least nine lumberjacks in Michigan and Wisconsin, some changing the lake to Lak San Clair. The McGill Song Book version is similar to the one sung in Manitoba by Rev. C. W. Gordon (Ralph Connor) in 1885.

The poem was set to new tunes by H. H. Godfrey (1899), Herbert Spencer (Delmar 1907), and Geoffrey O’Hara (Ditson 1920) in choral and solo voice versions.

According to my good friend, Gordie Little, a local radio personality, writing in the Press Republican in 2002, Edith Fowke included the song in her Folk Songs of Canada book, and noted that “French-Canadian shanty boys found a tune to fit it and carried it to many widely scattered lumber camps.” Gordie’s fellow announcer, Chet Bosworth, recorded it in the 1970s and played it from time to time on Plattsburgh’s local WIRY radio station.

Gordie also mentioned that in 1929, Daniel T. Trombley, from Isle La Motte, VT, writing as “Batiste,” borrowed the song, with credit to Dr. Drummond, and changed the name of the lake to Lake Champlain. He published it in his book, Poems of Batiste, Whoa! Bill, in 1929. From thence, it became popular all over the North Country. Colleen Pelletier, the Plattsburgh Public Library reference librarian, remembers her family singing it and reciting the refrain.

Nelson Eddy, the “American Tenor,” sang it on his radio program on May 26, 1945, and recorded it on an album of eclectic songs.

Geoffrey O’Hara, born in 1882 in Ontario, composed music for it, and recorded
British composer Howard Blake (he did The Snowman music) composed catchy music for the five-minute animated film, Wreck of the Julie Plante, directed by Steven Weston, produced by Taylor Grant, and issued by Flying Horse animated films in 1985. The song features Barry Dransfield playing the violin and singing the words. Norman Blake played the piano accompaniment. A delightful film, it can be seen on YouTube. Norman Blake also composed music for five singers and piano, Opus 416 in November 1990, and also Opus 244 in January 1984, available at the publisher, Highbridge Music Ltd, London. This animation film is in The Analog Archive (YouTube) and was included in the 1991 Animation Film Festival.

Finally, I supplied the poem with my composed music and recorded it in 2005 on my CD, North Country Memories (available in the NYFS gallery store, http://www.nyfolklore.org/gallery/store/music.html#nocountrymem). I sing it annually at every Battle of Plattsburgh celebration around September 11th for the benefit of the Canadians in attendance.

“The Wreck of the Julie Plante” is now firmly established in Canadian and American folklore and literature. We North Country residents can all recall and recite with satisfaction the final transferred line, “You can’t get drown on Lake Champlain, So long you stay on shore.”

BIBLIOGRAPHY


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The Gift of Song

BY DAN BERGGREN

My parents told me about my first trip to the Adirondacks, riding the train to the North Creek station. I was too young to remember the Delaware & Hudson, but I do recall when we switched to all-night rides in my brother-in-law’s Oldsmobile that took us from Brooklyn to Trout Brook Road. At the age of seven, I didn’t know the farm was my mother’s home before she married my dad, or that it would be my home when I turned 12, or that some day I’d be writing and singing songs about my grandfather, Harry Wilson.

We would arrive before the sun rose over the mountain to the east. The waist-high grass soaked my sneakers as we walked to the back door. Unlocking the farmhouse meant unleashing familiar smells of woodshed, cellar, knotty-pine kitchen, and screened-in porch. Even more exotic, but just as comforting, were the tales the barn told with its hay, old manure, horseshoe forge, grease from atractor, and the smell of thyme crushed underfoot in the barnyard. It didn’t take long to renew acquaintances with the trail to the river, giant boulders, summer toys, dusty books, secret hiding spots, and the pump organ whose wheeze was as familiar as the smell from its leather lungs.

One summer my great uncle Eric Van Norden visited for a week. He seemed as old and fragile as his sister, my grandma Ella Wilson. When he played the reed organ, I had to pump the pedals for him. After that week, I never saw him again, but he gave me two things I still have to this day. One was a 78 rpm record that held two of the many Tin Pan Alley songs that he’d written: “I Couldn’t Tell You From An Angel” and “I Love to Go to a Ball Game.” The other was a joke he told me:

This conductor found an old man asleep on the train with a ticket sticking out of his mouth and thought he’d have some fun at the old man’s expense. So he woke him up, shouting, “Where’s your ticket? If you don’t have a ticket, I’m throwing you off of this train!” Well, the old man got all flustered and searched all of his pockets at least twice and couldn’t produce the ticket. Finally, the conductor snapped it out of the man’s mouth, punched the ticket, and walked down the aisle laughing at the old man. As he left the car, the old man said under his breath, “He thinks he’s so smart. I was just licking the date off of last year’s ticket.”

The joke became public as I told my friends, but the record remained a personal treasure. It fascinated me that someone could make up a melody and words, and then record it, too. Until that point, songs just existed. Uncle Eric was my first encounter with a songwriter, my introduction to the concept of songwriting. I decided to take piano lessons, but they didn’t last long. The next year my brother John came home from college and, like magic, he knew how to play the guitar. Not only did he introduce me to the music of folks like Pete Seeger and The Weavers, but he taught me my first chords.

Four years later, I met Ralph Rinzler at a private family camp where I was a chore boy by day, singing folk songs by night. Ralph had just returned from a hectic week at the Newport Folk Festival (the year Bob Dylan “went electric”), where not only had he performed as one of the Greenbriar Boys but was also the festival’s talent coordinator. Instead of treating me like the teenager I was, Ralph made me feel like a fellow musician. After some song swapping, he let me hear some old reel-to-reel recordings of Uncle Dave Macon and gave me a new record of songs by a North Carolinian he’d been working with—Doc Watson. Two years later, I met Doc and his son Merle at their performance in Schroon Lake’s Boathouse. They were friendly and full of encouragement. Overwhelmed, I watched them perform, bringing the songs to life. It’s times like this when you either want to burn your guitar or practice harder.

I practiced harder, and it helped prepare me for my next and most significant encounter with a songwriter—Townes Van Zandt. When he performed at St. Lawrence University in the winter of 1971, I was running lights and sound for the event. Afterwards, I asked him about one of his songs, and he invited me to his hotel room. “Stop by tomorrow morning—bring your guitar,” he said. I did, and for several hours we played old folk songs that I knew and new songs Townes had written. It was a personal workshop in writing new songs that sounded old.

Not long after that I left home and served three years in the army with the American Forces Radio Network in Europe. During my time in Germany, thousands of miles from Trout Brook Road, I wrote my first Adirondack song: a tribute to my grandfather, a gentle man who loved the land. Thank you Townes, thank you Doc and Merle, thank you Ralph, thank you brother John. And thank you Uncle Eric for sharing a joke, for asking me to pump the reed organ while you played your own sweet songs, and for giving me the record to remember you by. And most of all, thank you for helping a small boy dream songs, so that some day he could write one about your brother-in-law Harry.

Harry twitched his moustache as he walked along, Wearing a wide-brimmed hat and singing a song. He looked at the mountains and knew he was free. Oh, how I wish that were me. He always did the best that he could. He never forgot the earth was good.

Dan Berggren’s roots are firmly in the Adirondacks, but his music has taken him throughout the US and abroad. Dan has worked in the woods with a forest ranger and surveyor, was a radio producer in Europe, professor of audio and radio studies at SUNY Fredonia, and owner of Sleeping Giant Records. An award-winning musician and educator, Dan is also a tradition-based songsmith who writes with honesty, humor, and a strong sense of place. Visit www.berggrenfolk.com to learn more about Dan and his music. Photo by Jessica Riehl.
“The electric lights on city lampposts come on at night and go off during the day: thus they mark and regulate night and day,” writes folklorist Eric Miller. “The red-yellow-green traffic lights likewise regulate traffic, telling one to go or to wait…. Jim Power’s mosaic work on lampposts features hundreds of colors! What messages might this send? Certainly not just stop or go! Perhaps it might signal one to pause and wonder, consider, meditate, admire the beauty of it, relax, and think, ‘I have arrived in the East Village’.”

Sixty-nine-year-old, Irish-born Jim Power grew up in Queens, served in Vietnam, and arrived in the East Village of Manhattan in 1981. Inspired by his work as a stone-mason, he got his start doing concrete and stone decorations on planters and on the bases of lampposts. “But people kept telling me, ‘go up, go up,’” Jim said. He began embedding tiles into the concrete and slowly developed his unique style of cutting plates and tiles and fitting them together like a jigsaw puzzle to fully cover the poles.

His idea was to create a mosaic trail with the theme “Around the Village in 80 Light Poles.” Jim’s mosaic work is made up of a wide variety of materials: tiles, crockery, colored glass, mirrors, and seashells—some purchased, some donated, some found. New Yorkers can catch their glittering reflections in the shards of mirror and glass. There is abstract design, figurative representations, and a good deal of lettering. For almost 30 years, Jim was often homeless, working outdoors in wind and cold or blazing heat, with an open hat for contributions.

In 2004, City Lore awarded Jim a People’s Hall of Fame Award for beautifying the City with distinctive, artful mosaics. The ceremony took place at the Museum of the City of New York, with Jim insisting that he could not come unless he could bring his dog Jesse. Jim tells the story of how a fancy car service picked him up and took him to the Museum where he proudly accepted the large, bronze subway token for New York’s longest lasting guerilla art. Then, after all the fanfare, the car took him right back to Astor Place where he slept outside with Jesse beside one of his poles.

For the next decade, Jim continued to work, but in 2015, distressing news swept through the East Village. New York City had decided to renovate Astor Place—the plaza at the north end of Bowery where Cooper Union is located—precisely the spot where eight of Jim’s most iconic poles were located. The famous sculpture called “The Cube” needed to be taken down and refurbished. In addition, all the light poles needed to be summarily taken down, because the City decided that an entirely new...
and I met Jim in Clayton’s studio. We had a good talk about how restoring the poles as artworks rather than decorated lamp-posts would cement Jim’s legacy. While we were there, he willingly signed a document giving the City permission to restore his poles—Clayton photographed the historic moment.

Once we left, Jim continued to protest strongly. He claimed his poles to be a more significant landmark than the Great Wall of China—and, in fact, he threatened to sell the poles to China. After working for small contributions for so many years, Jim heard on the news that Mayor de Blasio had announced $26 million for the arts in 2016. He began demanding $1 million per pole.

To William, Bob, Clayton, and me, there seemed no way that Jim could move forward with a modest city contract to restore the poles. The years of living on the street had taken its toll on Jim, who had such severe hip problems that he could not walk and travelled only on a motorized scooter. We made a plan to have a different mosaic artist restore the poles and have Jim supervise. Clayton and I visited Jim in
Jim Power and Bob Holman from the Bowery Poetry Club, September 26, 2016.

Julie worked for Home Depot on 59th Street at the time. As an employee, she heard about a company program for veterans. “Even in his Common Ground building on Pitt Street,” Julie said, “Jim was living like a homeless person. His desk was his overturned scooter box. I needed to organize and clean his space before Home Depot could actually come in and make his space liveable for him and Jesse. They took everything out and then gave him a new bed, new workbench, bins to store tiles. They separated his work space from his living space. Now that he had a bed, he started sleeping better, getting more linear in his thought process, and better able to take care of his dog Jesse.”

Suddenly, it seemed possible that Jim could restore the poles with Julie as his trusted assistant and intermediary. The Village Alliance raised funds from the City with City Lore as a fiscal sponsor, and a Generosity crowd-funding campaign was planned. The lampposts were taken down from Astor Place and stored by the Department of Transportation, ready to be restored as art poles rather than lighting equipment. All Jim and Julie needed was a space to work. City Lore called several community gardens to ask if they would take on Jim and give him space to refurbish the poles, but they all had their reasons for turning us down.

“At that point last May,” Julie continued, “I had started going to his apartment where I would bring him food. It was on a Sunday, and I was walking down 6th Street. A super from the block was washing his car with his hose, and I saw a gate open to a side yard. I remember it like a bastion of hope—a saving grace.” It turned out to be the 6th Street Community Center, and they took on Jim and Julie. The Community Center is headquartered in a

the Common Ground apartment for the formerly homeless on Pitt Street. In his cramped apartment, Jim seemed to agree to the plan.

Enter Julie Powell. She arrived in the East Village in 1983, and watched Jim’s poles slowly evolve. She recalls passing by poles that were in progress, noticing as they were chiseled off by the cops, and continually reconstructed by Jim. She had studied art and photography at the University of Buffalo and Parsons, “and I know for myself,” she said, “that I secretly always wanted to do mosaics—I even have a box of beautiful broken dishes that I was saving. I think I dreamed of making a mosaic table.” Julie was deeply scarred by September 11th—her husband of 20 years committed suicide soon afterwards, and Julie, like Jim, suffers from PTSD, she from September 11th, Jim from Vietnam.

We met Julie in Jim’s apartment the day we visited. Looking back on the event, Julie said she could see in Jim’s eyes that having someone else refurbish the poles was utterly unacceptable to him. It was, in retrospect, a singularly bad idea.

Mosaic Man working on June 28, 2016.
And, as the poles progressed I watched Jim grow stronger—I saw him actually walking a few steps without the walker. And I took him to the VA. In his own mind, Jim thought he only had a few years to live, but he was now told by the doctors that he was strong and healthy. They were willing to put him in line for the double hip operation he needs.”

Today, the poles, which prior to the renovation were often only partially finished, are complete and standing proudly not as tiled lampposts but as totems: the Directional Pole, which marks the directions to the adjoining neighborhoods; the Astor Pole, which tells the history of Astor Place and the nearby Public Theater; the Fire Pole, honoring the firemen and first responders of September 11; the Police Pole, with its new addition honoring the 9th Precinct and the fallen officers; the President’s Pole, honoring Presidents who spoke at the Great Hall at Cooper Union, including Lincoln; and the Art Pole, honoring artists from the East Village. Funds are still being raised for the last pole, honoring long-standing businesses in the neighborhood (see https://www.generosity.com/community-fundraising/jim-power-the-mosaic-trail). “Julie is now the other side of the coin,” Jim said. “She elevated the art, no question—and there’s no telling what we can do in the future—and I’m talking about the next 1,000 years not the last ones.”

Jim’s—and now Julie’s work too—stand as a permanent legacy at Astor Place. The work is celebratory, exalting the individual’s urge to give of oneself for free, as Jim has done for most of the past 35 years. Jim’s work is part of a tradition of customizing mass culture in the urban environment. As Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett writes, “Cities and mass culture…offer a new frontier for exploring the indomitable will to make meaning, create value, and develop connoisseurship under the most exhilarating, as well as the most devastating conditions.” My mosaics, Jim said, take “the anxiety out of people’s days when they see them. It’s not just long miles of lonely streets. It’s your home.”

Notes

What’s Your Watershed?
Folklore at the Intersection of Place, Culture, and the Environment

BY ELLEN MCHALE, PhD

From an airplane, the Mohawk River of New York State appears as a low ribbon of eastward flowing water, fed by the Catskill Mountains to the south and the Adirondack foothills to the north. Its role as waterway expanded when the Mohawk River’s waters were diverted to become the Erie Canal. Later renamed the Mohawk Barge Canal, it was enlarged to carry freight traffic and oil barges westward. In the 20th century, the canal lost this commercial function to the railroad and the highway.

The Mohawk Watershed, originally the homeland for the Mohawk Nation of the Haudenosaunee, was settled by Europeans in the 18th and 19th centuries and became home to numerous small villages, populated by European immigrant groups—the Italians, Poles, Ukrainians, Irish, and Germans—who came to work in the region’s textile and leather industries. The industries

Students document Schenectady’s historic water plant with video. All photos courtesy of the Schoharie River Center.
Darian Henry, Assistant Director of YouthFX, works with Lillian on camera techniques.

were situated on these streams to take advantage of the power accorded by rushing waters heading to the Mohawk River—creeks with place names such as the Chuctanunda, the Schoharie, the Otsquaga, and Canajoharie creeks, as well as the Alplaus Kill. European population groups were joined in the 20th century by Latino migrants from Puerto Rico, Cuba, and South America, who settled in Amsterdam and Gloversville to work during the twilight years of the regions’ textile industries. By the 1980s, these industries had moved elsewhere to take advantage of other regions’ and countries’ lower labor costs and less stringent environmental oversight.

It is upon this backdrop that the Schoharie River Center, a nonprofit environmental and cultural organization, has been working with the New York Folklore Society to record and document the biotic communities of the Mohawk Watershed. The two organizations work closely with teens in the region in a model of collaborative learning, conducting hands-on scientific inquiry focused on the ecology of the watershed—its plants, animals, insects, and geology—as well as its human habitation, to document the ecological and cultural records of the region. The Community Cultural Documentation Project of the Schoharie River Center’s Environmental Study Team (EST) uses an outdoor-based model of inquiry in order to enable students in the watershed to become better stewards of our environment and advocates for its health. The program merges the scientific inquiry of watershed ecology, macroinvertebrate identification, and water quality monitoring with folklife documentation and oral history, drawing upon the local folkways and cultural activities of the Mohawk Watershed and cultural connections to the region’s waters in an effort to encourage intimacy in community relationships with the environment. The program allies with the writing of aural historian Jack Loeffler, who posits that the watershed is a commons for the biotic community it cradles and sustains. Loeffler points to the folkways or “cultural mores” that form the moral code for the utilization of the commons, with inhabitants working towards the common good in an implicit force of law that preferences the welfare of all, over the advantages of a few (Loeffler 2012, 13).

We believe, along with Loeffler and ecologist Laird Christensen, that when we are disconnected from the environment we lose a sense of concern for its well-being. The program encourages “watershed consciousness,” in that it encourages the practice of profound citizenship in both the natural and social worlds, drawing attention to ourselves as members of ecological communities. As Christensen points out, such positioning is a “radical act,” because “when we love the places we call home, ‘business as usual’ is no longer acceptable” (Christensen 2003, 126).

The work of Mary Hufford provides further support for this work. In “Deep Commoning: Public Folklore and Environmental Policy on a Resource Frontier,” Hufford draws upon the concept of the
“commons,” as “that which gathers us together while granting each of us a place” (Hufford 2016, 639). To medieval Europe, the word “commons” had several meanings. The commons referred to the land, water, pasture, forest, and fishing zone that were available, by rights, to a local community to use. It was the rights to natural goods through which a local community could derive its subsistence (Ricoveri 2013, 30). The “commons” constitutes a social arrangement that is completely opposite to the one created by the market economy espoused by capitalism. In the true sense of the “commons,” the commons belongs to no one and to everyone, provided by nature. The community is the steward (Ricoveri 2013, 32).

As Hufford examines the forests of West Virginia as a “commons” that informs and sustains the communities of West Virginia, so, too, does the Community Cultural Documentation Project explore watersheds as a “commons,” supported in our work by folklore and its connections to place. If one were to map the commons that is the Mohawk Watershed, what would be our collective experience and our shared resources? The most apparent connection is to the waterways themselves, which Congressman Paul Tonko names “Mighty Waters”—a navigational highway and corridor of economic activity that defined the Mohawk Nation of the Haudenosaunee and spawned a 19th-century chain of small villages and Main Streets.

To delineate the watershed as a commons, today’s Mohawk Watershed is a site for boating and swimming, for cooling off on a hot day, and for seeking that teenage adrenaline rush that one receives by throwing oneself from the high bluffs that have been forged from the ravages of time and erosion. The waterways that are the Mohawk Watershed offer fishing and hunting grounds that still provide important food security for economically strapped households. The watershed provides berrying and foraging activities and bait collection for fishing. Its riparian zones are used for free-range poultry, garden plots, maple syrup-making, and large-scale vegetable farming. It provides the location for camping, bird watching, and hiking. Its forests provide firewood for heating homes or to be sold along roadsides for extra income.

In her examination of West Virginia’s mountains, Hufford speaks of “deep commoning,” as a study of the commons from within. Hufford writes, “The framework for the study of commons is what I call ‘deep commoning’: world-making from within that also reflects on those worlds, the rules for making them and the meanings for all participants.” She continues, “I read this as a clarion call for the phenomenological ethnographic approaches espoused by public folklorists and a number of heritage scholars as well” (Hufford 2016, 641). Hufford draws attention to folklore’s utility in providing a framework to understand reciprocity in the relationships between nature, ecology, and the land. The methodology of fieldwork provides a dialogic structure to examine culture and community within the construct of the “commons” (Hufford 2016, 639). Hufford points to folklore’s utility in understanding and preserving the natural and cultural heritage of communities.
inquiry as an important tool to answer questions of environmental degradation and a region’s response to this degradation.

In our work together, the Schoharie River Center and the New York Folklore Society are encouraged by Hufford and other folklife scholars who work at the intersections of folklife and natural resource studies. Folklorists working on the Pinelands Folklife Project of the Library of Congress (1983–1984), directed by Mary Hufford, documented the rural folklife, ethnobotany, and occupational traditions that were intimately connected to the landscapes of the New Jersey Pine Barrens. The folklorists of this 1980s study used folklore methodology to identify and describe the connections between folklife, historic resources, and natural resources (Hufford 1988, 217).

We are similarly encouraged by the work of progressive educator, the late Norman Studer, who was emboldened by the writings of John Dewey to begin an experimental and controversial summer program, Camp Woodland, in New York’s Catskills Watershed. Studer, along with Herbert Haufrecht and Norman Cazden, founded a youth-focused educational model in which students became the folklore fieldworkers, collecting the folklife and oral traditions of the Catskill Mountains (Johnson 2002). The campers met tradition bearers, took field expeditions to community venues, and annually performed cantatas based upon local stories and local issues, composed by Herbert Haufrecht. In their work with youth in the Catskills, Studer and his staff at Camp Woodland merged a love for the environment with a respect for the local knowledge and folklife of the Catskills, while providing youth with the skills of tolerance and deep listening. Along the way, they inspired a generation of folklorists and environmentalists. (personal communications with Camp Woodlanders, 2014).

Using the student-centered approaches pioneered by Norman Studer and Camp Woodland, the Community Cultural Program of the Environmental Study Team uses the watershed as its focus of study. It asks questions and seeks answers of the Mohawk Watershed: what is the human activity that is forged from and sustained by the watershed, and how do we, as residents of the Mohawk Watershed, interact with this environment? How can we, as stewards of this commons, draw attention to its condition over time? What tools are in our metaphorical “toolbox” that can help to tell its story?

The youth who make up the Environmental Study Team are residents of the Mohawk Watershed. Ranging in age from...
In the fall of 2016, the Schoharie River Center and the New York Folklore Society are working with YouthFX to examine the role of the Mohawk River within people’s perceptions of “place” within the City of Amsterdam, a postindustrial city that is sharply divided between its Latino and non-Latino populations, and its northern and southern shores of the Mohawk River. Access to the Mohawk River in Amsterdam is blocked now by railroad tracks, a highway overpass and urban renewal projects of the 1970s that created a downtown mall, now shuttered. Through the efforts of local politicians and advocates, however, access to the Mohawk River has begun to open up, first with the building of an urban park along the riverfront, and most recently in September of this year, with the completion of a pedestrian bridge across the Mohawk, linking the City of Amsterdam on its north shore with the historic Erie Canal Port Jackson on its south shore. This pedestrian bridge now also links Amsterdam’s Latino residents with Port Jackson’s Italian community, providing easy access to Amsterdam’s two shores. Students of the Community Cultural Documentation project have set out to explore how the newly constructed bridge impacts community perceptions of the Mohawk River. They ask, “Once seen as a barrier to community interaction, how does the new pedestrian bridge change the community of Amsterdam?”

Mary Hufford proposes the concept of “deep commoning,” the exploration of the commons from its interior to discover the networks and intricacies of the relationships between ecology, nature, and the land. Such explorations expose the connections between human emotion and the physical fabric of landscape, to discover those places that are centers of meaning to individuals and to groups. In folklorist Kent Ryden’s words, the study of places are “fusions of landscape, experience, and locations, bound up with time and memory.” (Ryden 1993, 39). Place, as described by humanistic geographers, includes a strong sense of rootedness to location, membership in a place-based community, and a common world view as a result of a common geographical experience. This coincides with the work of regional folklorists who “seek out instances where people share a body of folklore because they live in a certain geographical area and their geographical location is the primary basis for a shared identity” (Jones 1976).

The Schoharie River Center works with the New York Folklore Society to document “place,” “storying” the landscapes of the Mohawk Watershed to understand the impacts and effects of our region’s waters on its human inhabitants. Through the Community Cultural Documentation Project of the Environmental Study Team Program, students become familiar with their own bioregion, taking a cue from author...
Robert Finch, who says, “Ultimately we can only care for and connect with that which we have come to love…. only by storying the earth do we come to love it, does it become the place where imagination chooses to reside.” (Christensen 2003, 125).

References


Notes

1 Riverkeeper is a member-supported, watchdog organization dedicated to protecting the environmental, recreational, and commercial integrity of the Hudson River and its tributaries, and to safeguarding the drinking water of nine million New York City and Hudson Valley residents.

2 Point source pollution has a single identifiable source, such as sewage discharge from a municipal water system. The source can be identified with little ambiguity.

3 Trout Unlimited was founded in 1959, with the mandate to ensure that wild and native trout populations were allowed to thrive, as nature intended. Founded in Michigan, within a few years chapters had opened in Illinois, Wisconsin, New York, and Pennsylvania. To date, the organization has accomplished hundreds of conservation achievements nationwide.

The nonprofit Schoharie River Center has as its mission “to instill a love for learning, arts and science, promote the values of stewardship for our local environment, and encourage the positive and responsible involvement of youth in their communities.” Its core programs include the award-winning Environmental Study Team youth development program that works with youth throughout the Mohawk and Susquehanna Watersheds to monitor water quality and improve the local environment, enjoy the outdoors, and instill a sense of environmental awareness. Twice awarded the national Environmental Excellence Award by the Seaworld/Busch Garden Foundation, the EST program of the Schoharie River Center has also been recognized by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation with an Environmental Excellence Award in 2013. <http://www.schoharierivercenter.org>

Empower * Inspire * Create

Youth FX after-school and summer programs provide a team of experienced filmmakers and media arts educators to guide participants through the entire film production process from script to screen. Focusing on visual storytelling, narrative structure, performance, camera skills, and editing techniques, Youth FX gives participants a chance to express themselves by producing short films. Their programs provide a great opportunity for youth in the city of Albany—and in Amsterdam through partnering with organizations like the New York Folklore Society—to learn digital media skills, have fun, collaborate with peers, and experience all the excitement of filmmaking. A nonprofit organization, YouthFX was founded by Program Director Bhawin Suchak in 2008, to serve youth in Albany’s South End neighborhood. <http://www.youthfx.org>.

Ellen McHale is the executive director of the New York Folklore Society, a position she’s held since 1999. A resident of the Schoharie Watershed, Ellen is also the cofounder of the Schoharie River Center, along with her husband John McKeeby, and works closely with this organization to promote a bioregional consciousness through public programming and environmental advocacy.
Hannah Davis earned her MA in Folk Studies from Western Kentucky University (WKU) and a BA in Folklore and Ethnomusicology from Indiana University. While at Indiana, she served for four years as a Program Coordinator with Traditional Arts Indiana, Indiana’s statewide folk and traditional arts agency—now a constituent program of the Mathers Museum of World Cultures. Throughout her MA training at WKU, she worked as a Graduate Assistant for the Kentucky Folklife Program. In June 2016, she began work as a public folklorist for the NYSCA Upstate Folklife Survey and Program Development – A Partnership with the New York Folklore Society. While a student, she gained additional internship experience working with the Smithsonian Institution’s Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage and the American Folklore Society.

Jason Jackson (JJ): Hannah—I am so happy to be doing this interview with you, especially just as you are getting settled into your new role as a public folklorist in upstate New York. Could you describe your new position?

Hannah Davis (HD): Since June 1, I’ve been working as a contractor for the New York Folklore Society and New York State
Council on the Arts (NYSCA). I’ve been tasked with doing a folklife survey of nine counties (six in the Finger Lakes and three in the southwestern corner of the state). I’m also responsible for coordinating a few public programs with smaller regional arts organizations and acting as a consultant in the planning of future folklife-based programming. The state of New York is unique in that it has an organized network of folklorists working in many different capacities. This position was created as a way to serve counties that are not otherwise served by folklorists.

JJ: For those who are reading about such work for the first time, what goes into doing a multi-county folklife survey? How will your findings translate into further research and eventually presentations, publications, or other outcomes?

HD: Surveys involve, in many ways, all the fun parts of working as a folklorist. Between now and the end of my contract, I will have conducted dozens of interviews with all kinds of artists, musicians, and other informants, and crisscrossed the state, documenting fairs and festivals. I’ll record, photograph, and film as much as possible. Especially when a survey includes so many unique communities, it’s important to stay organized and keep your eyes on the big picture. There’s only one of me, and so many hours in a day. This is not intended to be a comprehensive survey of all the traditional arts and culture that one may find in each of my nine counties. Rather, my goal is to be able to paint a picture for our partner organizations of the kinds of traditions that exist in their service areas, and the ways in which they may continue to do folklife programming in the future. It’s important to me to respond directly to the needs of these organizations. The Auburn Public Theater, for example, is interested in doing a narrative stage, during which informants will engage in a conversation with each other about a specific topic, and their audience will be able to interact and ask questions. As I’m conducting fieldwork in their service area, then, I will make note of informants who seem to particularly enjoy discussing their life and work. Towards the end of my contract, I’ll work on organizing photos and recordings, transferring files to others, and drafting my programming recommendations. It’s possible that parts of this project will turn into more long-term work for NYFS. I’ll also publish a few articles discussing my work in NYFS’s journal, Voices: The Journal of New York Folklore.

JJ: It does sound like it will be a lot of fun. You know you will meet great people, but you do not yet know who they all are or what they are passionate about. How did your work in Indiana and Kentucky prepare you for your new work in New York state?

HD: Exactly! A big part of my job at TAI
[Traditional Arts Indiana] was transcribing, logging, and organizing materials collected by fieldworkers. I’m grateful to Jon Kay, the organization’s director, for introducing me to basic ethnographic methods through this kind of work, and allowing me to participate (even as a college freshman) in collaborative projects like the one I’m tackling now. Certainly, entering my grad program already comfortable with convening meetings, drafting grant applications, and planning public programs allowed me to work more independently at the Kentucky Folklife Program. My time in Indiana and Kentucky really equipped me to take a “big picture” approach to my work here in New York—I didn’t just learn how to do fieldwork, I learned what to do with fieldwork.

JJ: That is good. As we continue working with students in TAI and at the museum as a whole, your experience will be a source of encouragement. On the flip side, what kinds of experiences do you wish you could have had while at IU and WKU? What are you surprised by as you get going in New York?

HD: I certainly wish I had been able to take some [undergraduate] public folklore classes to complement my work at TAI. I didn’t really understand the origins of the field I was working in until I began graduate-level classes at Western. Once I got to Western, though, I really missed being able to take advantage of the diverse programs offered at IU. Pursuing my interests in digital media, for example, became a lot more difficult. There’s only so much you can study and prepare for, though! There’s a lot to be said for just diving in.

This might be a silly answer, but honestly, I’ve been most surprised by how smoothly things have gone. I don’t mean this to be self-congratulatory at all—the people here have just been so kind, and so happy to share their work with me. When you’re learning how to do fieldwork, you hear a lot of horror stories. I don’t have any yet!

JJ: Building up undergraduate course opportunities for public and applied folklore work is on the agenda at IU, as are opportunities for public humanities involvements more generally. Your reflection contributes to the making of the case for such efforts. I am glad that you have no horror stories, and I hope that things continue in that vein.

HD: That’s great to hear.
State? Things seem really strong there, and this seems to be a longstanding pattern.

HD: The infrastructure here is part of the reason I was so excited to take the job. There are capable and accomplished folklorists, including a few IU students and grads, working across the state. Many are within arts organizations, some work more independently, but they are all part of a collaborative network loosely bound together by Ellen McHale at NYFS and Robert Baron at NYSCA, who both work hard to support what we do (financially and otherwise). Their leadership has been crucial to the longstanding pattern you’ve noticed.

JJ: What is one cool cultural discovery that you have already made as you begin to learn your way around your part of the state?

HD: Word on the street is that there’s a game called “roque” played in the western
part of the state. I hadn’t heard of it until a few days ago! An annual tournament is held in Angelica, a village in Allegany County, during the community’s Heritage Day celebration. It resembles croquet, but has entirely different rules. Readers might be interested in this 2010 ESPN article: <http://www.espn.com/espn/news/story?id=5497685>.

**JJ**: I knew you’d have something great to share and just like that you serve up roque. Hopefully we’ll all be playing it soon, or at least watching your documentary! Here’s two to go out on. If you could share a word of counsel with an IU sophomore with an interest in a humanities career, what would you say? As an alumna, what would you share in conversation with our Provost or President about your training at IU.

**HD**: It’s scary to think about how recently I was an IU sophomore. Feels like it’s been ages! Here’s what I’d say: “It will be okay. There are jobs.” Sincere commitment to an interest goes a long way at IU, especially in the Department of Folklore and Ethnomusicology. I knew as a freshman that I wanted to graduate as a folklore major, and it was entirely because of a pep talk from a grad student who saw some potential in me and sent me to talk to Jon [Kay]. With the guidance of wonderful professors like you, Jason, and some very honest graduate students, I became a success story. And there are so many others. I’m proud to be an IU alumna, and to be part of the community that the department has fostered. A degree in the humanities is not a death wish.

To the provost and president, I’d say this: “My training at IU made me the professional that I am today.” I’ve been thinking a lot about my time at IU since yesterday’s announcement about the department’s move to the Classroom Office Building. I met some of my nearest and dearest friends and mentors in the TAI office. Our buildings were run-down. They were not accessible to members of the community with different physical capabilities. That’s a terrible thing. But they were home, and I’m sad that I won’t be able to go back there. The department is a whole lot more than a cluster of neglected brick buildings, though. It’s an incubator, it’s a community, and it’s a wonderful thing to be a part of. I couldn’t have learned the things I learned there anywhere else.*

**JJ**: Thank you Hannah for sharing your experiences with me and with our readers. Keep us posted on your adventures, and come back soon and teach your Bloomington friends how to play roque!

*In her closing remarks, Hannah is referring to the offices of the IU Department of Folklore and Ethnomusicology from which she earned her BA and in which I serve as a Professor. The department’s offices and seminar rooms in a cluster of four historic brick houses located adjacent to one
another on N. Fess Ave. and N. Park Ave. in Bloomington have, for alumni, staff, and faculty, become icons of the department over the course of many decades. In July 2016, it was announced that the Department would be moved to new, more modern and accessible quarters in a university building known as the Classroom Office Building on 3rd Street, across from the campus’s historic “Old Crescent” area. The department looks forward to showing off its new home to returning alumni very soon.

Jason Baird Jackson is Director of the Mathers Museum of World Cultures and a Professor of Folklore at Indiana University. His interview with Hannah Davis is part of a series of interviews that he has undertaken to explore the work of younger museum and public folklore professionals whose careers were touched by either the Mathers Museum or Traditional Arts Indiana, the statewide public folklore program now based at the museum. Jackson is the editor, most recently, of the edited collection, Material Vernaculars: Objects, Images, and Their Social Worlds (Indiana University Press, 2016). Photo: Jason Baird Jackson revisiting Tulsa, Oklahoma, a place at the center of his life and work. Michael Paul Jordan took this picture across the street from the Woody Guthrie Center, June, 24, 2016.

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We appreciate your support!
Speaking For Creation: Tom Sakokwenionkwas Porter

BY JOSEPH BRUCHAC

If you were to describe Tom Porter as a writer to his face, he would probably laugh. That is, in part, because the several books he’s “written” were largely dictated by him or drawn from his speeches and interviews with him over the years. Despite his deep well of wisdom, Tom doesn’t regard himself as an “educated” man. In fact, some of his “writings” describe in great detail his struggles within a Eurocentric education system that regarded his people as worthless savages and led to his leaving that system before high school.

He might be happier to be described as a keeper of oral traditions, a storyteller whose words are at times funny and even corny, at other times deeply philosophical, and at all times filled with messages that we human beings need to hear.

He would also probably laugh because laughter always seems to come easily to him. He recognizes it as a sacred gift.

All of that is obvious in the following quote from the chapter entitled “Turtle Island” in his 2006 book Kanatsiohareke: Traditional Mohawk Indians Return to Their Ancestral Homeland:

When you read this Iroquois Mohawk Creation Story, I hope that you will bear in mind that all races of the world have Creation stories. This particular one belongs to the Mohawk. The Creator gave it to us. It is not a garage sale or second hand story; it is Mohawk through and through. Sometimes, it is funny and hard to believe. If it is funny, then laugh. The one thing I ask you to do is realize that the Creation Story of all races of People throughout the world are equally as funny and hard to believe as well. When human beings laugh, the Creator is pleased. (Porter 2006, 12)

It also may make clear to you another aspect of Tom Porter as storyteller, as elder, as wise teacher and, yes, as writer. He has the sort of down-to-earth humility that only those who are sure of themselves and their beliefs can show.

Few people are as respected as Tom is by the Six Nations of the Haadensoaunee—or Native American and other indigenous people in general throughout the world. It is no wonder that his Mohawk name Sakokwenionkwas means “The One Who Wins.” A director and teacher at the Akwesasne Freedom School, he held the title of chief for 21 years among his Akwesasne people before moving to the Mohawk Community of Kanatsiohareke, that he established in 1993 on 332 riverfront acres near Fonda, New York. Even before his adult years, I’ve been told, people would come to listen to this boy who spoke like an elder.

Cataloguing his many accomplishments would take far more space than I have in this column. So I’ll only mention two more things. The first is his role as the organizer of the “White Roots of Peace” several decades ago. The objective of that group, a traveling multimedia collective, was to revitalize Native traditions and beliefs in North America. As its main speaker, Tom lectured at universities and colleges all over the US and Canada.

The second is his work as the Native American consultant for the New York State Penitentiary system, where he served as Chaplain for all the Native inmates in New York’s prisons.

All of this ties into one of the main objectives in Tom’s life, as he explained it to me 20 years ago. That objective was to create a Carlisle Indian School in reverse, a place that would be the opposite of Carlisle and all the other American Indian boarding schools and residential schools in the US and Canada, where the stated objective was to destroy Native American cultures to “Kill the Indian and save the man,” as voiced in 1892 in a public speech by Richard H. Pratt, founder of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School.

In the 2008 collection of Porter’s speeches and interviews As Grandma Said, Iroquois Teachings As Passed Down Through the Oral Tradition, he shared these words in the chapter titled “The Future”:

We must teach our people, our children, and teach them how to be mothers and fathers, give them back their ceremonies, give them back their language, give them back their spiritual history and their history altogether, teach them how to be wholesome family members, ambitious, honest, and morally good. That is what Carlisle took away from the Indian nations. (Porter 2008, 389)

That is a mission carried on to this day by Tom and by the supporters of Kanatsiohareke, a place where the Mohawk language is taught, where seasonal festivals of thanksgiving (such as their annual Strawberry Festival in early summer) are open to all, and where the Earth is treated with the respect deserved by a mother.

So it is that, to this day, if you are fortunate enough to hear Tom, you will recognize his voice as one speaking for Creation. When he stands up to speak the traditional Thanksgiving Address in Mohawk and then in English, sharing those words that come before all others, giving greetings and thanks to our Creator, to our Mother Earth, to the waters, the plants, the animals and birds, the winds, the sun, moon, and stars, you may feel as moved as I am always.

You may agree with what one of my Onondaga friends and teachers, Alice Dewasentah Papineau, the Head Clan Mother of the Eel Clan, said to me one day at Kanatsiohareke after Tom spoke the Address:

“It seemed as if even the grass was listening.”

For Further Reading:


Joseph Bruchac is a writer, musician, and traditional Native storyteller whose work often reflects his American Indian (Abenaki) ancestry and the Adirondack Region of northern New York where he lives in the house he was raised in by his grandparents. He is the author of over 120 books for young readers and adults, including the award-winning volume OUR STORIES REMEMBER, American Indian History, Culture and Values through Storytelling. Photo by Eric Jenks.
Bill Smith

Born in 1937 into a large family in the “Featherbed” section near South Colton, on the northern outskirts of the Adirondack Park, Bill Smith is a teller of tales, a singer of songs, and a maker of traditional Adirondack pack baskets. He learned each of these trades first at home from his parents, his father’s lumberjack friends, and the assorted other characters who would come through the Smith house and the nearby woods in Bill’s childhood. The household was without electricity until 1954.

Bill has been a trapper and fur buyer, a pulpwood cutter, and a hunting and fishing guide. For several years, he taught outdoor education in area public schools and colleges.

As the youngest of 10 children, all his brothers had moved out of the house by the time Bill received his first musical instrument by mail—a guitar from the Sears & Roebuck Company. Bill was inspired to play from hearing Dick Law, an accomplished musician, and also by his mother who played pump organ and taught him many songs.

With his father often gone for weeks at a time, working in the woods, Bill and his mother would spend many lonely nights playing and singing together; country songs and sentimental love pieces were among their favorites. Bill remembers well that New Year’s Day in 1953, when he and his mother heard on their car radio that Hank Williams, their musical hero, had died; they both cried.

Bill Smith is widely known throughout the Adirondacks and beyond as a master of various traditional arts of the region. He performs for a variety of audiences with a wide repertoire of stories and songs about local life. He has been written about in numerous articles and books, and has produced a series of recordings of his stories and songs for Front Hall Records and his own label, Featherbed Productions.

Bill’s CDs are available at the Gallery of New York Traditions at the NYFS in Schenectady or online at www.nyfolklore.org/gallery/store/music.html

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In 2012, Bobby Sanabria and I, Artistic Co-Directors of the Bronx Music Heritage Center (BMHC) attended a Garifuna event at the Hostos Center for the Arts & Culture. It was the first time that Bobby had seen drum and dance groups from the Garifuna community, and his drummer’s ear (he is a percussionist and jazz drummer) immediately picked up on the rhythms coming from the stage. “That sounds just like our bolandei (referring to a rhythm from the Puerto Rican bomba musical style). A light instantly went on in my mind—the Puerto Rican and Garifuna drum traditions have a lot in common, as well as do the communities themselves—so let’s create a program at the BMHC to present them together. That was the seed that became, Parranda con Paranda: A Puerto Rican & Garifuna Holiday Celebration, which will celebrate its 4th annual program this coming December.

At first glance, this is not so strange a pairing as it might seem. Many Puerto Ricans jokingly referred to the Bronx as the second largest Puerto Rican city, after San Juan (the capital of the island). The Bronx is currently home to the largest Garifuna community outside of Central America—the Garifuna come from Belize, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Guatemala. The borough shapes both the communities, as they have in turn shaped the Bronx. The Puerto Rican legacy is found in places such as Teatro Puerto Rico, which was the center of the local show business scene for decades, and the traditional music scene has been re-invigorated at Rincón Criollo, one of the oldest Puerto Rican casitas and community gardens in the City. The musicians playing the traditional music of Puerto Rico have
gained a lot of their training in groups and venues based in the Bronx— with the center of activity being the casita, which was created by Chema Soto to reclaim a space for his community amid the devastation. Rincón Criollo, or “La casita de Chema,” as it has affectionately become known, is the place where traditional Puerto Rican musicians from New York and Puerto Rico go to hear and play this music.

Sadly, the Bronx was also the home to the Happy Land Social Club, where in a fire, which happened on March 25, 1990, 87 people lost their lives. Fifty-nine victims were members of the Honduran community, of which many were Garifuna (many of the Garifunas in the Bronx are from Honduras). The fire was the worst in New York City since the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire in 1911, and the small park in front of the original site at 1950 Southern Blvd. has become the Plaza of the Eighty-Seven in their memory. Although most people have never realized the connection between Hondurans and Garifunas, within the community, almost everyone had been personally affected. The fire at the social club, actually a small after-hours disco, changed the face of the music scene in New York City, as small social clubs came under scrutiny for better safety regulations in terms of building and fire codes. This affected the immigrant/ethnic communities who rely on social clubs as meeting places, refuges, and centers of information. Various music scenes, such as the salsa circuit, lost neighborhood gigs as the music shifted to more commercial venues.

Musically, Puerto Ricans and the Garifuna also have a lot in common. They both play huge barrel-shaped drums, which have big, powerful sounds. The Puerto Rican bomba tradition is the oldest of all of Puerto Rico’s Afro-based musical traditions and has roots in West Africa. Bomba developed in the context of colonial plantation life when enslaved Africans participated in dances (bailes) to celebrate their day off, baptisms, and marriages. The drums used in bomba are called barriles. A bomba group requires at least two or three barriles, a cúa (a pair of sticks struck upon a hard surface), and a single maraca. The barriles that keep the constant rhythm are called the buledores, or seguidores, while the drum that interacts with the dancers when they perform their piques (steps), is called the primo or subidor. During the dance, the dancer creates a dialogue with the drummer of the subidor, by getting the drummer to respond to her dance movements with repiques or toques (drum strokes).

The Garifuna drums are collectively called garawoun. Bronx Garifuna drummer Bodoma says originally they were called dômbü. According to James Lovell, a noted Garifuna musician and educator, the individual drums are called lanigi garawoun (heart drum), which is used for sacred music; the

![Chester Nuñez dancing in Wanaragua regalia (2014).](image-url)
bass drum called **segundo**, which keeps the tempo of the music; and the **primeru**, the smallest drum with a higher pitch. These drums are accompanied by smaller percussion: **sisiro** (maracas), **wudaln agei** (conch shell), and **tagei bugudura** (turtle shell). The Puerto Rican and Garifuna percussion instruments have similarities, so it is not surprising that when listening closely to the big barrel-type drums of both groups, you can hear echoes of familiar rhythms that call to both.

Our **Parranda con Paranda** title and theme came from combining elements from both musical styles. The Garifuna have a musical style called “paranda” (with one “r”), which is played using drums and guitar. Both communities have the tradition of the “parranda” (with two “r’s”)—the holiday procession where neighbors sing Christmas carols from house to house in the **parranda** tradition, also called **trillas navideñas**, and sometimes called **asaltos**, as people join in to surprise and musically “assault” their family and friends. It is customary to give food and drink to the **parranderos** who stop by one’s home.

The **paranda** genre of music is thought to have entered the Garifuna musical lexicon during the 19th century when the community settled in Honduras and incorporated Spanish and Latin American musical elements, including the acoustic guitar, into their repertoire. Nowadays, the genre has become quite popular due to modern **parranderos** such as Paul Nabor, Junior Aranda, Andy Palacio, and Aurelio Martínez.

**Parranda or paranda**—they share some similar roots. In the liner notes for the Smithsonian Folkways Records recording, **The Black Caribs of Honduras**, Doris Stone writes, “The Black Caribs [a name for the Garifuna] call this type of song a **perrandatinu**, a word taken from the Spanish **paranda**, which signifies ‘spree.’” Other scholars have posited that the roots of the word, “parranda” come from the Arabic, Portuguese, or Basque with meanings that include: “joyful celebration,” “noisy feast,” or “uproar,” and “laugh” or “laughter.” Whatever the roots of the word, at the Bronx program all participants feel this annual celebration is truly a joyous occasion.

Each year we have focused on a different aspect of the musical traditions from the two communities. In 2014, we celebrated masquerade traditions from the Christmas season, with reference to the Puerto Rican Festival de Máscaras (Masks) celebrated in the town of Hatillo on December 28, the Day of the Holy Innocents, and a presentation of the Garifuna Wanarágu, which itself is a variation of Jamaican Jonkonnu. We included Jamaican masquerade performers in the program as well. Jonkunu
and Wanáragua include processions that incorporate African drumming with European and African masked traditions, and in the case of Jonkunnu, English mumming traditions. All three traditions feature masks made out of a wire mesh; Jonkunnu and Wanáragua have stock figures such as the Queen and the Devil, as well as beribboned figures, of which the most well known is probably Pitchy-Patchy from Jamaica.

In 2015, the focus was on women as dancers, vocalists, and as drummers. The Garifuna abeihamani songs are semi-sacred, unaccompanied, gestured songs only sung by women, as opposed to another song type, arumahani, which are sung a cappella by men. During the performance of abeihamani songs, the vocalists stand alongside each other, clasping pinky fingers to the person next to them. These songs are usually a component of the Dugu, a religious ceremony to communicate with ancestors. In various cultures, drumming has traditionally been the purview of men, even though the Yoruba of Nigeria consider the spirit of the drum to be female and call it aña (thus, the name of another of the BMHC’s series, “The Spirit of Aña,” which celebrates women and drums in all their forms). Yet, for the current generation of musicians, these genres have many women as active percussive participants and bandleaders. Young Puerto Rican and Dominican women are forming their own groups, which include Yaya, The Legacy Women Circle, Bambula, and Ojos de Sofia.

This year our theme will be Celebración de los Cuernos—Celebration of Horns. We’ll include a tribute to the iconic Puerto Rican masquerade figure, the vejigante, of which there are different styles on the island. In the south of the island, in Ponce, vejigantes with large papier-mâché masks have many horns of various sizes and march through the Carnival processions prior to Lent. In the northeast, during the Fiesta Patronal de Santiago (Festival of St. James) in July, vejigantes with coconut shell masks that usually sport 3-5 thinner horns, dance through the patron saint celebration. Their name comes from a combination of “vejiga,” meaning cow bladder, which these tricksters use as balloons to hit people during the celebrations, and “gigante” (giant), as these figures seem larger than life. Around Christmas-time, the Garifuna have a “bull dance” that is called Charikanari in Belize and Pia Manadi in Honduras. A man dons a long, dark coat and face mask, and adds a pair of horns to his forehead to evoke a bull.

Abeihamani performed by Garifuna Women Abeimahani directed by Luz Soliz (2015).
Another character, “Hunter Man” carries a gun and chases after the bull—and sometimes, the bull turns the tables, and using its horns, chasing the hunter in return. These antics are accompanied by music (James Lovell, personal communication).

Our mission at the BMHC is to present the musical legacy of the Bronx, looking to its past as the birthplace of hip hop and its Latin music connection—after all, it is “El Condado de la Salsa” (The Borough of Salsa). We also seek to present the thriving contemporary soundscape. Nowadays, Latin music heard in the streets is bachata and not salsa, reflecting the growing Dominican community, and the music of the emerging new communities, most notably the many African styles of music from Gambia and Mali and the large Garifuna community in the Bronx.

So this December, come to the Bronx and follow the beat of the drum because el tambor llama—the drum calls.

Many thanks to José Francisco Avila and the Garifuna Coalition for their support as our partner in “Parranda Con Paranda: A Puerto Rican & Garifuna Holiday Celebration.” Special thanks also go to the musicians who are parranderos with us every year, especially the core organizational group: Lucy Blanco, Bodoma, Alex Colón, James Lovell, Bobby Sanabria, Jorge Vázquez, and Matthew Gonzalez.

Elena Martínez received an MA in Anthropology and an MA in Folklore at the University of Oregon. Since 1997, she has been a folklorist at City Lore and is currently also the co-artistic director for the Bronx Music Heritage Center. She co-produced the documentary, From Mambo to Hip Hop: A South Bronx Tale, which aired on PBS in September 2006 and won the NCLR’s (National Council of La Raza) 2007 ALMA Award for Best TV Documentary. She was also a producer for the documentary We Like It Like That: The Story of Latin Boogaloo, which premiered at the SXSW Festival in 2015. She has been a contributor to Latinas in the United States: An Historical Encyclopedia by historians Virginia Sánchez Korrol and Vicki L. Ruiz (Indiana University Press, 2006); Women’s Folklore & Folklife: An Encyclopedia of Beliefs, Customs, Tales, Music, and Art (ABC-CLIO, 2008); and New York State Folklife Reader: Diverse Voices (Univ. of Mississippi Press, 2013). She is currently on the Advisory Boards for Casita Maria/Dancing in the Streets’ South Bronx Culture Trail, the Center for Puerto Rican Studies Archive at Hunter College, and Los Pleneros de la 21. She was awarded a 2013 BOROMIX Puerto Rican Heritage Award and Comité Noviembre’s Lo Mejor de Nuestra Comunidad 2013. Photo by Francisco Molina Reyes, II.
Maxwell Kofi Donkor & Sankofa Drum and Dance Ensemble  

BY POLLY ADEMA

Master drummer and Asante
Prince Maxwell Kofi Donkor spent much of his childhood in the Ghanaian villages of Otumi and Besoro-Kumawu, learning Asante (or Ashanti) drumming from his grandfather. As a young man, he was chosen to carry on the ancestral drumming tradition, a commitment he has pursued with a passion throughout his life. Kofi cultivated his drumming while also studying Ghanaian culture, sculpture, and industry at university. His life’s work blends beautifully his musical and intellectual talents with his love and respect for the arts, tradition, and people of all cultures.

Since arriving in the United States in 1992, Kofi has been active with several drum circles. In 1997, he and other drummers formed Sankofa Drum and Dance Ensemble. The ensemble is comprised of drum and dance artists from the tri-state area. Every rhythm Sankofa plays evokes lively village experiences. Village life also informs Sankofa’s dynamic modes of play and performance: “I use the village as the model for our philosophy, to bring everyone in,” Kofi explains. When performing and leading demonstrations, he encourages audience participation and involves audience members in singing, dancing, and playing instruments.

Asante rhythmic textures speak of the multifaceted character of West African culture. Sankofa’s 2010 CD Drums exemplifies this multidimensionality. Each piece communicates a dynamic interweaving of rhythm and music, tradition and culture, local and global, individual and community. Recently Kofi shared some insights in the making of this CD, providing a behind-the-scenes look into the group’s artistic process. His thoughtful responses follow each question.

How do you and the group decide what to include on a CD, and in particular the Drums CD?

We all made the decisions as to what rhythms to include on the Drums CD, even the order of rhythms and songs. We wanted to capture the village story the group has been studying for years from me and Yacine [Yacine Wade, a Wolof princess and co-leader of the ensemble].

Most of our music is based on authentic rhythms from West Africa, mostly Ghana and Senegal. We allow contributions from each willing member and review them before we get to the studio. Some of the rhythms, especially “Somba,” evolved in the studio. We adopt the same philosophy [of honoring tradition and embracing interpretation] in our performances.

How is the decision made about which instruments and whether or not there is call and response in each piece? Are these factors prescribed by the song/tradition of the song? Is there room for “artistic license,” leaving you free to interpret as you see fit, or is it completely open to negotiation among members of the group?

It is a collective decision. I, with the help of a few of the drummers/dancers, made the decisions about the drums and instrument used for the call and response on each piece. These factors are prescribed by the songs and the traditions and by the ceremonies surrounding the songs. There is definitely lots of room for interpretation on some of the rhythms, like “Fanga,” “Ega,” and “Bak2Roots.” Other rhythms, in particular, “Kpalogo,” “Ogidigidi,” “Damba,” and “Soboadza,” were left the way they are ethnically and traditionally.

What are you working on now and what’s next for Sankofa?

We are now exploring the original tribal rhythms from West Africa beyond what I know, and how they have evolved in the Caribbean Islands and South and North America in general. The next CD is based on this research, which will involve some travels to West Africa and South America.

Sankofa African Drum and Dance Ensemble’s DRUMS CD is available from the Gallery of New York Artists at the New York Folklore Society or online at <www.nyfolklore.org/gallery/store/music.html#sankofa>.

Culinary anthropologist Polly Adema is Director of the Master of Arts in Food Studies program at University of the Pacific, San Francisco. Before moving west, she was the Director of the Folk Arts Program at Arts Mid-Hudson, serving three New York counties.
Overview
On Sunday, February 28, 2016, from 5–8 p.m. in the Great Room at South Oxford Space, 138 South Oxford Street, Brooklyn, New York, the New York Folklore Society welcomed approximately 20 attendees, some who had come from as far as Philadelphia, to a folk arts forum convening local and national arts and labor leaders for panel presentations and an open forum on the topic of “Democratizing the (Folk) Arts Nonprofit Workplace.” Presenters included Andy Kolovos, co-director and archivist of the Vermont Folklife Center (VFC); Selina Morales, director of the Philadelphia Folklore Project (PFP); Lisa Rathje, assistant director for Local Learning: The National Network for Folk Arts in Education; cooperative developer and strategist Joe Rinehart; and UAW Local 2110 President Maida Rosenstein (Local 2110 represents part-time academics and museum workers). New York Folklore Society NYC Representative and folklorist Dr. Eileen Condon organized and curated this event. Kathleen Haughey, a colleague of Andy Kolovos in educational programs at Vermont Folklife Center cancelled her planned participation due to illness.

The presenters approached the forum’s topic from intersecting approaches, based on their varied work experiences and positions within or in connection with the field of traditional arts administration. The general purpose of the forum was to generate and document a critical conversation about best work practices in the (folk) arts nonprofit field (aka public sector ethnography/culture work). The speakers explored several different schools of thought about how more sustainable and more democratic ways of working together in the field of folk arts could be achieved. Their approaches included:

(1) changing nonprofit organizational work styles and practices through consultation;
(2) considering alternative working structures to the nonprofit (such as the worker-owned cooperative and the movement supporting it in NYC) for the traditional arts; and
(3) exploring precedents and prospects for unionizing traditional arts nonprofit organizations.

Presentations
Lisa Rathje began by sharing that she, Andy, and Selina had previously participated in a national conversation about leadership in the field of public sector folk arts in Chicago, together with folklorists Christina Barr (Nevada Humanities) and Sally Van de Water (Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage). Out of that conversation, a “manifesto” was written collectively, and some of the following questions emerged:

(1) How can we better foster peer-to-peer mentoring to sustain ourselves and our work?
(2) What are the core qualities of leadership that suit the values, ethics, and methods of our field?
(3) What are the internal mechanisms of
healthy organizations, and do they reflect the values and ethics of our discipline?

4. In what ways can effective leaders impact or facilitate creative, healthy workplaces?

Lisa and Selina Morales pointed to the importance of defining leadership and workplace practices in this value-grounded way, and they also described leadership as something more than “ambition,” more than just the acquisition of positions of greater and greater power within organizations. Andy’s and Selina’s organizations had both come through recent upheavals in directorship—PFP’s longstanding founding director had retired two years earlier, opening that position to Selina, and Andy had joined a coworker five years ago in a “marriage” of sorts as codirectors of VFC. Through these periods of change, both PFP and VFC benefitted from consultations with Jenna Peters-Golden from the worker-owned cooperative AORTA (www.aorta.coop—Anti-Oppression Resources and Training Alliance). Selina outlined the “points of unity” that PFP staff generated, with Jenna’s encouragement, as a set of values that all staff believed in wholeheartedly, and which would serve (and continue to serve) as a foundation for revisioning the routines and practices in PFP as a workplace going forward. Here is a selection of some of the points from Selina’s staff-generated list:

- We recognize peoples’ multiple and intersecting identities.
- Due to overt and covert systemic oppression, many cultures and ethnicities are not valued and respected. This is not OK with us.
- Opportunities to practice valued cultural traditions and knowledge enhance lives, self-determination, and community vitality.
- Because of economic injustice and disparity, there is a real need to fund artists who are systematically denied access to resources and support.
- Care for people, relationships, and artistic connections nourishes us.
- We see our work as playing a role in building a world without violence.
- We are working towards a world in which folk and traditional artists and practitioners can practice their arts and be valued for it, monetarily and socially.

As Selina explained, the points of unity are still a work in progress, and the list also serves as a reference by which PFP staff can monitor the success of their work, conversations, and collaborations, at present.

Andy Kolovos outlined how he and his co-director Greg Sharrow have evolved through a process of hiring more staff, including an educational director and a fundraiser, while asking themselves how to accommodate these new people in a structure that gets the work done. Andy and Greg “flirted” with a “what if there’s nobody in charge?” or “what if no one person is the boss?”—as a way of working, in which “everyone could have an equal stake in what happens…everyone has a say in major decision-making, and where things still get done.” After Andy attended the Chicago meeting of folklorists (which Lisa Rathje described), he, like Selina and her staff, consulted with AORTA to build a decentralized organizational structure. Despite his excitement at having progressed into this structure at the staff level, Andy confessed that he and Greg realized their group has nevertheless “created a parallel structure,” one which “as far as the board is concerned…doesn’t exist.” They have tried to mitigate this by making sure that staff are welcomed at board meetings, but according to the organizational bylaws, the executive(s) who run the organization remain the primary individual(s) responsible to the board, while the board retains the hiring/firing responsibility over the
executive director(s). Having staff at board meetings helps “mitigate” these power dynamics and helps the board “recognize that staff are people,” Andy quipped. However, staff members are “part of the organization,” he reflected, paradoxically, “more than the board members are.”

From the complexities of power sharing and values-based decision-making in nonprofit workplaces, the conversation moved to Joe Rinehart. Joe outlined his experience as a worker-owner at a cooperative bookstore in North Carolina, a cooperative developer at the US Federation of Worker Cooperatives, and a cooperative director at the Democracy at Work Institute. His inquiry centered on questions of what “democracy” and “democratizing” could actually mean in relation to workplaces. Democracy, he pointed out, is often equated with “participation,” but teasing these concepts apart can be useful. Democratic work implies the generation of “stronger bonds of accountability” and the “decentralization” of power. But what are those bonds of accountability, exactly, and to whom are they being decentralized? “Thinking about how we are democratizing wealth is also a huge problem. How can we make wealth more distributed, more evenly controlled, and more community controlled,” Joe asked? “Monetary wealth” could also be replaced by “cultural wealth” in this question. Sometimes, Joe pointed out, there is conflict between spreading participation and spreading wealth. He provided several cases in point based on real organizations he had worked with or within. Lest worker cooperatives be opposed as some sort of utopian concept for nonprofits, Joe teased out the complexities further: large (1,000+ member), worker-owned cooperatives can operate with very traditional management structures, which are hierarchical and rely on decision-making from single individuals coming into play from the top down. Likewise, nonprofits and worker-owned cooperatives alike can operate with participatory discussion being a regular part of worklife, whether or not the major decision-making is made traditionally by an executive or more collectively. There can be a “middle ground” in which the participatory work styles can exist within a hierarchical structure where decision-making can be alternately made by an executive and collectively. In situations in which the “loop of accountability” is long—running from executives through middle management to workers and shareholders—some co-ops may use unions to shorten that accountability loop, or even an employee advocacy committee, in place of a union.

One motivating factor for considering the worker-owned co-op model, as opposed to nonprofits, is the desire for members to “share risk, share reward, and share financial reward much more broadly.” Joe joked that he would like to see a “folk arts for-profit” organization come into being, especially one that would support contra dances (his current area of interest is running Brooklyn Contra)! The juxtaposition of “folk arts” and “profit” caused most panelists to smile. A for-profit dance hall might work, he said, pointing out that leasing space is one area that can be profitable and sustainable in the arts. Joe wound up by returning to the differences between asking how far one wants to go with creating an organization that shares risk and reward in order to share wealth more broadly.

Maida Rosenstein explained that UAW 2110, the local for whom she is president, does not serve any “united auto workers;” rather, the union serves workers in cultural institutions, ranging from the very large (such as the Museum of Modern Art) to smaller museums and a number of small nonprofits, many of which are involved in publishing rather than with the arts directly. Reflecting on the conversations she had been listening to thus far, and the approaches the other presenters had been describing, Maida noted that no approaches presented so far, in her view, would “preclude” the process of unionization right alongside other efforts and methods to make work and wealth more democratic. That being said, Maida commented that she found it “amazing” how few cultural institutions were organized in terms of labor, even in the more public institutions.

In smaller organizations, or more “rarefied” ones like galleries, she said, “unions are virtually nonexistent.” “Most workers who
are working in those settings have very little power.” An option of electing board members or changing the work structure “does not actually exist.” These cultural workers “don’t have any ability to make changes in the workplace, other than as individuals hoping to negotiate or navigate a better situation.” So the step that Maida said she would posit is for these workers to begin looking at unions. Folk arts, she conjectured, would be a field in which there would be organizations that are “very tiny,” in which people were “expecting no great wealth.” Nevertheless, she pointed out, even in small nonprofits, there are “often inequities.” “[F]or workers to obtain changes in their workplace, unionization is the way to go.”

Noting situations in which the executive director is making a huge salary, and the workers are earning very little—“that happens a lot in the nonprofit world,” Maida stated. People also organize unions in situations in which they are not motivated by money, she pointed out, but rather by a desire to change the ways in which they work together—seeking not just a change to the culture of the workplace, but to reform a workplace that isn’t really living up to its mission. In her view, the United States is “losing our democracy in part because we are losing our unions.” As fewer and fewer workers have less and less power or voice in the workplace, she said, “not only are workplaces becoming less democratic,” but enormous wealth inequalities have developed, even in nonprofits. Probably not “in the folklore center,” Maida guessed, casting a look towards her fellow presenters, who smiled, but “if you look at the Museum of Modern Art, or at a university, you see very tiny,” in which people were “expecting no great wealth.” Nevertheless, she pointed out, even in small nonprofits, there are “often inequities.” “[F]or workers to obtain changes in their workplace, unionization is the way to go.”

Andy posed the following question in conclusion: If our work in the field of folk arts is based upon values such as partnership, collaboration, and cultural equity, then “why should we have a top-down structure, if what we are advocating for in the world is completely different?” “Ethically, perhaps morally,” he added, “we have an obligation to think about how we structure the organizations we run, to do the work we do in the world.” Maida commented that unionization can bring workers concerns “outward,” rather than just focusing upon making their own workplaces fairer. Unions can expand workers’ power beyond the workplace, she explained, moving those cherished values to “face outward” into society, beyond a single workplace.

The Forum progressed into more critical “how” questions following this phase, as audience members and the curator posed questions to the presenters about how folk arts organizations and the field of folk arts might take steps toward unionizing (begin with coalition building, not with protest); how worker-cooperatives could be established (incubation organizations in NYC have free start-up programs available); and how nonprofits can continue to democratize and promote equity (such as including regional housing/home ownership in an employee benefits package to increase the value of an otherwise low salary). Further, New York Folklore Society-sponsored forums were scheduled in 2016 to explore these more specific, and intriguing, interest areas to continue the discussion, and hopefully, to translate interest into action.

Readers are urged to view the entirety of the four-part video documentation of the Democratizing Forum, which was posted to the New York Folklore Society’s YouTube channel just after the event and included on its website. The link to this documentation was also posted to the national public sector folklore list, Publore, as well as the New York State Folk Arts Roundtable Facebook group, and the NYFS Event Page on Facebook, where comments were encouraged.

Shortly after the forum, folklorist Amy Mills (Programs Coordinator at the Western Folklife Center) wrote to Publore to express the following comment of appreciation:

THANK YOU... for making this session available online. It was personally and professionally meaningful to hear how several new leaders are trying to innovate, while paying close attention to pay and power equity. Three cheers for the panel participants, for trying new things and sharing your challenges honestly with us! Fellow early-to-mid-career folklorists—take time to watch this. It’s a good, grounded conversation about issues that affect our job market and our jobs.

See more online:

**Own The Change: Building Economic Democracy One Worker Co-op at a Time**

“A short, practical guide for those considering worker owned cooperatives, made by GRITtv & TESA, the Toolbox for Education and Social Action. Featuring conversations with worker-owners from Union Cab; Ginger Moon; Arizmendi Bakery, Anti-Oppression Resource and Training Alliance (AORTA); New Era Windows; and more.” (22:12)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8G1-SyMatNc>

**A Co-op Story: Green Worker Co-op Academy**

“For our New Economy series, The Laura Flanders Show at GRITtv is highlighting solutions to our economically precarious times. Cooperatives have demonstrated the great power in working together, and this week we bring you the Green Worker Cooperative Academy…” (8:03)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7vPjmxjWg8t>
New York Folklore Society followed up the initial forum on democratization with a workshop at South Oxford Space in Brooklyn on October 23, 2016. The workshop, led by Ileia Burgos of Green Worker Cooperatives in the Bronx, presented an overview of cooperatives as business structures and focused on how this work structure might be of benefit to artists and culture workers/arts administrators. Green Worker Cooperatives (www.greenworker.coop) is the nonprofit organization, which provides five months of free business start-up training, twice a year, for teams of two or more individuals with a community-oriented business idea. Ileia fielded questions and provided an overview of Coop Academy, and how to apply to the program, which is subsidized by New York City cooperative funding. Coop Academy helps applicants do market research to be sure their business ideas are viable, and links applicants with the “Working World” cooperative business loan program and free legal support through the Urban Justice Center. Applications were accepted for Coop Academy’s Spring 2017 Semester, via the application portal on Green Worker Cooperatives’ website, through December 16, 2016.

This article was based on the report submitted to the American Folklore Society by Eileen Condon, May 17, 2016. The forum was presented with support from the American Folklore Society. The New York Folklore Society’s programs are made possible in part with public funds from the Folk Arts Program of the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature.
Radio Flyer

BY HELEN CONDON

[Author’s Note: When I was eight years old, in 1948, I crept downstairs in the middle of the night Christmas day to find Santa had left me a doll carriage. I tried to take it apart, thinking I could make it into a wagon and my parents wouldn’t know the difference.]

I offer to pull the wagon for Mrs. Borst
As I am short and the handle is a little low
For an adult.
It has been raining and the road is wet
So wet that the wide wheels throw water towards me
Just missing my legs.
The wagon is such a deep red, so thick with paint
That the Radio Flyer Company
Must have dipped the body into the paint
Instead of painting it with a brush.
The handle is black.
It fits my fingers perfectly as I grip it.
Now, this is more than a just a toy.
This is a tool.
A tool that can carry rocks and dirt and plants.
Mrs. Borst smiles as she walks beside me.
Her thick heeled shoes go, snock, snock, snock,
On the pavement.
That along with the swooshing wheels form a song
As we leave silvery tracks on the road.
“Is this Billy’s wagon” I ask.
I’m not out of breath, not even a little.
It glides so nicely.

I could run with it and still talk polite.
“Yes, dear, it is. He pulls the baby around in it.”
Oh now, isn’t that just the ticket.
A little blanket in the bottom covering the grooves,
And with its rounded sides for good gripping.
The baby would get cut on any sharp edges
If you tipped over.
I figured I’d even take a brown one if Santa brought it.
Even though brown is my worst color.
When it comes to drawing pictures I
even color tree trunks green.
In fact, if I wasn’t such a sensible girl, I
would throw out every brown crayon
In the box.
The white letters printed on the both sides of the wagon
Are in script.
Now that’s proof that this is a serious piece of equipment.
Most toys have printed letters
In upper case.
Billy is a lucky boy, I know that.
And boys get wagons and girls get doll carriages.
I know that too.

Growing up in Connecticut in the ‘40s, Helen remembers playing ball on the village green and wanting a wagon instead of a doll carriage for Christmas. Following the death of her husband of 33 years, she went back to school and received her graduate degree in Creative Non-Fiction from University of North Carolina at Wilmington. She teaches rug braiding and memoir writing and lives in Parishville, New York, near her three children. Photo by Todd Condon.
“Folksongs as Regulators of Politics,” by Betty Wang (1965) in *The Study of Folklore*, edited by my mentor Alan Dundes, served as my introduction to Chinese folklore when a graduate student in the folklore program at the University of California at Berkeley from 1979–82. From that article, I learned, for example, that during different periods of history, the Emperor of China had sent officials out into different regions of the country to collect folk songs in order to understand how well he was governing from the point of view of the people, as expressed in these narratives (Wang, 308–14).

Approximately 35 years later, at the New York Institute of Technology (NYIT) and the Nanjing University of Posts and Telecommunications (NUPT) Overseas Education Program, my undergraduate students, other students, professors, administrators, and a few members of the public had the opportunity to learn about the thoughts and feelings—or worldviews—of regional groups of Americans, as expressed in their folklore not only through assigned course readings—for my students—but also through the Public Folklore Diplomacy Programming that occurred in one of the original 12 American Culture Centers in China, funded by the US Department of State, on our campus. In the NYIT Center for Humanities and Culture at NUPT (CHC), Teaching Building One, Room 207, we as Americans were granted permission by the Chinese government, through our partner institution, to explore the folklore of specific regions of the United States by bringing folk artists, folklorists, and other scholars of folklore to this space.

As a result, *Cultures of the American Gulf Coast: Work and Play through Story and Song from Louisiana to Florida* brought Dr. Nick Spitzer, folklorist and NPR “American Routes” founder and host, along with folklorist Josh Kohn, to Nanjing during the 2013–14 academic year. Their entourage included the Louisiana-based Cajun musicians Jesse Lége, Joel Savoy, and the Cajun Country Revival; Cajun filmmaker and University of Louisiana folklorist Connie Castille; and sacred steel guitar musicians, The Campbell Brothers. Independent scholar Sandra Parks also joined them and spoke on the work of Florida folklorist, social activist, and author of *The Klan Unmasked* (2011), Stetson Kennedy. Finally, a “Woody Sez: The Life & Music of Woody Guthrie” performance was offered.

In 2014–15 *Folk Arts of New York State* were highlighted in this American Culture Center. Harvard-trained sociologist and NYIT Campus Dean Dr. Monique Taylor spoke on “Changing Foodways in Gentri-
Frank London and Lisa Gukin of The Klezmatics informally discuss similarities between klezmer music and that of Chinese folk music with Chinese student musicians, CHC, April 10, 2015. All photos by Beverly Butcher unless otherwise noted.

fying Harlem,” and MIT Professor Christopher Dewart lectured on “From Shaker to IKEA,” A Folk Arts of New York State Lecture on Furniture Making.” New York Folklore Society Director Dr. Ellen McHale offered a presentation on her book Stable Views: Voices and Stories of the Thoroughbred Racetrack (2015). In addition, Goucher College Cultural Sustainability faculty member Dr. Robert Baron presented on “Folklore and Cultural Tourism.” The world class Klezmer band, The Klezmatics—whose performance included songs from their 2006 CD, Wonder Wheel, with music put to Woody Guthrie lyrics—and the award-winning Amsterdam, New York-based Alex Torres and his Latin Orchestra were also brought to China through one of the two US Embassy Beijing $50,000 Supplemental Grants awarded to NYIT for this folklore programming.

What is the effectiveness of such folklore programming in an Overseas Education Program in China? What purpose has it served? Who has gained what from these outstanding performances and lectures? Of what lasting value will the experience of these two programs have? As Stephen D. Winick asked in the conclusion of his piece on “Folklore and/in Music”: “What does this mean?” (Winick 2014, 480).

In an effort to answer this question as a folklorist, professor, and the director of the former NYIT Center for Humanities and Culture at NUPT, now known as the NYIT–NUPT Campus Commons, the two former Student Associate Directors Li Jinko and Xu Jiayi and I created two surveys to be completed by 22 other former student assistants who worked in the Center during the years under consideration. We sent the surveys via email to the students, many of whom are now in top graduate school in the US, China, or Europe or working full-time in any of these locations. We also sent a request for NYIT and NUPT administrators and professors who attended any of the folklore programming to review my annual grant reports, as well as Cultures of the American Gulf Coast and Folk Arts of New York State Literature and Folklore course syllabi (which had also been sent to the assistants), in addition to the two surveys before providing any feedback they wanted to share with us. Additionally, we made this request of all of our programming participants. Finally, we asked for feedback from Dr. Jennifer Tarlin, then director of the University of Shanghai for Science and Technology (USST)—University of North Dakota (UND) American Culture Center with regard to our shared folklore programming during these years. We received 21 responses to our inquiries.

Prior to sharing our findings, I would like to provide a bit more of the context in which the Cultures of the American Gulf Coast and Folk Arts of New York State programming occurred and some of my relevant history which brought me to be director of this programming in China. In one of those institutions of higher learning—that is, Institutes of Technology—described by cultural critic University of Pennsylvania English Professor Wendy Steiner as being likely to “become increasingly central to cultural education in the future” due to the fact that interactivity through the internet and
mass media are “the central thrust of contemporary culture” (Wendy Steiner, pers. comm.)—the New York Institute of Technology (NYIT)—and a highly esteemed second tier university in China, the Nanjing University of Posts and Telecommunications (NUPT)—formed the extremely successful joint Overseas Education Program in 2007. Three hundred Chinese students a year, primarily from China’s educational capital Jiangsu Province, where Nanjing is located, enter our program and four years later receive undergraduate degrees from each university, after having spent their fourth year in New York (a three-plus-one program).

In regard to my part of the story, my first experience with an “intimate, authentic encounter with the other,” a Robert Cantwell phrase (1993, 274), through the “gift” (Cantwell 2007, 303) of the sharing of Chinese folklore by my students—as opposed to reading about the academic discipline of Chinese folklore studies for my professor—occurred during the years 1982–84 in Hsin Chu, Taiwan, where I had gone to teach English as a Second Language after having earned my master’s degree in folklore. The re-contextualization of the folklore narration shared with me in the classroom or on the back of a motorcycle driving up a small mountain to a temple in Taiwan during those years, as well as during 1997–98 in Chungli, Taiwan, changed my future. I wrote my University of Pennsylvania dissertation, later published as a book, on Chinese and Chinese American ancestor veneration in the Catholic Church (Butcher 1994; 2010), as a result of these Taiwan years. My year of teaching American folklore and literature at USST—coincidentally—from 1986–87, when I had the opportunity to personally learn how revered Alan Dundes (1934–2005) was among Shanghai folklorists and his Chinese folklore studies counterpart, the honorable Beijing-based Zhong Jingwen (1903–2002), did as well (Butcher 1990, 54; Liu 2014, 192; Kang, Baron, and Wang 2014, 267).

In my case, I came to the folk, and the folk shared with me, for the most part, in a non-traditional setting. In the case of my students and of others at NYIT–NUPT Nanjing, Room 207, for the most part, served as the non-traditional setting where the various folk under consideration came to them, and where the attempted application of Public Folklore Diplomacy “to an ‘audience’ in a new setting in an honest way that accurately conveys its meaning” occurred, to use Richard Kurin’s words pertaining to the Smithsonian Folklife Festival (Kurin 1997, 23).

NYIT Campus Dean, Dr. Monique Taylor lectures on “Changing Foodways in Gentrifying Harlem,” based on her fieldwork, November 13, 2014. Photo taken by a CHC assistant Zhu Ruida, courtesy of the author. “Changing Foodways in Gentrifying Harlem” poster.
thought America was a perfect place and people there might feel superior to others before, but when I got a close look, I found that most Americans are very nice just like everywhere else, and there are also many problems in this country and it is still not perfect” (Yang Zheyu, pers. comm.). Jing Yifei shares, “I love the Ellen McHale [presentation]…in regard to her experience with only remaining dread that the black[s] are dangerous or offensive, a kind of stereotype in most Chinese mind[s]. Actually, they are awesome and talented, creative” (Anonymous, pers. comm.). Another assistant who evaluated the New York State programming described the ACC in general. Jin Yifei writes, “So when compared to other student associations on the campus,

Former CHC Assistant Yin Xin indicates in her narrative response to the survey questions evaluating the effectiveness of Cultures of the American Gulf Coast programming that prior to her experience of these events, she felt that “American culture was a blur picture” while Zhu Ruida maintains that she learned, “American culture is not just all about modern civilization and technology. There are more mysterious parts about…nature and traditions” (Yin Xin, pers. comm.; Zhu Ruida, pers. comm.). My observation over the years has been that Chinese students are typically educated about major historical events in American history, but not geography. Robert Baron concurs in his narrative response to our request for Folk Arts of New York State programming feedback, in which he states that although Chinese students are well informed about American popular culture and “enjoy our fast food, they have a limited understanding of regional variations and traditional cultures in the United States” (Robert Baron, pers. comm.). Both the Cultures of the American Gulf Coast and Folk Arts of New York programming served to rectify this situation for our students and others.

Yin Xin states,

Our [C]enter brings concerts, film events, scholar speeches to people in Nanjing, and let[s] them feel, hear and think about American culture. Besides, discussions after those events among people from different background[s] (Chinese and American students and international professors) deepened their understanding…It was a pleasure for us to enjoy the time. We were relaxed in the music and the stories…it was meaningful in the way that it makes us to think about things behind the events, such as cultural differences…it served as a platform for us to make more friends. (Yin Xin, pers. comm.)

Indeed the formation of friendships in the Center during our presentation of the folklore programming is a repeated mantra throughout the narrative responses. In the process of developing friendships, preconceived notions about the other were either changed or affirmed while positive experiences were shared. Yang Zheyu states, “I thought America was a perfect place and the study of racetrack folklore…fascinating stories behind the scenes attracted us much. This lecture provided us with a chance to take a glimpse of American hardships [in] a certain walk of life, which is exactly what we crave since we’d better know the states [more] roundly” (Jing Yifei, pers. comm.). And Wang Shuai responds, “Since I [have] worked for the ACC [American Culture Center], it…[no longer means just a] wonderful indoor condition, nice western food, dessert and fluent English anymore…[rather, this place gives]…me a sense of belonging[,] our members[,] are a team…” (Wang Shuai, pers. comm.). An anonymous assistant has learned, “…Each person should be respected. The brilliant concert performed by The Campbell Brothers impressed me the most which eliminate[d] the ACC is undoubtedly more efficient and attractive and meaningful. Being efficient may be an important element in American culture because it sounds so ‘American,’” which I barely experienced before” (Jing Yifei, pers. comm.). Yin Xin shares that she was surprised to learn that listening to the “church music” of The Campbell Brothers could have meaning to her life as an atheist. She states, “I was a little doubtful…before I went to [a] religious concert. But when I was there, I enjoyed it and found resonance” (Yin Xin, pers. comm.).

Both Yang Shuyuan and Jing Yifei comment on the meaningfulness of spending time with the Klezmatics, especially on their tour of Xuan Wu Lake, the Nanjing Wall, and Jiming Temple. Shuyuan remembers the band “intently listening and observing...
the Buddhist[s] chanting in Jiming Temple.” He adds, “Since I guided several groups of people around the archaic part of the city, I [found] these pros, unexceptionally, marveled at how…Nanjing and China differ from their original understandings” (Yang Shuyuan, pers. comm.). These words echo those of Ellen McHale who also finds she had misconceptions of China prior her visit (Ellen McHale, pers. comm.). Yifei comments on how he heard the Klezmatics sing during the tour: “They are kind and easy going, and they love much from their deep heart.” He continues, “It was magical to witness their daily life and talks before they gave a show and shone. Also, they are professional in that they composed and practiced their songs again and again when walking and chatting” (Jing Yifei, pers. comm.).

Comparatively, “love” and “magic” are two words used by folklorist Robert Cantwell to describe the highest points of communication through folklore (Cantwell 2007, 303; 1994, 180), while another, Debora Kodish, maintains, “Folklore is best -professional in that they composed and practiced their songs again and again when walking and chatting” (Jing Yifei, pers. comm.).

The students and other audience members were the most joyful—exuberant, really—during events in which they had opportunities to participate in folk music traditions as they were being introduced, such as the playing of their erhu, pipa, hulusi, and guzheng with the Cajuns, or their violins with the Klezmatics, or dancing with or before the performers—the two-step in the case of the Cajuns and traditional wedding dances with the Klezmatics. In addition, perceiving parallels between the American and Chinese traditions for the first time were found to be illuminative experiences: an NYIT professor (Butcher 1989, 1) sharing that she had collected the Chinese folksong “Liange Lao-hu” or “Two Little Tigers” in Philadelphia prompted Yang Shuyuan to exclaim, “I recall how amazed Professor… [said she] was when she knew the nursery rhyme ‘Frère Jacques’ [had] a Chinese counterpart…” (Yang Shuyuan, pers. comm.).

Other enriching comparisons were made as well: Cajun musician Joel Savoy informed the audience that the “ancestor” of the fiddle/violin was originally from China (Butcher and Mitchell 2014, 12); the Klezmatics’ Frank Young mentioned that the Buddhist chant the group heard at the Jiming Temple is analogous to the repetition of sounds found in klezmer music (Butcher and Mitchell 2015, 9). NYIT Professor Sumiao Li, who earned her PhD in the US, but grew up in China, shares her experience along these lines: “…I remember asking the musicians if those often repeated sounds had special meanings, and after being told they were just vocals, I remember feeling amazed how people from very different corners of the world would use similar sounds to voice feelings, feelings that could never be fully captured by words maybe, feelings that were probably more similar than different, if we did not try to use complicated ideologies to differentiate and thus hierarchize you and me, us and them, citizens and foreigners…” (Sumiao Li, pers. comm.).

In response to Stephen D. Winick’s (2014, 480) question, “What does this mean?” I offer the following conclusions: transcending difference to the extent to which all in the room become one through the sheer joy of the experience of the traditional or tradition-based music is perhaps the highest, most meaningful point of magic realized through the folklore programming during these years 2013–15. The uplifting transformative “dialogic” and “emergent” experiences of all present—which made those moments possible with the PowerPoint presentations followed by Q&A, exchanges with and without dancing, where who is the guest and who is the audience becomes “a blur picture”—only in a good sense—could only help prepare our students for their fourth year at NYIT New York and for graduate schools they now attend in the US—the University of Pennsylvania, University of Southern California, Dartmouth, Massachusetts College for Art & Design—as well as in Europe and elsewhere (Bowman 2006, 67; Baron, 2016a, 4; Baron 2016b, 14; Yin Xin, pers. comm.); and for their first full-time jobs, as well as provide preparation for “better and deeper thinking in [a] global cultural system” (Sun Rui, pers. comm.).

The evidence provided by the responses to our surveys, and by my observations, il-
“American Routes” Nick Spitzer records jam session of Jesse Lége, Joel Savoy, and the Cajun Country Revival with Chinese students playing the *erhu*, *pipa*, *hulusi* and *guzheng*, which inspired Dr. Spitzer to exclaim, “That’s the best jam we’ve had since we’ve been in China!” CHC, April 11, 2015.

Illustrate that the CHC, in general during these years, and the folklore programming, in particular, provided a platform where students and others could gain insight into a variety of American worldviews by learning about Louisiana, Florida, and New York regional variations and traditional culture. This place and the programming here were also found to empower these individuals and others to form international friendships and strengthen those at home, perhaps by participating in newly introduced American folk music traditions and/or by perceiving parallels between American and Chinese vernacular culture for the first time. At least two students have chosen to include folklore as part of the focus of their future careers: Communication Arts graduate Chen Tianchen plans to “promote communication among different cultures” while Zhu Ruida, our devoted poster-maker, hopes to use “media to bring culture and folklore of each place to the world” (Chen Tianchen and Zhu Ruida, pers. comm.).

For what more can we as folklorists ask? Alan Dundes, though an armchair scholar himself and a self-proclaimed “missionary of folklore studies”—a phrase he shared with me about himself shortly before his passing—would likely be overjoyed to learn of the ability of an American Culture Center’s Public Folklore Diplomacy Programming in Nanjing, China, to ignite and inspire students and others to carry his torch, a torch which can only serve to enhance international understanding and world peace, as folklore converts making friends, creating an “authentic future,” writing their unfinished stories (Baron and Spitzer 2007, xiii).

**References**


ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This article is dedicated to Dr. Edward Guiliano, NYIT President and CEO, who was principal investigator for the initial grant awarded to NYIT to form the NYIT Center for Humanities and Culture at NUPT by the US Embassy Beijing/US. Department of State in 2011. NYIT Dr. Allison Andors, Assistant Provost, Research Director, Sponsored Programs and Research and Carlton Mitchell, Director, Grants also deserve recognition for their part in the writing of grants and final reports, respectively. CHC Student Associate Director Huang Wei (2015–16) has earned special thanks for his invaluable and numerous contributions to the folklore programming during 2013–15 as well as for his written feedback, as do former CHC assistants Niu Yicong, Yang Yue Yue, and Wang Shuai; NUPT Dean of Foreign Languages, Dr. Wang Yukuo, and “Woody Sez” deviser and performer David Luxkins, for the latter. Thank you to all CHC student assistants, past and present—beginning with Yu Hao—without whom such programming would not be possible. Gratitude is also extended to UST–UND American Culture Center then director Dr. Jennifer Tarlin for sharing her US Department of State grant-funded programming with us: “Woody Sez: the Life & Music of Woody Guthrie,” devised by David M. Luxken with Nick Corley and Darcie Deaville, Helen Jean Russell and Andy Tierstein, directed by Nick Corley; as well as MIT faculty member and furniture maker Christopher Dewart’s “From Shaker to Ikea” PowerPoint presentation. Finally, the support of NYIT Nanjing Campus Dean, Dr. Monique Taylor; and Associate Campus Dean, Professor Keh Kwek is, as always, greatly appreciated.

A version of this paper was presented at the 2016 American Folklore Society/International Society for Folk Narrative Research (AFS/ISFNR) Joint Annual Meeting in Miami, October 19–22, the theme of which was “Unfinished Stories: Folklore and Folk Narrative at the Gateway to the Future.”

American Ancestor Veneration in the Catholic Church, 635 AD to the Present. Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press.


Beverly J. Butcher, PhD, is a multicultural interdisciplinary scholar (BA, English; MA, Folklore, UC Berkeley; PhD, University of Pennsylvania, Folklore and Folklore) and former NYSCA Schuykill County Arts Council folklorist (1999–2003). She is the author of Chinese and Chinese American Ancestor Veneration in the Catholic Church, 635 A.D. to the Present (Edwin Mellen Press, 2010), as well as of a number of folklore-related articles, mainly with a focus on the Chinese diaspora and Pacific Islander Americans. Beverly serves as Editorial Board Member for CHINESE AMERICA: History & Perspectives, THE JOURNAL OF THE CHINESE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF AMERICA. She is Associate Professor of English, English Department Chair, and Director of the NYIT-NUPT Campus Commons (the former NYIT Center for Humanities and Culture at NUPT), Nanjing.
Good Read

Charlie Whistler’s Omnium Gatherum: Campfire Stories and Adirondack Adventures

The best stories are often passed down through the generations. Joy becomes a memory, memories become tales, and tales become legend. Family photo albums become time machines, allowing us to see into the lives of our ancestors, providing brief glimpses into the lives they lived. Charlie Whistler’s Omnium Gatherum is a spectacular look at the fictional lives of the Whistler family, who have spent their leisure time in the Adirondacks for the past 150 years.

Presented as a faux scrapbook, discovered by young Charlie Whistler at his family’s camp, this is an extremely attractive hardbound journal. The interior is lavishly illustrated with photographs, paintings, sketches, and loose-leaf notes that have been collected by Charlie’s family. Every single page has a story to tell, and no two pages are alike.

Among the collected ephemera of Omnium Gatherum are recipes for flapjacks, a terminology chart for baseball fans, postcards, and newspaper clippings. The steady progress of time is strongly felt while flipping through, as a young boy in the 1960s slips in a newspaper article that predicts 3D televisions, moving sidewalks, and video telephone calls. Earlier in the book, a young Whistler includes a letter from his father, telling him that their family friend Teddy has received an urgent telegram informing him that the President was critically ill, and Teddy was quickly needed back in Washington, DC.

Suitable for nearly every age, Charlie Whistler’s Omnium Gatherum is a fantastic idea for the quickly approaching holidays. The artwork included is incredible, and the practical knowledge makes this a gift that will keep on giving. Family members of all kinds will enjoy taking in this beautiful book, and it is sure to be looked over by every friend that spies it on your coffee table.

—Chris Linendoll
Northshire Bookstore, Saratoga Springs, NY
Follow us on Twitter @TogaNorthshire

January 2017
Programming with the New York Folklore Society
The New York Folklore Society is extending its reach! Please look at our January schedule as we may have a program in your region.

Jan. 14, 2017, 2–4 p.m., Mabee Farm Historic Site, Rotterdam Junction, NY
Story Sharing. In Harm’s Way: Responses to Hurricane Irene
In collaboration with the Mabee Farm/Schenectady County Historical Society. The recording of personal experience stories by the NYFS is part of a two-year documentation project that will culminate in an exhibit and a series of public presentations beginning in the fall 2017. Each session will provide a brief introduction to the project, followed by one-on-one or small group interviews conducted by trained interviewers from the NYFS. Interviews will be scheduled in ½ hour blocks of time. Refreshments will be served.

Jan. 21, 2017, 2–5 p.m., The History Center of Tompkins County, Ithaca, NY (details TBA)
Textile Arts Program, a program of the NYSCA Upstate Folklife Survey and Program Development – A Partnership with the New York Folklore Society.
Ithaca area textile artists, representing a variety of textile traditions, will present their work. Project folklorist, Hannah Davis, will also speak about her survey of Tompkins County folk and traditional arts.

Jan. 22, 2017, 2–5 p.m., Auburn Public Theater, Auburn, NY (details TBA)
Folk and Traditional Arts Narrative Stage, a program of the NYSCA Upstate Folklife Survey and Program Development – A Partnership with the New York Folklore Society.
Upstate Regional Folklorist Hannah Davis presents her work in Cayuga, Wayne, Yates, Seneca, and Ontario Counties, documenting the region’s folk and traditional arts.

Jan. 25, 2017, 7–9 p.m. Mabee Farm Historic Site, Rotterdam Junction, NY
Story Sharing. In Harm’s Way: Responses to Hurricane Irene
See description above for Jan. 14 event.

Jan. 28, 2017, 1–4 p.m., Jamestown Community College (details TBA)
A Dance Showcase, a program of the NYSCA Upstate Folklife Survey and Program Development – A Partnership with the New York Folklore Society.
Project folklorist, Hannah Davis, presents a showcase of participatory dance traditions drawn from Allegany, Cattaraugus, and Chautauqua Counties. Davis will also speak about her survey of folk and traditional arts in this region.
The Historical Prospective

In the 16th century, John Gerard, a botanist and herbalist, and author of the 1,484-paged *Herball*, compared the snowdrop and snowflake. He found they were so similar he named them early and late blooming Bulbous Violet. In 1465, he listed the plant as *Leucis i viola alba*, or the white violet. At first, Gerard said snowdrops had no medicinal value, but later they were listed as an emmenogogue used to regulate menstruation and more (Larkin 2009; “Snowdrops” 2011). In the 1950s, snowdrops were used to...

The Scientific Perspective

An article in Planta Medica 2009, reported researchers in Barcelona found 10 alkaloids in snowdrops Galanthus nivalis, and another seven in in Galanthus elwesi. Of the 17, three were new to science. The haemannitine-type alkaloids can cause highly selective apoptosis (programed cell death, involved in the control of development and growth). In Galanthus elwesi, licorice derivatives have anti-malarial properties and can inhibit the enzyme acetyleholinesterase, which effects the neurotransmitter acetyleholine. Galantamine is approved for treating mild to moderate cases of Alzheimer’s disease and treating traumatic injuries. In Galanthus nivalis, agglutinin lectin, is said to help injuries and the nervous system. Lectin is an antibacterial and antiviral. It inhibits protein synthesis. Research is being done to determine its efficacy in fighting retroviruses like HIV and AIDS. (“Three New Alkaloids” 2010).

Sam Malone, who suffers from Lyme disease, blogs about his success in combating Lyme disease by making and taking a tincture made from snowdrops. At first he used the whole plant, now he uses the leaves and flowers which have less lectin. (Malone 2013).

The Mayo Clinic offers extensive information on products containing galantamine, US brand name Razadyne, Razadyne ER, Razadyne IR, with warnings of interactions with other medications. (Mayo Clinic 2016). Is that because snowdrops remedies and Razadyne actions are similar?

The demand for snowdrops has caused “galanthrophiles,” snowdrop mania. The costs to purchase them have spiraled upward. Snowdrops are so sought out that picking them in Spain is prohibited. (Malone 2013). Perhaps we should plant more snowdrops or share the snowdrops we have?

Myths

Legend says when Adam and Eve were thrown out of the Garden of Eden, it was winter and snowing. Eve was cold and cried for the warmth of Paradise. God took pity on her and transformed some of the snowflakes into snowdrops. The plant was then named the Flower of Hope. The Druids named the snowdrop to honor the goddess Bridget, the goddess of poetry, inspiration, and healing. In a German legend, snow lacked color, so God asked the plants and animals for some of their color. The animal’s response was, “No.” Only the snowdrop was willing to share her color—white (Larkin 2009; “Snowdrops” 2011).

The Folklore

In the Caucasus mountains in Southern Russia, old people eat the bulb to strengthen the brain and to feel younger. In Bulgaria, people rub it on their foreheads to ease pain. The snowdrop uses are said to range from an insecticide, to a remedy for memory problems. (Larkin 2009; “Snowdrop” 2011).

From the scientific perspective, to folklore, indications point to snowdrops playing an important role in health. Personally, I embrace the natural approach to medicine, but I also strive to be an informed consumer. Always consult a qualified expert before taking any remedy, or confer with your physician. This material is not intended as medical advice.

At this moment, April 8 in the Northeast, bitter cold weather lingers, the skies are gray, and the tree branches are bare. The snow flurries were so dense this morning that my garden view was nearly obliterated. But I’ve seen my snowdrops, the Flowers of Hope, and the harbinger of spring. How grand.

References


When I was very young, my father showed me how to look under a wild ginger leaf for the little cinnamon colored cup. I was delighted. I have had a passion for plants since then, especially medicinal plants. I lead my first woodland walk when I was 13. After nursing school, a degree in Health Psychology from Empire State Collage, and becoming a Certified Health Care Practitioner, I studied many different healing modalities and natural remedies such as homeopathic remedies, flower essences, and essential oils. I became a master gardener in 2000, and then took a two-year apprenticeship in Medicinal Herbs. I developed teaching gardens at The Foundation of Light in Ithaca, New York, and led garden walks for children such as “Taste, Touch and Smell,” and for adults as well. Truly, plants are our teachers. My front dooryard garden is full of medicinal plants. Tea from Lemon balm, Melissa officinalis for a relaxing tea, and much more. Discovering the properties of the little Snowdrops was a treat. Studying the folklore, the uses, and the history, is a joy.

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