

## **ASF FOLK ARTS & CULTURAL TRADITIONS IN THE UPPER MIDWEST 2024–2025 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 2024–25 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**

#### **AUNE, ALISON FROM—Duluth, MN**



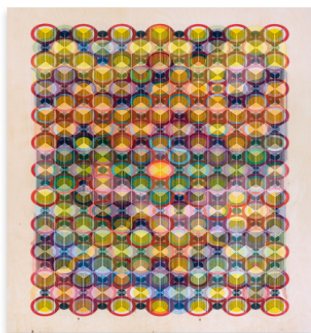
In June 2025, 2018 ASF Folk Artist Fellow Alison Aune will travel to Sweden to embark on a new project, “Minnesota-Swedish Folk Painting: Then and Now.” During her two-week stay, she will study traditional and contemporary Swedish folk painting techniques with esteemed folk artists Åse Larsjos, Pernilla Nordstrom, and Britt Marie Nilsson. Upon her return to Minnesota, Ms. Aune plans to preserve and promote the art forms of *sydsvenskt bonadsmåleri* and *dalmålning* through exhibitions and workshops in Duluth and Minneapolis.

#### **FLANDERS, SUE FROM—Mora, MN**

Sue Flanders will deepen her expertise in *skinnfell*, a traditional Norwegian folk craft that involves sewing and decorating sheepskin blankets. Traveling to Norway, she will study under master artisans Britt Solheim and Stina Marie Rognes Solheim. Upon her return, Ms. Flanders will co-present introductory classes and demonstrations with 2024 ASF Artist Fellow Rebecca Utecht (see project description below) at venues such as the Sons of Norway in Isle, Avon Hills Folk School, Kanabec County Art Association, the American Swedish Institute, and Vesterheim.



**KEOBOUNPHENG, TIA**  
**FROM—Minneapolis, MN**



Tia Keobounpheng, a 2022 ASF Folk Artist Fellow, will continue her exploration of traditional and contemporary Sámi *duodji*—a craft that preserves sacred cultural knowledge. Her project, “*Duodji: Generational Tradition*,” includes traveling to Vettasjärvi, Sweden, to work with Sámi *duodjar* Lennert. To preserve her *duodji* experience, she will document the crafting process in an art film created with her son Silo. Upon returning, Ms. Keobounpheng will showcase her art film at the American Swedish Institute in February 2026, coinciding with the ASF exhibition *Nordic Echoes: Tradition in Contemporary Art*.

**KLEIN, THOMAS**  
**FROM—Saint Paul, MN**

Thomas Klein will travel to Sweden to advance his knowledge of *säckpipa* (Swedish bagpipe) and the Swedish cittern, a 10-stringed Renaissance instrument used in Scandinavian ensembles. While in Sweden, he will study under the master musician Jonas Åkerlund and participate in events such as the annual *säckpipa* gathering in Gagnef and the Tobaksspinnarstämman Festival in Nås. On returning, Mr. Klein plans to share his knowledge of the Scandinavian folk music tradition through school programs and workshops.



**LINDEN, PAUL**  
**FROM—Saint Paul, MN**



Paul Linden will expand his practice of *slöjd*, a Scandinavian handicraft tradition emphasizing educational models that utilize tools, materials, and the local environment. In Sweden, he will study cooperage (staved wooden containers) with woodworker Beth Moen and blacksmithing with Hans Karlsson. Returning to Minnesota, Mr. Linden plans to teach Swedish cooperage at the North House Folk School, ensuring that this Scandinavian folk craft tradition is passed on to future generations.

**NESSETH, CLIFTON**  
**FROM—Duluth, MN**

As Director of the Duluth-Stämman Nordic Music & Dance Festival (DS), Clifton Nesseth will travel to Sweden with 2024 ASF Folk Artist Fellow Paul Sauvey (see his project description below) to attend the Korrö Music Festival (KMF). Together they will study the festival's youth programs as models for fostering Scandinavian craft and music education at Duluth Stämman. Mr. Nesseth aims to adapt these approaches to inspire and support young musicians in preserving Scandinavian-American music and dance traditions.

**ODALEN, NANCY**  
**FROM—Stoughton, WI**



Nancy Odalen and her apprentice Ella Beckler will travel to Norway to refine their skills in *rosemaling*, a traditional Norwegian decorative painting style. Under the guidance of local Norwegian folk artists, they will enhance their craft and foster connections with the Norwegian rosemaling community. Upon their return, Ms. Odalen and Ms. Beckler will teach courses and present at the Livsreise Heritage Center, aiming to inspire a new generation of Midwest rosemalers.

**PAJUNEN, SARA**  
**FROM—Duluth, MN**

A 2018 ASF Folk Artist Fellow, Sara Pajunen will travel to Lund, Sweden, to study traditional Swedish folk music with master fiddler Mats Edén. While there, she will learn Edén's repertoire by ear, study historical recordings from the region, and record music sessions with Edén. Upon her return, Ms. Pajunen intends to teach local workshops and courses to continue the generational transfer of Swedish folk music traditions.

**PELTONIEMI, KIP**  
**FROM—New York Mills, MN**

Kip Peltoniemi will delve into Minnesota's Finnish musical heritage specific to the "Finnish Triangle," through his project "Early Rural Finnish Music in Minnesota's Finnish Triangle." To understand the regionally specific origins of these Finnish songs and ballads, Mr. Peltoniemi will travel to Finland to study *Perho* fiddling traditions and *Tornio* ballads in Finland with folk musicians such as Ritva Talvitie, Katril Haukilahit, and Arto Järvelä. Upon his return, Mr. Peltoniemi will adapt these songs for the 5-button accordion and reintroduce this music through concerts, workshops, school programs, and online content.

**PETERSON, SONJA**  
**FROM—Minneapolis, MN**

In August 2025, Sonja Peterson will travel to Denmark to enhance her expertise in psaligraphy—the Danish tradition of papercutting. While in Denmark, Ms. Peterson will attend workshops on small-scale psaligraphy in the Gaekkebrev tradition and visit exhibitions on traditional and contemporary papercutting techniques at the Odense Museum and the Papir Kunst Museum. Upon her return, Ms. Peterson will lead workshops on psaligraphy and showcase her work in exhibitions across the Midwest, sharing the art of traditional and modern papercutting.



**ROG, SOPHIA**  
**FROM—Decorah, IA**



During her apprenticeship with Beth Rotto, Sophia Rog will study a repertoire of Scandinavian American fiddle tunes from Northeast Iowa and Southeast Minnesota. To further expand her knowledge of Scandinavian American tunes, Ms. Rog will also study the history of the tunes and the stories of the local fiddlers who shaped these traditions. At the end of her apprenticeship, Ms. Rog will perform with Ms. Rotto's band Foot-Notes for a community dance at the Highlandville School House.



**SAUEY, PAUL**  
**FROM—Minneapolis, MN**

Along with his fellow 2024 ASF Folk Arts Fellow Clifton Nesseth (see project description above), Paul Sauey will travel to Sweden to study Nordic guitar traditions with leading folk musicians. During his tour of regions in Sweden, he will study with a variety of Swedish folk musicians, including Roger Tollroth, Anders Larsson, Mattias Pérez, Magnus Gustafsson, Thomas Limpan Lindberg, Sebastian Block, Ale Moller, Olle Lindvall, Daniel Ek, and Ale Carr. At the end of his stay, Mr. Sauey will showcase these regional styles at the Korrö Festival, and, upon his return, he will perform and host workshops to promote Nordic guitar traditions in the US.

**SEPPALA, KAY**  
**FROM—Houghton, MI**

As Director of Kivajat Children's Finnish American Folk Dance Group, Kay Seppala plans to expand her knowledge of traditional Finnish dance by traveling to Turku, Finland, where she will study at Turan Kansantanssin Ystävät (TKY), a folk dance association. While studying at TKY, Ms. Seppala will observe dance sessions, record dance videos, formalize choreography and instructions, and learn more about Finnish folk-style couple dancing. Upon her return, she will enrich her dancers' repertoire and share Finnish folk dance traditions, through performances, dance festivals, and workshops at various local venues.



**UTECHT, REBECCA**  
**FROM—Ogilvie, MN**

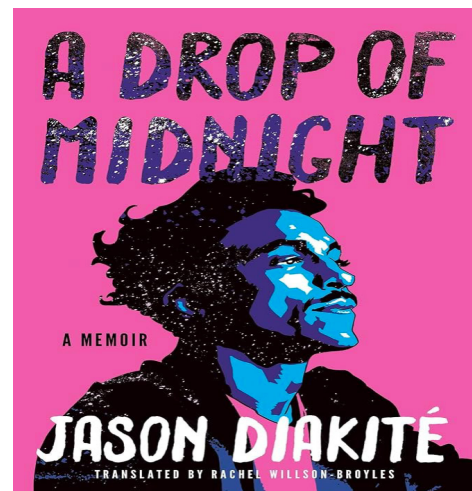


Along with 2024 ASF Folk Artist Fellow Sue Flanders (see project description above), Rebecca Utecht will travel to Rauland, Norway, to study advanced *skinnfell* —a traditional Norwegian folk craft that involves sewing and decorating sheepskin blankets. While studying under Norwegian *skinnfellers* Stina Marie Rognes Solheim and Britt Solheim, Ms. Utecht will examine methods for integrating handweaving with *skinnfell*. Upon returning, Ms. Utecht will share her expertise through teaching courses and showcasing her work at regional folk schools and festivals.

**PUBLIC PROGRAMS & COMMUNITY PROJECTS**

**The American Swedish Institute**  
**Minneapolis, MN**

The American Swedish Institute (ASI) is seeking support to host *A Drop of Midnight*, an autobiographical musical by Swedish rapper and author Jason “Timbuktu” Diakité. This musical production explores the themes of identity, belonging, and cultural heritage while highlighting the intersections of Swedish hip-hop with traditional folk music. Scheduled for April 2025, Mr. Diakité will take part in ASI's Story Swap program, a week-long initiative connecting him with immigrant youth at Wellstone International High School through workshops and performances rooted in cultural traditions.



**Gogebic Range Health Foundation/Saint Maud's  
Ironwood, MI**



In partnership with Gogebic Range Health Foundation, St. Maud's seeks funding for a *slöyd* (handcraft education) program. Piloted by Karl Zinsmaster, recipient of the 2023 Educator of the Year and Ironwood Chamber of Commerce's Gus Swanson Education Award, this program will offer nine classes per week for 5 17-year-olds living in Iron County, WI, or Gogebic County, MI. By serving K-12 audiences at local school systems, home-schooling groups, and other youth church and social groups, this *slöyd* program aims to provide practical skills and craft education for underserved communities to preserve and transfer Nordic folk traditions in trades, crafts, and arts to the next generation.

**Great River School Foundation  
Saint Paul, MN**

Great River School (GRS), a public Montessori charter school in St. Paul, MN, is requesting funding for a year-long teaching artist residency to introduce students to traditional Scandinavian *slöjd*—a form of educational handcraft. This residency will provide handcraft experiences for students grades 1-12, teachers, and families through direct instruction, internships, curriculum development, professional training, and community workshops. Serving as a pilot program, the project aims to inspire a broader pedagogical movement in the Upper Midwest by demonstrating how traditional handcraft can enrich modern public education, even in today's digital era.



**Kisarit Finnish-American Folk Dancers/Lauluanka  
Mounds View, MN**



In collaboration with Kisarit Finnish-American Folk Dancers, Lauluanka—a Finnish folk band dedicated to preserving Finnish and Finnish-American music traditions—seeks funding to expand its programming at Folklore Village. The project will include a partnership with Metku to integrate Finnish music into contra dance traditions, creating opportunities to connect diverse communities, preserve Nordic cultural heritage, and encourage traditional Nordic dancing. By fostering these connections, the initiative aims to inspire musical collaborations that will enrich cultural life both locally and regionally.

**Museum of Danish America  
Elk Horn, IA**

The Museum of Danish America seeks funding to host “Music of Two Continents,” an exhibition celebrating the life and legacy of folk musician Dwight Lamb. Launching on March 15, 2025, the exhibition will feature the documentary *Dwight in Denmark*, along with photographs, artifacts, and live performances celebrating Danish and Danish-American folk traditions. Complementing the exhibit, live performances by musicians, such as Kristian Bugge and 2018 ASF Folk Artist Fellow Bill Peterson, will take place at Tivoli Fest and Sankt Hans Aften, highlighting the enduring impact of this shared musical heritage.



A film about an easy-to-ignore old man from rural Iowa who is a culture hero.