

NFO NEWS

THE NATIONAL
FOLK
ORGANIZATION
OF THE
UNITED STATES
OF AMERICA

15221 N. CR 400E
Eaton, IN 47338

nfo-usa.org

President
Greg Lund

Vice President
Jeanette Geslison

Treasurer
Taunya Lund

Secretary
Rob McCollum

Immediate Past President
Cricket Raybern

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Elected
Bobi Ashley
Linda Bernfeld
Jacqui Horwitz
Eileen Hug
Amy Jex
Barbara Merson
Melissa Miller
Catherine Rudin
Andy Taylor

Founders
Vyts Beliajus (deceased)
George Frandsen
Mary Bee Jensen (deceased)
L. DeWayne Young (deceased)

NFO NEWS
Editor
Kathy Bruni

Assistant Editors
Sanna Longden
Loui Tucker

Production
Kathy Bruni

WEBSITE MANAGER
Dale Adamson

NATIONAL

Folk

ORGANIZATION



Dec
2025

NFO ANNUAL CONFERENCE GATHERS PEOPLE TO CELEBRATE TRADITIONAL CULTURAL ARTS

Jeanette Geslison, Provo, Utah

Join the Annual National Folk Organization Conference in Durham, North Carolina, March 5–8, 2026

Registration opens November 28, 2025; the registration links will be available on our website: nfo-usa.com/annual-nfo-conference-2026/. Full-time or part-time registration is offered.

Note that this year's conference will take place Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. The welcome reception will take place Thursday evening, March 5, at 7:30 p.m., followed by a welcome dance party. The post-conference debrief will wrap up the conference Monday morning, March 9.

WHERE: Old Murphey School, Shared Visions Retreat Center, 3717 Murphy School Road, Durham, NC 27705

LODGING: Hilton Durham near Duke University, 3800 Hillsborough Road, Durham, NC 27705. The conference group rate is available now by using the link on our website.

Presenters:

- Phil Jamison (Appalachian Dance Traditions)
- Andrew Walker (Appalachian Fiddling and Music Traditions)
- Erik Bendix (International Dancing)
- Sheila Kay Adams (Storytelling)
- Ben Owen III (Pottery)
- Triangle Shape Note Singers (Singing)
- Apple Chill Cloggers (Dancing)
- Debby Szajnberg (NFO Grant Report: Global Rhythm Games)

More detailed session information, bios, and the conference schedule are available on our website. We hope you will join us in Durham for three days of cultural activities, events, and friends including:

- Presentations
- Dance instruction
- Music workshops
- Evening dance parties
- Workshops
- Performances
- Live music
- Singing
- Networking opportunities
- Awards banquet
- Annual business meeting



PRESIDENT'S CORNER

NFO President Greg Lund, Eaton, Indiana



Recently, I was asked to provide a brief introduction of the NFO on a F.O.L.K. Chat for those who may not know why the organization got started, and how the NFO has evolved. I think it would probably involve the *why*. Why do I dance? Why do you dance? And why folk dance?

I would guess that most of us did not start out planning to become folk dancers. For me, dancing was not

something that guys did growing up. After all, I was an athlete. Though I was too small to play basketball or football, I could wrestle, and I could swim (size doesn't really matter there), so that's what I did. And I was pretty good at academic things, like physics and mathematics, so I got a degree in mathematics. Hmm...do you see dancing in there anywhere? Not a chance.

But during my sophomore year, I discovered that I could take a folk dance class and have it count as a P.E. credit. After all, how difficult could that be? A week or so into the semester a young lady, whom I would later learn was a member of the BYU International Folk Dance Ensemble, approached me and suggested that I audition for the group, so I did. I learned dances from Germany, Italy, Hungary, Ukraine, Romania, and others. And somehow, they spoke to me.

Thus was born a love of rhythms and music, of dance and costumes, customs and community, and that which was and that which is yet hoped for. These are things that enrich our lives, allowing us to look back at our past and forward to our future. And even though we may have some differences, I dare say we probably have far more things that bind us together than things that separate us. In my own family, on my father's side, I was a child of the only American-born son of Norwegian immigrants (there were seven other siblings, born in Norway). And from my mother, I am the eighth great-grandchild of immigrants

who arrived on the Mayflower in 1620. Nearly 300 years of separation, yet their dreams and aspirations were similar.

I dare say that your story is likely not that dissimilar. Dance, especially folk dance, draws people of varied backgrounds together, and I think that's a good thing.

If you have a unique story about your journey into the world of folk dance, why don't you send me a brief note—emphasis on *brief*—to nfopresident@gmail.com.

IN MEMORIAM: MARJOLEIN STRIKWERDA MCLACHLIN

Marjolein McLachlin passed away in February 2024, on the morning of her 69th birthday.



Born in Amsterdam, she made her home in the U.S. for forty years. Marjolein will be remembered for her big heart and warm smile; she was relentlessly empathetic and selfless, caring about others even during some of her most difficult days. An animal lover, environmentalist, and long-time vegetarian, she was conscientious, thoughtful, and deeply curious about the world.

She taught elementary school in Amsterdam, then in Evanston, Illinois, and finally for over fifteen years at Pear Tree Point School in Darien, Connecticut. She brought creativity and care to her classes.

Marjolein treasured nothing more than being with her family and friends. A lifelong dancer, she savored international folk dancing trips and continued to attend weekly folk dancing gatherings for as long as she was able.

Full obituary at legacy.com/us/obituariesdarienimes/name/marjolein-mclachlin-obituary?id=57654054.

IN THIS ISSUE

| | |
|--|-----|
| NFO Annual Conference 2025 | 1 |
| President's Corner..... | 2 |
| In Memoriam: Marjolein Strikwerda McLachlin..... | 2 |
| NFO Ad Hoc Committee on Communications Expenses | 4 |
| Help Spread the Word: NFO Grants Are Available..... | 4 |
| Renowned Potter Ben Owen III at NFO Convergence | 4–5 |
| Mexican Carousel Update..... | 5 |
| Salt Spring Island Folk Dance Festival..... | 6–7 |
| Milwaukee Scottish Country Dancers Halloween Ball..... | 8 |

| | |
|---|-------|
| NFO Board Nominations | 8 |
| Lyrids Folk Dance Festival | 8 |
| Pourparler 2025..... | 9 |
| My Experiences at the CIOFF Romanian Festival | 10 |
| Completion of the Grace McMillan Project..... | 12 |
| Steve's Thoughts on Folk Dance Authenticity | 12–13 |
| Fa So La: Raleigh's Shape Note Community | 13–14 |
| In Memoriam: Karl Finger..... | 15 |
| Dance Events Network | 15 |
| Advertising Rates..... | 15 |
| Membership Application | 16 |



Jim Gold International Folk Tours 2026

Travel, adventure, fun, folk dance, culture

INDIA: Jan 24-Feb. 7, Nov. 3-18, 2026

Delhi, Udaipur, Pushkar, Jodhpur, Jaipur, Agra, Varnasi, Pushkar

Middle East

EGYPT: Feb 19-March 1. 2026

Cairo, Nile River cruise, Luxor, Aswan

ISRAEL: March 1-12

Led by Lee Friedman and guided by Joe Freedman: Jerusalem, Masada, Tel Aviv, Galilee, Haifa, Safed, Golan Heights.



Eastern Europe-The Balkans

ALBANIA, GREECE, MACEDONIA and KOSOVO ext: May 20-June 1-3

Led by Lee Otterholt, guided by Mili Mullanji: Tirana, Durres, Vlora Folk Festival, Kruja, Gjirokaster, Saranda, Berat, Lake Prespa, Ochrid

CROATIA: July 6-20

Led by Lee Otterholt Dubrovnik Folk Festival, Island of Korçula, Island of Hvar, Split, Zadar, Zagreb Folk Festival

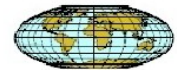
BALKAN SPLENDOR: 5-COUNTRIES July 26-August 11

Led by Ventsi Milev: Bulgaria, Macedonia, Greece, Albania, Serbia,

GREECE and the GREEK ISLANDS: Oct 3-16

Led by Lee Otterholt, Maroula Konti, guide: Athens, Nauplia, Sparta, Olympia, Delphi, Meteora, Mycenae, and Epidaurus.

Greek Island Cruise: Mykonos, Crete, Rhodes, Patmos, Kusadasi



Travel
broadens
one!

Western Europe

SCANDINAVIA: June 9-23

Led by Lee Otterholt: Oslo, Gothenburg, Helsingborg (Elsinore), Copenhagen.

IRELAND: Aug 1-13

Led by Lee Friedman and guided by Kay Cleary: Galway, Connemara, Aran islands, Kerry, Cork, Blarney, Dublin.

SPAIN: Sept 11-24

Malaga, Ronda, Cadiz, Seville, Cordoba, Granada



South America

PERU-Nazca and Peruvian Amazon ext: May 20-29.

Lima, Cusco, Machu Picchu, Puno, Sacred Valley, Lake Titicaca, Peruvian Amazon, Nazca

BRAZIL: Nov 2-13

Led by Lee Otterholt Rio de Janeiro, Salvador, Iguassu Falls

ROMANIA, ARGENTINA, W. CANADA, E. CANADA

See website for details



Jim Gold International Youtube Channel (Videos of folk dancing and folk tours)

TOUR REGISTRATION: Reserve my place! \$200 per person deposit..

Register on line at: jimgold.com Jim Gold International, Inc.

497 Cumberland Avenue, Teaneck, NJ 07666 U.S.A.

(201) 836-0362 Email: jimgold@jimgold.com

NFO AD HOC COMMITTEE ON COMMUNICATIONS EXPENSES

Pat Henderson, Orlando, Florida

The 2024–25 NFO Board Finance Committee, whose members include Jacqui Horwitz, Barbara Merson, Taunya Lund, and me, as Chair, saw the potential of allocating more funds to further our mission by rethinking how the NFO delivers communications to members.

We reviewed the 2025 budget and found that more than \$16,000 was spent for producing and mailing the *NFO News*, Membership Directory, and membership renewal reminders. We proposed to the NFO Board the formation of an ad hoc committee on communications expenses. In April, at our annual meeting, the membership voted to establish this ad hoc committee. The members are Jacqui Horwitz, Barbara Merson, Taunya Lund, Kathy Bruni, and me, as Chair. Greg Lund also attends, as the NFO President.

The committee was charged with the mission to investigate the cost of printing and postage and to recommend ways to save money that could be used for projects critical to the NFO's core mission.

We first met in June and agreed to survey the membership to see how they value NFO communications and the NFO in general. Barbara Merson drafted a survey and shared it with the committee. After several revisions, it was sent to the membership. The results of the survey showed that an overwhelming majority of respondents value our communications (Membership Directory, quarterly *NFO News*, and renewal reminders), but would be willing to switch to electronic communications as an option. (We would continue to mail documents to members who indicate that preference.) The committee is meeting again in November to finalize our recommendations before the next NFO Board meeting. In every *NFO News* issue, you are asked to go digital and receive your newsletter online by requesting it at: natlfolkorgeditor@gmail.com.

HELP SPREAD THE WORD: NFO GRANTS ARE AVAILABLE

Barbara Merson, North Yarmouth, Maine

Do you know someone who is excited to be going to a folk-related event for the first time? Or maybe someone who is starting a project to research folk-related activities? If financial need is an issue, the NFO can help through its scholarship program.

The NFO offers two types of scholarships:

- Discovery Grants of up to \$500 cover travel expenses (excluding food and lodging) for such events as camps, festivals, and conferences.

- Folk Arts Grants of up to \$2,000 help with project development expenses for projects that support the vision, mission, and values of NFO.

We want to reach out to as many potential grantees as possible. We are particularly looking for people who have financial need, who are starting their involvement with folk activities, and who have not previously received grants from the NFO. We are also looking for geographic diversity. We do not fund ongoing events. If you or someone you know qualifies, you can find more information about our grants on the NFO website, www.nfo-usa.org. The grants committee hopes to hear from you soon!

RENOWNED POTTER BEN OWEN III AT NFO CONFERENCE



Ben Owen III is a renowned American potter celebrated for continuing a multigenerational legacy of craftsmanship.

Born into a family deeply rooted in the traditions of Seagrove, North Carolina, Ben grew up immersed in the world of clay. His grandfather, Ben Owen Sr., was a prominent figure in the American pottery revival of the twentieth century, and his influence shaped Ben's early exposure to the art form. Observing

the family studio and community artisans, Ben developed an appreciation for both technique and tradition.

Ben's work is known for blending classic forms with contemporary aesthetics. He often draws inspiration from Asian pottery traditions, particularly Chinese and Japanese forms, incorporating flowing lines and balanced silhouettes into his pieces. His glazes range from rich earth tones to vibrant experimental finishes, reflecting both a respect for heritage and an eagerness to innovate. This combination has positioned him as a bridge between historic Southern pottery and modern ceramic art.

After studying ceramics formally, Ben honed his skills through apprenticeships and hands-on experimentation in his family studio. His artistic journey evolved with a focus on functional wares as well as exhibition pieces, showcasing versatility in both utility and design. Collectors and museums have recognized his work, and his pottery is frequently displayed in galleries across the United States.

Ben also plays a vital role in preserving and promoting the Seagrove pottery tradition. He engages with the community

through workshops, demonstrations, and mentorship, sharing his expertise with aspiring potters. His approach emphasizes the importance of understanding the past while embracing creative exploration.



Through his dedication to craft, Ben Owen III continues to shape the legacy of American ceramics. His pieces, often signed and dated, embody the timeless dialogue between tradition and innovation, securing his place as one of the most respected contemporary potters in the country.

Ben will have select historical and current work on display during his lecture at the 2026 National Folk Organization Conference.

MEXICAN CAROUSEL UPDATE

William Dentzel, Port Townsend, Washington

Earlier this year at the 2025 NFO Convention and dance in Portland, I presented my family’s carousel history and a village carousel project in Jalisco, Mexico. I patiently work on this during village visits, as well as here at home in Port Townsend. The local village group has applied for an official Mexican non-profit status, which is in the bureaucratic pipeline.

With that in hand, the local mayor of the greater western Lake Chapala district, who likes our project very much, will dedicate a permanent site for us to use for the carousel and pavilion. It’s located in the middle of their beautiful malacón (waterfront) park. The park is not complete and there is an excellent space for us; we will also add trees and benches. The village of San Juan Cosala is right there at an easy walking distance.

Along with my 2025 NFO “Preserving Our Heritage” award, I was generously awarded a grant of \$300. I put this toward the center hub construction, the core piece at the heart of the carousel’s hand-crank drive (see photo). The NFO’s support will be noted at the carousel.



Here in Port Townsend, I have carved a set of ¼ scale Mexican pinewood replica animals (photo). I will take



these back to Mexico with me to paint with students, then use them for promotion and display of the project. After they are mounted on stands, they will be presented to the sponsors of the particular animals they represent. For more project info, visit dentzel.com/info/SJCprojecttryptica.html.

Turkey & Armenia May 6th-June 8 in 2026

(tentative dates)

with Ahmet Demirbagh
Tineke and Maurits van Geel



Join Ahmet Demirbagh and Tineke and Maurits van Geel, your passionate tour leaders and specialists in these inspiring dance and culture journeys. The Turkey tour sold out within just 3 days! You can still sign up for the waiting list. The Armenia tour already has a guaranteed departure too. For full details, visit our website: www.tinekevangeel.nl/tours/ Don't miss this unique experience!

SALT SPRING ISLAND FOLK DANCE FESTIVAL

Rosemarie Keough, Salt Spring Island, B.C., Canada

Below is an article by Rosemarie Keough, who originally started the Salt Spring Island Festival and ran it for 10 years before turning it over to Burnaby International Folk Dancers (BIFD). BIFD has run the Lyrids Festival since then, and as 2026 will be our final festival, I asked Rosemarie to write about the origins of the festival. She has contributed a wonderful article, and I hope you all enjoy it.—Kathy Sandstrom

In 2004, on a bucolic island in British Columbia, I founded the Salt Spring Island Folk Dance Festival—a vibrant celebration of ethnic dance, live music, authentic costumes, great cuisine, and supportive community. What began as a southern B.C. gathering very quickly grew into an international event, annually drawing 120 dancers, teachers, and musicians from as far away as New Zealand, Japan, Bulgaria, England, Italy, and across North America, with surprisingly few local dancers from Salt Spring itself. During the week ahead of the festival, we reached out to the younger generation. Our dance instructors taught folk dances at each of our island's schools. Throughout the festival, there was so much joy and laughter, such that the smiles lingered long after the music stopped—for a full decade, 2004 through 2013, on the weekend closest to May Day and the UNESCO International Day of Dance.

We owe a debt of gratitude to Mihai David, the catalyst for my founding of our festival. While my family and I were attending Mainwoods Dance Camp, Mihai generously offered to teach on Salt Spring, should I ever decide to hold an event. A year earlier, I had met John Campbell, leader of Portland, Oregon's Scandinavian dance ensemble, during a performance in Portland's airport. He, too, promised to come if I ever organized a festival. With the full support of my family and the encouragement of Mihai and John, I issued invitations broadly and began myriad preparations for the very first folk dance festival on Salt Spring Island.

Then, just four days before the inaugural event, Rebecca Nielson, John's partner, called with shocking news: John had suffered a heart attack and was in the hospital! Thankfully, he recovered, and we welcomed him in later years. However, at the literal 11th hour, we had to find his replacement, as many registered dancers were expecting Scandinavian instruction. With only 72-hours' notice, Roo Lester and Larry Harding (bless them) flew to Victoria—our nearest airport—caught the ferry to Salt Spring, and delivered a wonderful program, together with Mihai. All three teachers have been dear friends ever since.

One lesson I learned was to always have two teachers on hand. If one canceled at the last minute, the festival could

still go on. I often paired very different dance styles—Armenian with Portuguese, Bulgarian with Cajun, Romanian with Hawaiian—so that for one weekend, participants could spend half their time dancing familiar traditions and the other half exploring something entirely new, perhaps even beyond their comfort zone.

From the very beginning, the festival relied on the full support of my family, given that there was no folk dance club on the island then or ever before. At the outset, we filled every role: organizing, hosting, decorating, menu planning, grocery shopping, cooking, and writing what seemed like a gazillion emails. Our son Glen, from age 11 through his teen years, served as master dishwasher and sous chef, assisting with festival lunches and dinners. The beginning was admittedly a bit rough, but everyone had fun, and we learned a great deal about hosting a festival.

Driven by a dedication to perfection, each year improved upon the last. Before long, several non-dancing friends from Salt Spring pitched in, drawn by the festival's positive energy; and dancers from off-island clubs extended invaluable assistance. In this way, everyone took ownership of the festival. Colorful banners decorated the dance hall from recreational folk dance clubs in Saanich, Sidney, Cowichan, Langley, Quadra Island, Vancouver, Squamish, Burnaby, Surrey, and Gabriola. The energy was incredible: so many dancers that, despite the generous size of Fulford Hall, we often had two circles—one inside the other—dancing on a genuine wooden floor and just beyond, farmland and sheep!

A-level teachers enthusiastically spread the word about their wonderful experiences on Salt Spring, which made it easy to engage top talent. France Bourque-Moreau and Yves Moreau, along with Pat (my husband) and myself, formed a "phantom board" that, amusingly, never actually met, although we chatted on the phone. What was also funny is that they had known me as being bald, having battled an aggressive breast cancer for six years. When I later joined them in Istanbul for Yves's 60th birthday Trakya folk dance tour, at first, they didn't recognize me with hair!

France and Yves introduced us to Sonia Dion and Cristian Florescu, who joined us in 2009. Two years later, Cristian strongly recommended that we consider Roberto Bagnoli, whom he said was "like my brother." What a remarkable combination that turned out to be! During the Trakya tour I invited Iliana Bozhanova and Todor Yankov to be on our staff, not quite realizing that a year's effort would be necessary to plan their cross-Canada tour and to wade through paperwork to obtain work visas from our government. We're very glad they could join us, and not just once, but twice! We so love Andy Taylor, who kindly filled in for Marianne Taylor, her mother, who was suddenly ailing. The YouTube video of Andy teaching us Malhão has been viewed 253 million times! One of my favourite comments pertains to Alexandru David's teaching of Bielolitsa Kruglolitsa. A dancer was overheard to say, "Alexandru made us feel elegant, even when we weren't." Our festival was so much fun that teachers from previous years returned

as participants, not as instructors. Never can we forget Lee Otterholt's energetic, acrobatic Syrtos Samiotis, with leaps, spins, and high kicks supported by Cristian. And what fun to witness the culinary expertise and witty repartee of Željko Jergan and Richard Schmidt in our kitchen at home, post-festival evening. These two men are great chefs! Pat, who was principal videographer for the entire festival series, so enjoyed filling his viewfinder with Tom Bozigian, master showman, whose singing, dancing, and voice filled the hall. All of the teachers were so very special—those mentioned above, and the ever-graceful Hilde Otterholt, and the hilarious Jerry and Jill Duke.

The festival became both a reunion of old friends and a meeting of new ones. One year, an entire dance club from Japan traveled to Canada solely to participate in our festival. Another year, a Romanian performance ensemble from Alberta joined us. Immediately following dinner—allowing the delicious food to settle—a half-hour of performances in full costume showcased ethnic communities from Victoria and Vancouver, whose members traveled to Salt Spring to join us for the evening dinner and party.



*Photo credits, CW from top left:
2012 - Uri Cogan; 2012 - Rosemarie Keough;
2008 - Pat Keough; 2013 - Bruce Sharpe*

In the fall of 2004, Dale Adamson called, inquiring about the video footage she had heard was taken of the spring festival that same year—extensive coverage, filmed by Pat. This marked the beginning of a lifelong friendship and professional collaboration. Dale produced an engaging DVD package for each Salt Spring Island Folk Dance Festival, including instructional videos, evening performances, the festival party, and an accompanying dance notes booklet. These outstanding productions are archived by the UNESCO International Dance Council and by the Society of Folk Dance Historians.

Now, in 2025, Salt Spring boasts an enthusiastic folk dance club that has grown steadily since 2017. Our extensive repertoire goes beyond Balkan dances to styles from many corners of the globe, including a growing number of couple dances. Although I enjoy teaching locally and also at sea on trans-Atlantic cruises, I'm no longer hosting festivals. In fact, I have not since 2013, when I passed the baton to the Burnaby International Folk Dancers, who hosted the spring festival on the mainland the following year.

As the Lyrids Festival prepares to celebrate its 12th and final weekend of dance in April 2026, I can only imagine who might rise to accept the baton next. Whatever the future holds, one thing is certain: The legacy of these festivals, Salt Spring and Lyrids, will continue to inspire smiles, laughter, and connections for years to come.

Salt Spring Island Folk Dance Festival—Teachers by Year (2004–2013)

- 2004: Mihai David (Romanian); Roo Lester & Larry Harding (Scandinavian)
- 2005: Alexandru David (Russian & Romanian); John Campbell & Rebecca Nielsen (Scandinavian)
- 2006: France Bourque-Moreau (International); Yves Moreau (Bulgarian)
- 2007: Lee Otterholt (Greek & Balkan); Hilde Otterholt (Hawaiian); John Campbell (Irish)
- 2008: Andrea Taylor-Blenis (Portuguese & Austrian Yodeling); Tom Bozigian & Sheree King (Armenian)
- 2009: Cristian Florescu & Sonia Dion (Romanian); Hilde Otterholt (Hawaiian)
- 2010: Iliana Bozhanova & Todor Yankov (Bulgarian); Jerry & Jill Duke (Cajun & Appalachian)
- 2011: Cristian Florescu & Sonia Dion (Romanian & Latino); Roberto Bagnoli (Italian)
- 2012: Zeljko Jergan (Croatian); Richard Schmidt & Renata Jarko (Polish)
- 2013: Iliana Bozhanova & Todor Yankov (Bulgarian); Yves Moreau & France Bourque-Moreau (International)

A few links:

Andy Taylor, Malhão: [youtube.com/watch?v=kJBn_DpTz3g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kJBn_DpTz3g)

Alexandru David, Chastushky: [youtube.com/watch?v=BF-L809fxEY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BF-L809fxEY)

Lee Otterholt, Syrtos Samiotis: drive.google.com/file/d/16V1GW4BJB7DbCcCdHEudH6uGS5vzRJ8/view

Salt Spring Island Folk Dance Festival 2012 Montage: [youtube.com/watch?v=b127VL0Sfko](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b127VL0Sfko).

Salt Spring Island Folk Dance Festival 2013 Montage: [youtube.com/watch?v=0yoMlsmBOQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0yoMlsmBOQ)

Dale Adamson's DVD sets of both Salt Spring and Lyrids are available for purchase at: singularproductions.com.

MILWAUKEE SCOTTISH COUNTRY DANCERS' HALLOWEEN COSTUME BALL

Terry Garner, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Many of us dress up for dance opportunities, often in attire relating to folk tradition. How often do we toss tradition out the window and gear up in something totally different—say, a Halloween costume? That's exactly what happened on October 25, when the Milwaukee Scottish Country Dancers hosted their annual Halloween Costume Ball. It was a very festive occasion for all (some even came from as far away as New Brunswick!) with lively music provided by Rare Privilege: Maria Teres and Dave Mullen on fiddle and Amy McFarland on piano. We concluded the day with a yummy potluck dinner with a variety of tasty dishes and delicious conversation. Definitely something to look forward to in 2026, this time on October 31—Halloween.



Photos courtesy of Rebecca Winnie.

NFO BOARD NOMINATIONS

Bobi Ashley, Redmond, Oregon

The NFO Nominating Committee has three nominations for new board members. They will be voted on during the Zoomed business meeting at our conference March 5–8, in Durham, North Carolina.

- Pat Henderson, Florida
- Gigi Jensen, Washington State
- Stacy Rose, Oregon

Nominations will also be accepted from the floor during the meeting.

LYRIDS FOLK DANCE FESTIVAL

APRIL 17–19, 2026

Chrisanne Pennimpe, New Westminster, B.C., Canada



SAVE THE DATE for our final festival! The Lyrids 12th Folk Dance Festival will take place April 17–19, 2026! Our featured teachers are Tineke and Maurits van Geel, presenting Armenian, Roma, and other international dances. We are excited to be part of their farewell tour. The Saturday evening party band will be Zakuska (Jana Rickel & friends) from Seattle, WA. The festival will not be Zoomed, and you have to attend to experience it. This is a fragrance-free event.

The festival takes place in Pitt Meadows, Vancouver, B.C., Canada, an hour's drive east of the

Vancouver Airport. The Pitt Meadows Hall boasts a wonderful hardwood dance floor with bounce, ample free parking, and a convenient Best Western Plus Inn & Suites nearby (block of rooms have been reserved).

In addition to frequent and plentiful snacks, there will be three catered meals, with an optional allergy-sensitive menu. The festival market will have ethnic items and clothing. Some of the other activities planned are performances for the Saturday evening party and culture talks on Armenia and Roma from Tineke and Maurits. We are in the planning stages of the festival and more information will follow.

Registration opens in January 2026, and we look forward to seeing many of you at the festival.

For more details and to see our past festivals, visit lyridsfolkdancefestival.org.

POURPARLER 2025: DANCING, SINGING, AND MEMORY MAKING IN MARYLAND

Sarah Bustin, North Reading, Massachusetts

On a crisp autumn afternoon on a farm in Maryland, five women between the ages of 24 and 75 circled with playful, flapping arms, mimicking the flight of a butterfly. Seated around them, thirty more adults smiled from ear to ear, singing along to Audrey Engdahl's soft, guitar-driven composition, "Mariposa." The song, written for youngsters but clearly applicable to any age group with the right attitude, describes the monarch butterfly's yearly pilgrimage to Mexico. That day in October, the dance hall was filled with joy, giggles, awe, and wonder as we watched human butterflies flitting across the wooden floor, as if they had trained their whole lives for this incredible journey. I will always remember this magical moment at the 2025 Pourparler at Fox Haven Farm in Jefferson, Maryland.

Pourparler (French for "parley"—a gathering or chat) is a yearly event for music and dance teachers to exchange knowledge, share best practices, connect with one another, and inspire each other. One of my favorite aspects of Pourparler is that it functions like an "un-conference." There is no hired talent. Instead, every attendee has an opportunity to present at least one participatory song, dance, or game, ensuring we all learn from each other.

I felt supported and encouraged throughout my entire experience at Pourparler. At first, I was a bit starstruck by my fellow attendees, many of whom have honed their teaching, dancing, and musicianship skills for decades and have published books and recordings. Soon, however, I was reminded that my heroes are simply humans doing their best, just like me. They told me that I have much to offer, even though I am younger and have fewer years in the classroom. For example, when I came up with an idea for an unscheduled Austrian yodeling workshop, programmers Mady Newfield and Jeremy Knorr seamlessly integrated the session into our packed schedule. I felt welcomed again when Henry Chapin saw my borrowed guitar and invited me to play in the band for a live teaching session, which was great fun. I am also so lucky to have a fantastic mentor and friend back home in Boston, Andy Taylor, whose material I presented at Pourparler this year and who talked me through my stage fright more than once!

Each time I taught a dance, my colleagues offered me feedback, but the attitude was positive rather than critical. People would comment, "I liked how you explained this part," or "It was great when you sang the steps with the melody." I was so much more comfortable because we had a group norm of lifting each other up, and I thank the organizers for establishing this practice.

Another routine that made Pourparler special is that everyone had a job and took time to help each other out, which kept

the events running smoothly. I had the great pleasure of assisting "kitchen queen" Kappy Lanning with a few meals. Usually, this involved Kappy and others doing the actual meal prep as I gleefully wrote ingredient labels on index cards.

In addition, I was not the only person under 35 at Pourparler this year! There were 5–7 of us 20- and 30-somethings present. Although I have plenty of experience being the youngest person at a dance event, it was nice to have a group of contemporaries to hang out with. On the other hand, my absolute favorite part of Pourparler was meeting its founder, renowned world dance educator Sanna Longden. I had heard about her and admired her work many times before, so dancing with her in person and watching her teach was a real treat. Sanna is kind, clear, and playful in her teaching, and as a person, she is caring, plucky, and expressive. I also enjoyed meeting her partner, Clint Seely, and seeing them together as a couple. There is a fun article in the *Chicago Tribune* about the two of them that was published in February 2025; read it when you need a mood booster!

One of the most poignant events of this year's Pourparler was a Zoom tribute to Peter Amidon. Videographer extraordinaire Karlene Kjerstin put together a moving video compilation of Peter's contributions to Pourparler. As we watched the video together, we pointed out folks we recognized in the background: "Oh, there's Judith Stames-Hamilton! The guy in the green shirt is Eric Maring... Ha, that's Margaret Bary!" While I did not have the privilege of meeting Peter, I see his legacy clearly, and I'm grateful for all that he gave us. Furthermore, Busy Graham coordinated a touching birthday shape-note singalong for local community member Kim Forry, which moved many of us to tears.

Of all the wonderful pieces that make Pourparler so special, what stands out to me most is the people. Everyone I met at Fox Haven is amazingly talented and kind, and I'm so grateful I got to spend a weekend with them. Plus, we have an email group exclusive to Pourparler alums, so the gifts of our gathering can keep on giving. I can't wait for my next Pourparler: Maine 2026!



Four women smile for the camera in the dance hall at Pourparler 2025. From left, Sarah Bustin, Margaret Bary, Mady Newfield, and Sanna Longden. Photo by Sarah Bustin, 10/23/25.

MY EXPERIENCE AT THE CIOFF ROMANIAN FESTIVAL

Anastasia Krzymowski, Roseville, California

I had the privilege of attending a CIOFF youth folk festival as a band member of ADAC in Cluj, Romania, July 12–20, 2025. The festival was the International Children's and Youth Folkloric Ensembles Festival, held both at the Municipal Park and at the House of Culture (due to rainy weather) in Vatra Dornei, Romania. In attendance at the festival were teams from Italy, the Basque country, Bulgaria, the USA, and several Romanian teams. ADAC, or American Dance Arts Collective, was the team representing the USA. Neither we nor the other international teams, however, were a part of the Romanian Folk dance competition—one of the primary functions of this annual festival. The director of the festival explained that although the festival was strictly a Romanian folk dance competition originally, in recent years they began inviting teams from around the world to enhance the quality of the festival and create new, rich cultural experiences for all participants.

That is precisely what my attendance at this festival offered me: a rich cultural experience that increased my appreciation for Basque, Bulgarian, Italian, and Romanian music, dance, and people. As we interacted with the other

teams before performing—exchanging bracelets and other little gifts—we cheered loudly for them as they took the stage. My mouth got tired from grinning ear-to-ear at how delightfully skilled our new friends were at their particular folk dances. I remember catching the eye of some of the little members of the Bulgarian team while I was on stage and how excitedly they pointed and clapped and cheered as they saw their favorite ADAC members perform with energy and vigor. It was so special that although we didn't share the same language, culture, or background, we could feel jubilant excitement for the success of each other.

I also had the opportunity, as the ADAC band director, to attend a director's dinner and dance party at the end of the first day of the festival. The festival directors and coordinators, judges, and team directors were all in attendance. I got to talk to one of the festival coordinators, who explained what goes into the preparation of this festival and his background in teaching music. Having worked as a music teacher myself, I felt that we faced some of the same challenges of getting students to practice and developing their musical ability. It amazed me to realize how similar we really are as members of humanity, despite country boundaries and language barriers.

The dancing portion of the evening was also a highlight. There was a live band playing traditional music from the southern region of Romania, near Bulgaria. A Romanian



director spontaneously started pulling people from their seats to dance. Many of us formed a circle, joined hands, and danced some simple steps to the beat of the music as we followed the leader. We snaked around in circles and got faster and faster as the music picked up speed. This dance continued for what felt like 15 minutes. We were all sweaty and tuckered out by the end, but filled with joy to be basking in the warmth and camaraderie of the evening.

On the last day of the festival, all the teams gathered at an indoor sports facility and we took turns teaching each other simple recreational dances from our countries. We taught a little dance to Cotton Eyed Joe and all the teams seemed to thoroughly enjoy it. As I looked around while playing my fiddle, I saw upwards of 150 dancers from different countries all elbow-swinging their partners with a smile on their lips. Learning the other teams' dances was exciting too. I danced with a girl from Italy and it was fun to challenge each other with the simple choreography by adding an extra spin here and there. We couldn't speak the same language, but through gestures, smiles, and shared dance steps we could communicate. At the very end of the recreational dance event, many members of different teams wanted to do foot races and acrobatic competitions. I had at least 50 or more dancers from all the different teams line up and I signaled the start of their foot race. I even found a young Bulgarian dancer who wanted to do aials with me. We took countless videos and photos to not forget this memorable bonding experience.

From these and several other unforgettable memories on this trip I felt that I accomplished my goal of cultivating unity and spreading peace through folk dance and music. I am excited to continue to do so as I work with International Dance Arts Collective (IDAC) students in the near future. I am currently preparing a slideshow to share ADAC's experience at a CIOFF festival in Romania, which will be presented to 50-plus IDAC students and their parents. I anticipate that this will help those in attendance see the value of cultural dance and music and the significance of learning about and appreciating differing cultures by embracing their art forms. Additionally, after being exposed to Balkan music at the directors' dinner, I feel an increased interest in learning to play it. I also was able to improve my violin technique as I learned from another fiddle player at the festival. I was excited to come home and share some of what I learned with my violin student. I hope to continue teaching violin—specifically traditional American fiddle repertoire—to increase exposure to folk music and help others develop an appreciation for that music.

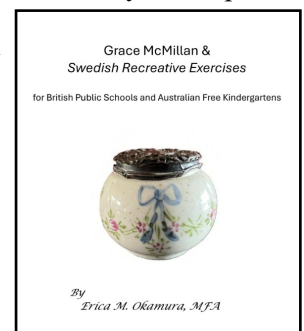
I appreciate the NFO's financial contribution to this enriching experience and will continue to assist in its mission of encouraging respect for cultural traditions. As stated, I hope to do this as I continue my work with IDAC and as a music teacher and folk dancer. I will forever remember my experiences in Romania and be changed by the impact they had on me and my understanding of the cultures with which I came in contact.

COMPLETION OF THE GRACE MCMILLAN PROJECT

Erica Okamura, Thurgoona, New South Wales, Australia

The Grace McMillan Project, dedicated to uncovering who Grace McMillan was, and why she created the manual *Swedish Recreative Exercises for School & Playground* (the first widely distributed, if not first-ever English translation of Swedish singing-games) has officially come to a close. McMillan's book was published in the UK in 1905 and was aligned with a newly rolled out British physical training syllabus for public elementary schools. This book was readily adopted in the USA to support a burgeoning school and playground-based folk dance movement under exponents such as Elizabeth Burchenal and Mary Wood Hinman. As such, it represents one of the first foundational manuals for folk dancing in educational and recreational contexts.

In early 2023, Erica Okamura's discovery of a 1912 Australian edition of *Swedish Recreative Exercises* inspired the Grace McMillan Project. After several months, Okamura was able to procure a copy of this extremely rare Australian book. It contains all of the original British content, plus 18 additional exercises, many of which employ Australian and New Zealand themes. From May 2023 through September 2025, Okamura worked with over 20 archives and multiple independent subject matter experts, as well as descendants of one of Grace's brothers, Grace's step-granddaughter, and a 110-year-old man (as of October 23, 2025), Bill Morgan, whose mother had been friends with Grace, to assemble McMillan's life story, with special attention given to how and why she likely produced her British and Australian books. These findings are now summarised in an eBook, *Grace McMillan & Swedish Recreative Exercises for British Public Schools and Australian Free Kindergartens*, available free at SwedishCastle.com. This site also contains a supplemental document, *Mary Anne's Story*, by Grace's niece, Mary Anne, who lived with Grace from about age 12 to 18. This story was handwritten by Mary Anne on her deathbed in 1989 as part of a 43-page account of her life. It was contributed by her children, now in their 80s and 90s, as a piece of evidence toward the project findings.



The front cover of Okamura's eBook features a trinket box once owned by Grace McMillan, given to her step-granddaughter.

An NFO Discovery Grant facilitated Grace McMillan Project-related work in Europe during the summer of 2024.

STEVE'S THOUGHTS ON FOLK DANCE AUTHENTICITY

Kathleen Mazurek, Chicago, Illinois

This is the promised follow-up to the May 2025 article about Steve Kotansky's thoughts on authenticity and choreography as they relate to folk dancing. Steve does choreograph dances, but he strives to use traditional dance moves and makes a point of letting people know when a dance has been created. Steve says that all his choreographies have a story, so we asked him to tell us the stories of a few of his dances. The three basic components of Steve's creative process are the music, the intended audience, and the dance steps. As Hopa Hopa is a long-time favorite of many of us, it seemed like a good place to start the conversation.

Hopa Hopa

Music: Steve usually hears a piece of music that attracts him and then at a later time he starts thinking about creating a dance to it. The first time Steve was in Albania, he was listening to a folk-music channel in his hotel room and heard the song Hopa Hopa by a popular Albanian singer named Poni. Hopa Hopa is modern Albanian Tallava music.

Audience: Steve keeps in mind who his potential audience is, and what they will like. He doesn't choreograph dances for EEFC workshops, where people are looking for more village dances. Steve believes that he first began putting steps to Hopa Hopa in his room at a weekend international folk dance workshop in Washington State. He doesn't remember what year that was. In July 2017, Steve taught Hopa Hopa at the Door County Folk Festival and provided dance notes. The first dance notes to be made available online are from the October 2017 Pocono Fall Folk Dance Weekend. He has since made changes and refined the dance.

Dance Steps: Steve says he always asks himself what dance people from the region would do if they heard the music at an event. For Hopa Hopa, depending on which area of Albania people are from, they would either do a very fast pogonishte, or a valle, which is like a čoček (step, step touch, step touch).

When starting a choreography, Steve first identifies the different melodic sections in a piece of music and counts the beats in each section. He then chooses dance patterns for each section. Of course, when the steps correspond to the music like this, it is a sign that the dance has been choreographed.

True to his word, Steve was able to identify his source for all four of the dance steps in Hopa Hopa. Some of the steps were based on the basic structure of step patterns, some were based on kinesthetic motifs, and some were actual dance steps. A kinesthetic motif is a recognizable movement or short movement phrase that can be combined with other movements in varying ways.

Introduction: This isn't a step. It's just walking back and forth to get up the courage.

Vamp Turn: The musicians threw in four extra beats. These extra beats appear in various places throughout the recording. Steve does a four-count turn to make use of the music. He said that these extra beats were the most challenging part of the choreography. Interestingly, they are also my favorite part of the dance.

Step 1. Hopa Hopa step: Steve based this step on a basic pan-Balkan structure. (Three moves to the right, three moves in place, three moves to the left, three moves in place). He says the upbeats and cross-behinds are typically Albanian.

Step 2. Grapevines: This step, where the lead foot moves forward and backward, was inspired by a common improvisation used by Steve's friend Raif Hayseni. He calls it Raif's step.

Step 3. In-and-out and half turns: This step was based on a common Balkan dance structure (three steps in, hop, three steps out, hop), and common hand motifs done during the half circles danced in place. Steve changed the arms during the in-and-out portion of his step after watching Roberto Bagnoli's interpretation of the dance.

Step 4. Gishtë për Gishtë. This means "little finger on little finger." This dance figure actually comes from a dance from Southern Albania called "Gishti i vogël nëgistin ë vogël."

We asked Steve to talk about some of his other choreographies. Mahala Mori Shej, another favorite of many of us, also has an interesting story.

Mahala Mori Shej

Music: Steve and his wife Susan (Susy) Kotansky were given a Kalyi Jag CD after attending a Hungarian Roma concert in the East Side of New York City. In the car on their way home, they listened to the CD and heard a song called Mori Shej that they both loved.

Audience: Steve and Susy created the dance Mahala Mori Shej to present at Gwen Peterdi's circle dance festival in Mexico in 2014. Steve says that the choreography may have been too complicated for this audience, yet to this day, the dance is still done in Mexico. Later Steve taught this dance to the international folk dance community, where it became a hit.

Steps: Steve and Susy used steps from a Transylvanian Romani couple dance called Mahala from the village of Százcsávás. They used the improvised couple-dance steps to make a circle dance choreography. Steve says that people need to know a dance vocabulary before being asked to improvise. They called the dance Mahala Mori Shej to differentiate it from the popular dance Mori Shej by Laura Shannon.

New Music, Old Dances

Steve spoke about putting existing dances to new music. Steve heard the music Rumelaj, also by the Hungarian Romani band Kalyi Jag, and fit the steps from the Turkish/Macedonian dance Jeni Jol to it. Similarly, Steve liked the music to Ketri Ketri, again by Kalyi Jag, and paired it with

a Romani dance from Kosovo called Sherianqe. In the 1980s, after Steve moved back to the USA, he became involved with the Hungarian folk dance community. He accepted a friendly challenge to create a dance to a piece from an album one of the Hungarian groups was trying to sell. He chose the music *Ne Félj Lányon*, which is a ballad by the Csángó people living in Moldavia. At the time, not much was known about Moldavian Csángó dancing, so Steve borrowed steps from the better-known Gyimesi Csángó dances from an area in Transylvania.

Snölejoninna—Sapmi

This is a dance that is new to the international folk dance community. Steve taught it by request at June Camp 2025. Steve's story about creating this dance is interesting, as it doesn't follow his usual sequence of starting with the music, then deciding on his intended audience, then fitting dance steps to the music.

This time, he started with his audience. He teaches folk dancing every winter in a private alternative school. He needed to create a dance for children in grade school. Next, Steve focused on dance steps. Each year, the school chooses a theme, and one year the theme was indigenous people. Steve was asked to teach dances of indigenous people from various parts of the world. From Europe, he chose the Sami people in Sapmi (Lapland). Steve found a dance company called Jutarinki from Northern Finland who used traditional steps in a somewhat choreographed form. The group danced to drums. Steve also did some reading and discovered that Jutarinki had a lot of the elements correct. Finally, he looked for music and found a great song by Sofia Jannok from Sapmi that had the same beat as the drum music used by Jutarinki in the videos.

Steve taught the dance to a couple of classes from the younger grades. Later, when he was teaching at a circle dance camp in Brazil, he met an indigenous woman from the Amazon, and decided to honor her by teaching Snölejoninna, an indigenous dance from a completely different part of the world. The dance was learned in Brazil and subsequently taught at a workshop in Mexico by an Argentinian circle dance teacher named Pable Scornek. It has been since taught at Dale Adamson's folk dance Zoom class by Kathleen Mazurek. As of September 2025, the dance has been taught in Ireland by one of Dale's Zoom dance participants, and by one of the teachers from Washington State.

Steve has many other choreographies which, due to time constraints were not discussed. He acknowledges the ethnocentricity of many peoples and respects their need to hold on to their cultures. At the same time, he stresses that dance is a living and evolving entity and that cultures are constantly appropriating each others' music, dances, and dance steps. Steve's dances also evolve. Steve will change his choreographies if he sees something he likes better. And, he is fine when others modify his creations to meet the needs of their specific groups. Steve feels he has accomplished something worthwhile when he creates a dance that brings people joy.

FA SO LA: RALEIGH'S SHAPE NOTE COMMUNITY

*Susanna Klingenberg
Photography by Taylor McDonald*

Members of the Triangle Shape Note singers will be at the National Folk Organization conference with a presentation and participatory singing.

A growing community of people of all backgrounds come together to sing Christian hymns —at the top of their lungs.



Across the Triangle (the North Carolina cities of Raleigh (the state capital), Durham, and Chapel Hill), a few times a month, an eclectic group gathers: religious believers of all stripes and spiritual seekers, tweedy professor types and tattooed 20-somethings. They duck into coffee shops or church basements, greet one another warmly, deliver their dishes to the break table, and gear up for what they've come to do: sing Christian hymns together. At this unlikely gathering, there are no instruments and no microphones. Just lungs, hearts, and the powerful pull of music.

This is shape note singing, a raw, spirited, singing tradition with a growing appeal to young people disenchanted with the AI-ification of our world. It offers an oasis of analog togetherness in an increasingly virtual world. Sometimes called *fasola* or Sacred Harp singing, shape notes have deep roots in early American history. Originating in rural New England in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the tradition was designed as “a populist way to learn to sing together in church for people who didn't have the money to be classically trained,” explains Celia Lechtman, a shape note singer who regularly goes to meetups at Durham Friends Meeting House, Pullen Baptist, and St. Mark's Chapel in Mordecai (and who happens to have operatic training, too).

Itinerant teachers would visit churches and teach the method, which quickly moved south and took hold in the Appalachians,

(Continued on page 14)

Fa So La (Continued from page 13)

where it remains popular today. But it's also found a fan base far from its rural origins across the nation at urban community centers, college campuses, and innovation hubs like the Triangle.

Instead of traditional notation, shape note music uses geometric shapes (triangle, square, oval, and diamond) to represent different pitches on the scale. The system was meant to democratize music. "I've never been in a space that's as genuinely welcoming as shape note singing," says Lechtman.

"But that's not because it's become more inclusive—it's because it was built that way from the ground up." Central to the local community is the Triangle Shape Note singers' group, founded in the 1970s by Dr. Daniel Patterson, Kenan Professor Emeritus of English and Folklore at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Patterson, now 97, was shelving books at an undergraduate work-study job when he happened upon a shape note songbook that included tunes his grandmother sang in the 1870s. He xeroxed a few and tried singing them with his friends, a group that quickly grew, gained support, and eventually became the Triangle Shape Note singers. This community of Triangle musicians—some trained, many not—gather monthly to sing from several shared songbooks: *The Shenandoah Harmony*, *The Valley Pocket Harmonist* and, most famously, *The Sacred Harp*, a tune book first published in 1844. Its name is a reference to a singer's voice.

While the songbook titles might suggest a sound that's delicate or even sentimental, the music is anything but. Loud, direct, and energetic, shape note singing was (and still is) meant to be in full voice, with singers arranged in a hollow square, one part on each side, each voice carrying its own weight. "A good voice in shape note singing is one that can hit the notes and sing loud (sic)," says Lechtman. "That perspective is so freeing, so bucket-filling. Singing is a thing we're doing together, like an organism that I get to become part of."



The sound of shape note singing might surprise you, not only because it's loud (very loud) when sung in big groups, but also because the harmonies are not those we typically hear in Western music. Instead of thirds, it leans on fourths and fifths, with the tenor (rather than the soprano) carrying the melody.

"To my ears there's a beautiful dissonance to

the sound that makes it one of the truest representations of the human voice out there," says David Brower, executive director of PineCone, the Piedmont Council of Traditional Music, which helps facilitate shape note singing in the Triangle. "We're all surrounded by autotuned recordings and bombarded by AI-generated music. This is the exact opposite."

For devotees, shape note singing isn't about performance. It's about participation. "We're not a choir. There's nothing performative about it," says singer Kyle Johnston, associate director of the Moravian Music Foundation and committed shape note singer. "If you believe in God, then that's your only audience. But many singers don't, and for them, it's about singing for one another, making music in community."

What draws people in 2025 to a singing style founded in the 1800s? Many singers appreciate that shape note singing frees them up to explore spiritual questions without the trappings of a church or religious tradition. "There's a different kind of reverence here," says Michael DeVito, a regular at Durham sings. "It has nothing to do with a 50-foot tall stained glass or a giant pipe organ and everything to do with being present together and singing."

For others, the draw is the lyrics. "They explore the whole breadth of human experience: friendship, work, troubles, and dying," says Lechtman. "There's a lot of *we*. It's about passing through the world together."

Sometimes these groups of friends gather for conferences or for all-day sings, which draw enthusiasts from across the country. These gatherings often include a covered-dish dinner before people depart for smaller "house sings" in living rooms and backyards—a musical afterparty, of sorts.

But across the board, people are drawn to the authentic community of shape note singing. Says DeVito, "As much as it's a way to poke around at some kind of spiritual yearning or whatever, it's also just fun to sing super loud and potluck with your friends."

This article originally appeared in the October 2025 issue of WALTER magazine. Used with permission. It has been lightly edited for length.

Did you know you can pay your NFO membership fees and make donations online using PayPal or a credit card?

If there is an event you would like see included on the Folk Dance Events Network list in the future, please contact NFO News Editor Kathy Bruni at natlfolkorgeditor@gmail.com, before January 10 for the February issue, April 10 for the May issue, August 10 for the September issue, and November 10 for the December (conference-focused) issue.

You may also choose to pay for an advertisement; the deadlines for ads are the same as for events.

IN MEMORIAM: KARL FINGER

Karl Finger passed away on January 1, 2025, in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, at the age of 85. He leaves behind a legacy of musical recordings, cultural-exchange trips, workshops, and dance communities that still carry his influence—in the folk world of North America and beyond.

Karl Finger was born on November 10, 1939, in New York City to Sophie “Suds” Mins Finger and Raphael “Phil” Montague Finger. His early experience included eight summers as a camper and counselor at research-and-folklore Camp Woodland in upstate New York, where he and fellow campers explored songs, dances, and stories from regional communities.

After graduating from the University of Chicago, Karl built a remarkable career as a folk singer, guitarist, and folk-dance leader. He believed that music and dance are “fundamental and essential to human existence.” He used them as tools to “break the barriers of language and culture” and to enable “people from different worlds to get to know one another as human beings.”

In 1979, Karl and the late, great Bulgarian dance teacher, Yves Moreau, hatched a plan to offer the first-ever folk dance tour to then-Communist Bulgaria. For the next 30 years, Karl led over 60 tours around the world, where he brought travelers into cultural exchange via music and dance. He also brought international folk traditions into community spaces in the USA and facilitated cross-cultural dialogue through music and dance. He organized dozens of weekend festivals featuring workshops, jam sessions, music concerts, and dance parties. The weekends he ran at Chait’s Hotel in the Catskills and Solway House in Saugerties, NY, included top folk dance teachers from across the country, making for a warm and vibrant environment for everyone to learn and have fun.

Karl was instrumental in organizing the Brooklyn Heights International Folk Dancers in 2000, which has continued for the last 25 years! He also lectured on folk music and dance’s role in history and social movements at schools, colleges, and universities.

Karl made his home for the last 60 years in the Berkshires (Massachusetts). His longevity and range—live performances, albums, decades of dance leadership, and global travel—made him a unique ambassador for the folk music and dance world.



FOLK DANCE EVENTS NETWORK

Please refer to the event websites for the most current information. Submit events to natlfolkorgeditor@gmail.com.

January 30–February 2: FLORIDA FOLK DANCE COUNCIL WINTER WORKSHOP, with Cristian Florescu and Sonia Dion teaching Romanian and international dances. Holiday Inn Celebration, Kissimmee, FL. Info: floridafolkdancer.org

February 19–March 1: FOLK DANCE TOUR OF EGYPT. Info: jimgold.com.

February 24–March 13: FOLK DANCE TOUR OF INDIA. Info: jimgold.com.

March 1–12: FOLK DANCE TOUR OF ISRAEL. Info: jimgold.com.

March 5–8: 2026 NFO CONFERENCE in Durham, North Carolina. Old Murphey School Shared Visions Foundation Retreat Center, 3717 Murphy School Road, Durham, North Carolina 27705. Info: nfo-usa.com.

March 6–8: LAGUNA FOLK DANCE FESTIVAL, Clubhouse Two, 24112 Moulton Pkwy., Laguna Woods, California. Featured teachers: Anna Angelova, teaching Bulgarian dances, and Daniel Sandu, teaching Romanian and Rom dances. Info: lagunainternationaldancers.com.

April 10–22: FOLK DANCE TOUR OF WESTERN CANADA. Info: jimgold.com.

April 17–19: LYRIDS FOLK DANCE FESTIVAL 2026. Save the date! FINAL FESTIVAL! Tineke and Maurits Van Geel are the featured teachers for Armenian and Roma dances. Pitt Meadows Heritage Hall, 12460 Harris Road, Pitt Meadows, BC V3Y 2J5 (same as last year). Info: lyridsfolkdancefestival.org. Registration opens January 2026. *Fragrance free.*

May 20–29: FOLK DANCE TOUR OF PERU. Info: jimgold.com.

May 20–June 1: FOLK DANCE TOUR OF ALBANIA, GREECE, MACEDONIA and KOSOVO. Led by Lee Otterholt, guided by Mili Mullanji. Info: jimgold.com.

June 9–23: FOLK DANCE TOUR OF SCANDINAVIA. Led by Lee Otterholt. Info: jimgold.com.

DO YOU PREFER PDF?

The *NFO News* is available in PDF. If you prefer to receive your copy electronically, please contact *NFO News* Editor Kathy Bruni at natlfolkorgeditor@gmail.com and you will receive the *next* issue as a PDF file instead of hard copy. The photos that appear in black-and-white in the hard copy will appear in color in the PDF, and the hyperlinks will work!





**NONPROFIT ORG
US Postage Paid
Permit #873
Seattle, WA**

National Folk Organization
15221 N. CR 400E
Eaton, IN 47338

Return Service Requested



**National Folk Organization
Membership Application**

Annual Membership Dues*

Name _____ Date _____
Individual/Organization (please include name of contact person)

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Country _____

ZIP/Postal Code _____

Phone(s): Home _____ Office _____

Email _____

Website: _____

How did you hear about the National Folk Organization? _____

Student \$15 US
Individual \$35 US
Household \$45 US
Groups: recreation, festivals,
performing \$60 US
Lifetime member \$1,000 US

**international postage surcharge:
please add \$4 US*

New Member **Current Member**

Brief description of your interests:

TOTAL ENCLOSED: \$ _____

MAIL TO: NFO Membership Services, 15221 N. CR 400 E., Eaton, IN 47338