

ASF FOLK ARTS & CULTURAL TRADITIONS IN THE UPPER MIDWEST 2023-2024 GRANTEES

New York, NY—The American-Scandinavian Foundation is pleased to announce the winners of ASF's Scandinavian Folk Arts and Cultural Traditions program. Introduced in 2017, this program helps to nurture the rich Scandinavian folk art traditions in the Upper Midwest (North Dakota, South Dakota, Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and the Upper Peninsula of Michigan) by deepening the skills of master artists, fostering long-term relationships among masters and apprentices, and enhancing the traditions' visibility through public programs and community projects.

The 2023-24 cohort is a group of worthy individuals and organizations whose dedication to traditional Scandinavian arts and skills is an inspiration to us all. We look forward to seeing their projects unfold while we marvel over innovative ways that our grantees from previous years have carried out projects and shared folk-art traditions with their local communities.

ARTIST FELLOWSHIPS

BRABENDER, DEREK FROM—Stoughton, WI



Derek Brabender will apprentice with Jarrod Dahl to learn the craft of constructing pole lathes—foot-powered woodworking tools used in the shaping of traditional Scandinavian bowls. During his year-long apprenticeship, Brabender plans to build four pole lathes, which he will also document in a series of social media posts and videos. By recording the construction process of springpole lathes, Brabender intends to revitalize this folk craft, making it more accessible to the general public and increasing awareness of the significance of pole lathe bowl turning as a Scandinavian Folk Art.

Figure 1: Derek Brabender bowl turning on a spring pole lathe at Wisconsin's 2023 Syttende Mai festival (photo by Tom Bartlett).

CHATMAN, LIESL FROM—Minneapolis, MN

In October 2024, Liesl Chatman will travel to Norway and Sweden to study and explore the social history and technical evolution of kolrosing, a decorative Scandinavian folk art made by cutting lines into wood surfaces and filling the lines with pigment. While abroad, Chatman will see various open-air museums and folk schools to further her knowledge of kolrosing, and upon her return, she intends to share her mastery with local folk schools, museums, and craft gatherings.



Figure 2: Tache the Silken Windhound by Liesl Chatman.

DAHL, JARROD
FROM—Ashland, WI



Figure 3: Woven birch bark basketry by Jarrod Dahl.

Already a well-established woodworker and craftsman, Jarrod Dahl plans to go to Norway and Sweden to learn more about crafting traditional Scandinavian baskets. While abroad, Dahl will study with famed Norwegian basket maker Hege Aasdal and visit museums and other basket makers invested in preserving and documenting traditional basketry techniques. Upon his return, Dahl will share his knowledge of this craft at the Woodspirit School of Traditional Craft and at other local venues.

GROVEN, KJETIL
FROM—Rapid City, SD

Already a skilled blacksmith, Kjetil Groven intends to further his study of pjaal/skav during his summer in Norway and Sweden. Pjaal, as it is known in Norway, or skav, as it is known in Sweden, is a woodworking tool forged specially to quickly remove and smooth the surface of wood. During his summer abroad, Groven will work with specialized blacksmith toolmakers, namely Jon Dalmo and Roald Renmælmo of Norway and Patrik Järefjell of Sweden. While in Norway, he will also have opportunities to visit pjaal collections at local museums. Upon his return, Groven hopes to share his knowledge not only through continued teaching but also through training younger blacksmiths and engaging with local blacksmithing communities.

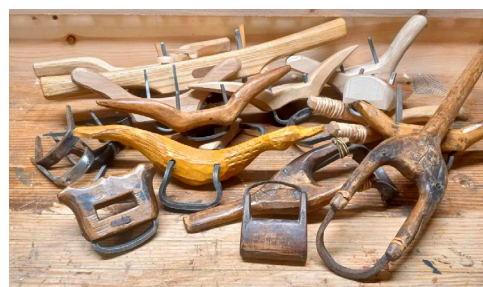


Figure 4: A pail of Pjaal, new and old, by Kjetil Groven.

KEENAN, KAREN
FROM—Duluth, MN



Figure 5: Sheila's Brooch, a contemporary hairwork piece made from human hair, by Karen Keenan.

An ASF 2018 Folk Arts Fellow, Karen Keenan will begin a project entitled “Reviving, Expanding, and Sustaining Traditional Swedish Hairwork Artistry in the Midwest.” Hairwork as a Scandinavian folk art was practiced by Swedish women as far back as the 1700s and early 1800s in Våmhus, where hair was woven, corded, or made into heirloom jewelry such as brooches, bracelets, necklaces, crowns, or earrings. To advance her expertise in hairwork, Keenan will apprentice with master hairworkers Helen Martis and Erika Borbos-Rindvall and visit hairwork collections at the Nordisk Museet in Sweden. Upon her return, Keenan hopes to continue sharing her craft with local teaching venues as well as the annual Lake Superior 20/20 Studio and Art Tour.

KRAUS, BETH
FROM—Minneapolis, MN

Beth Kraus will study how to make traditional Danish and Swedish woven baskets, which are typically made of willow or other regional materials. To build these traditional baskets and shape and bend handles, rims, feet, and skids implementing raw materials that are both self-harvested and processed, Kraus will apprentice with Steen Madsen of Ringsted, Denmark, and Beth Moen of Dalarna, Sweden. Upon returning, Kraus will integrate her nuanced knowledge of birch wood crafts with her own teaching and workshop-led programs in surrounding local communities.



Figure 6: Hand woven birch bark by Beth Kraus.

SANDERS, LAUREL
FROM—Duluth, MN



Figure 7: Two Nordic bands woven with a pattern heddle, and one with multi-strand braiding by Laurel Sanders.

Laurel Sanders and her daughter Giizh (Sarah) Agaton Howes, a renowned Ojibwe craftswoman, plan to travel to Norway, where they will study band-weaving, not only in terms of employable techniques, but also in terms of its history and place in Ojibwe, Sami, and Nordic cultures. To better contextualize and understand band weaving—a method of weaving narrow strips of fabric to use as decorative jewelry or belts—Sanders and Howes’ trip to Norway will include taking courses at the Rauland Folk Academy in Telemark, meeting with band weavers, and visiting textile museum collections. Upon their return, they will share their knowledge of band weaving with local communities through presentations and exhibits at various venues including the Duluth Nordic Center and Sami Cultural Center of North America.

VITALE-SULLIVAN, CAITLIN
FROM—Madison, WI

In 2024, Caitlin Vitale-Sullivan plans to study Icelandic vocal traditions while training under two renowned Scandinavian folk musicians: Bára Grimsdóttir and Chris Foster. In particular, she is interested in studying two Icelandic song types—Icelandic *tvisöngur* and *kvæði*. Icelandic *tvisöngur* is a polyphonic singing type in which two singers sing in parallel; is usually in the form of ballads, but with harmonies. Vitale-Sullivan’s trip to Iceland will provide hands-on experience in teaching methods used in the Icelandic music community. Upon her return, she hopes to not only share her knowledge of Nordic folk song with her community through singing classes and folk music workshops, but also use different teaching methods to increase awareness and interest in traditional Scandinavian folk music.

PUBLIC PROGRAMS & COMMUNITY PROJECTS

American Swedish Institute
Minneapolis, MN

The American-Swedish Institute (ASI) will bring performers to the annual Midwinter Folk Fest, a long-standing, annual program on Scandinavian folk music. From March 2-3, ASI will bring to the Cedar Cultural Center various workshops, performances, and demonstrations by a variety of performers, including Stina Fagertun, Helena Hallberg, Ross Sutter, and two Nordic folkway speakers. The goal of this event is to foster an interactive folk music experience for local audiences—both young and old—and promote an ongoing appreciation of the Scandinavian folk music tradition.

Cedar Cultural Center
Minneapolis, MN

For its 2024 Cedar’s Nordic Series, the Cedar Cultural Center will present quarterly Scandinavian performances, which will be accompanied by daytime educational workshops for K-12 audiences within the Minneapolis school district. Performances by Ánnámáret, Kardemimmit, Symbio, and Northern Resonance will draw together audiences of to celebrate and appreciate Nordic folk music and culture in Minnesota.

Finlandia Foundation
Hancock, MI

Finlandia Foundation will continue cultural programming at the Finnish-American Folk School (FAFS) in Hancock, Michigan. The program will include 5 days of presentations from pan-Nordic folk artists along with musical performances, weaving workshops, language instruction, and larger events, such as the Midsummer Jouhikko Gathering and the Finnish Independence Day Celebration. These events will provide opportunities for audiences in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula to learn and engage with American-Nordic folk traditions and programs.

**FinnFest
Minneapolis, MN**



FinnFest 2024 will engage Nordic folk arts performers, artists, and academics in the folk arts section of the festival. The 2024 program, entitled “Nordic Conversations with the Natural World,” will feature Sofia Jannok, Llona Korhonen, Michael Loukinen, among others, to showcase a smörgåsbord of Finnish, Finnish American, Sámi, pan-Nordic, and Upper Midwestern folk traditions. FinnFest 2024 will be held from July 25-27 at the Duluth Entertainment & Convention Center.

Figure 8: Lauluika performing at FinnFest 2023.

**Nordic Center of Duluth
Duluth, MN**

Building on the concept of stämman as a gathering of folk musicians and dancers, the 2024 Duluth-stämman aims to promote Nordic community-driven traditions through jam circles, workshops, youth programs, and dances accompanied to traditional American-Nordic music. Performers will include Kristian Bugge & Sonnich, Sebastian Block & Kevin Henderson, Sara Pajunen, Laurel Premo, Zosha Warpeha, Lynx Lynx, and 18 Midwest Ensembles. The 2024 Duluth-stämman will be held from June 7-8.

**North Country Fiber Fair
Brookings, SD**

The North Country Fiber Fair (NCF) will bring Natalie Norman as the featured teacher for the 31st anniversary of the fair, which will take place in Watertown, SD, from September 20-22, 2024. Natalie Norman is a 2019 ASF Folk Artist Fellow, and for this three-day fair, she will provide a public lecture and teach classes on traditional Swedish embroidery styles and techniques for bags and kjolväskor (skirt purses). In collaboration with local museums and libraries, NCF aims to gather residents of the Dakotas who identify with Scandinavian heritage and traditional arts.



Figure 9: Swedish needlework on felt circles by Natalie Norman.

**Sverdrup #107 Sons of Norway Lodge
Bismark, ND**

Sverdrup Lodge—in partnership with Northern Plains Heritage Foundation (NPHF)—will provide cultural heritage programming during a month-long Northern Plains Winterfest, which will be held within the Northern Plains Heritage Area in January 2024. Sverdrup Lodge’s cultural and educational programs will focus on Scandinavian folk arts and traditions associated with winter and bring folk artists together to celebrate winter activities, including public ice sculpture demonstrations, Hardanger fiddle performances, and kicksled relays.

**Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum
Decorah, IA**

Vesterheim’s project “Hand Me Down the Fiddle” will consist of an exhibition on Hardanger and flat fiddles, accompanied by online fiddle music programming and workshops. It will feature prominent Norwegian fiddlers and tune collectors actively involved in sharing and perpetuating endangered tunes for Norwegian-American communities in the Upper Midwest alongside dances, performances, and workshops to connect audiences to the context and practice of Norwegian folk music.

Washington Island Scandinavian Fest Dancers
Washington Island, WI



Organized as a community heritage dancing group since 1949, Washington Island Scandinavian Fest Dancers provide opportunities for dancers from preschool to community elders to participate in celebrating Scandinavian heritage via dance. From June 21-28, Washington Island Scandinavian Fest Dancers will bring 30 teen and adult dancers to the Valdres region of Norway to learn and experience the cultural context and tradition of folk dancing. Upon their return, dancers will perform at the Trueblood Performing Arts Center and share their learning with the local community.

Figure 10: Washington Island Youth perform a schottische in the Island Community's annual Scandinavian Festival of Song & Dance.