

2012 Preserving Our Heritage Awards – Bethesda MD

Each year at its annual conference, the NFO honors those who have made significant and lasting contributions to the field of folk arts.

In 2001 The National Folk Organization inaugurated the 'Preserving Our Heritage Award' and is a result of the foresight of DeWayne Young and Mary Bee Jensen. For the last eleven years this award has been presented to honor individuals for their commitment, passion, and energy for preserving, researching, promoting and/or teaching folk arts.

Heritage has come to mean many things to many people. Some synonyms include: inheritance, legacy, patrimony, bequest, heirdom, or succession by right of blood.

One way to think about heritage is that it can be something such as a way of life or traditional culture that passes or continues from one generation to the next in a familial and/or social group.

An example is how we celebrate events within our own families such as birthdays. Do we follow how our individual families celebrated them? Are these traditions modified when blended with spouses and partners? How?

This year, like many of the preceding years, the honorees have shown life-long passion working for our common goals in a variety of ways to promote and preserve folk heritage.

A couple of similarities between our honorees: They both began folk dancing in college. They were both undergraduates at that time.

Sanna Longden, from Evanston, Illinois, has been a member of the NFO for many years, serving as a Board member, NFO News editor and founder of Pourparler. Sanna is a world dance teacher and multicultural movement educator who teaches in schools and at educator conferences locally, nationally, and internationally. Her lessons illustrate how dance and movement activities can encourage community, civility, and cooperative teamwork, as well as creativity, concentration, cultures, and curriculum connections.



A well-known clinician at American Orff-Schulwerk Organization (AOSA), American Organization of Kodaly Educators (OAKE), Music Educators National Conference (MENC), and other music organization events, Sanna teaches in world music seminars and university courses, and is a Silver Burdett/Pearson author and workshop leader. She has presented at many physical education conferences and workshops, as well as at in-service events for K-12 classroom teachers and specialists, and has spent time in elementary schools around the U.S. as a resident artist.

Sanna is coauthor of the book *Cultures & Styling in Folk Dance* written with Phyllis S. Weikart (HighScope Press, 1998), as well as *Making Music with Movement & Dance* written with Wendy

Taucher (Pearson Education, 2006). She has produced seven instructional DVDs with accompanying CDs, featuring favorite folk dances of kids and teachers.

Reflections from Sanna's daughter, Jessica Lawless:

I remember walking through the Evanston Public Library in what was likely the late 1970's and someone stopping to ask Sanna "What have the Romanian's done?" because she was wearing a shirt that read, "Help stamp out Romanian Dances."

I also probably learned something I shouldn't have - a bit too young - because her other favorite shirt at the time was "Dick Crum is not a social disease."

I had the "pleasure" of being able to sneak cigarettes as a teenager when the Bulgarian dancers who came to stay with us didn't have the same provincial rules about children smoking as we do in the US. Fortunately I now have the same disdain for smoking that Sanna does, but I do have fond memories of feeling very cool as I shared my Marlboro Reds with the Bulgarians on our back porch in a freezing Chicago winter. And because of that, I knew where Bulgaria was and what Bulgarian women's choirs sounded like long before my friends in Seattle in the 90s thought they were edgy for listening to the one choir that became popular at that time.

One of my favorite images of all times is my brother Mick and I playing the Ramones for Sanna and trying to get her to stop creating a dance pattern to punk rock and *just join* us in slam dancing across the living room. While I still prefer free form dancing, I know that my love for the gypsy punk band, Gogol Bordello includes a sense of familiarity rather than newness, that for me it is not the newness most folks are excited by that has made them such a popular band in the last few years.

I moved to Northern New Mexico a couple years ago and my partner and I stumbled across Las Posadas, a ritual that happens on December 12th in the Santa Fe Plaza. My mother was the one who filled me in on the history and origins of this event.

She may have been gone every Monday night of my childhood bringing the good people of the Chicago area world dance, but she also managed to pass on the significance of art and culture to her stubborn, rebellious daughter, who went on to earn an MA in Cultural Studies as well as an MFA in studio art.

Thank you for honoring her lifetime of important work.

Warmly,

Jessica Lawless

Larry Weiner, from Silver Spring, Maryland, is one of the foremost experts in traditional dance, music, and customs of the Balkan Peninsula. Both a superb teacher and excellent dancer, he has a knack of making seemingly complex movements, dances and rhythms accessible and fun for dancers of all levels of experience.

Larry has been involved with Balkan traditional music and dance since the early 1960s. Principally a dance researcher, he has made numerous trips to the former Yugoslavia, trips to the Resia Valley on the border of Italy and Slovenia, Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, Hungary and Norway to study traditional dance in its native setting and to record and film folk music and dance as living social traditions.



Larry teaches Balkan dance workshops throughout North America with his wife and teaching partner, Margaret Loomis. He has directed various Balkan music and dance camps since the early 1970s. In addition to his strong background in traditional dance, Larry plays *tüpan* (Bulgarian big drum) and *tarabuka* (small hand drum) and currently serves as the manager for Lyuti Chushki, a band that plays "spicy traditional Bulgarian music." Larry is also a member of the band that will play for us this evening.

He is currently the director of the annual Bulgarian Folk Music & Dance Seminar, now in its eighth year, based in Plovdiv, Bulgaria. Larry has a large personal collection of Balkan Music recordings and a keen interest in preserving these for posterity. He continues in his search for more traditional music recordings from different time periods and is making the music available to the Academy of Music in Plovdiv, Bulgaria.

Email to Larry that I am pleased to say I also received . . .

Larry: Congratulations on this wonderful well deserved award and honor. You have been an inspiration to hundreds/thousands of Americans, but also to hundreds/thousands of Bulgarian Americans. You are certainly an inspiration for me. You have shown me the unlimited love and passion for the Bulgarian folk music and dances . . . oh, and gardening too.

You have inspired me to do community service. You have been partnering with all of the Bulgarian American organizations on the East Coasts and including the Bulgarian Community Center. And, yes, you have the largest collection of Bulgarian folklore music in the US. I hope that one day we will make a museum out of it to celebrate your life-long dedicated love to the Bulgarian/Balkan beats.

Thanks,

Dr. Assen Assenov
Assistant Director
Center for Teaching, Research and Learning and School of International Service
American University

Note: Our thanks to NFO member Dick Oakes and his Phantom Ranch website for information on both artists