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**Ann Porcella**

old-time bass playing and singing

Baltimore, Maryland

*2015-16 Folklife Apprenticeship Award recipient*

Ann Porcella is a fixture in the Mid-Atlantic's old-time and country music scene. She is a powerhouse vocalist and a rock-solid country and old-time bass player. Ann's father was a preacher; growing up, she learned gospel music from him. Her deep, resonant voice adapts well to many different traditional styles, though harmony singing is her first love. She has performed solo and with a variety of ensembles, including the Blue Moon Cowgirls, and as a duet with her husband, Bill Schmidt.

In 2016, Ann received a Folklife Apprenticeship Award from Maryland Traditions to apprentice under master artist Francis Riale, a stalwart of the old-time and country music community in Cecil County, Maryland, and a contemporary of the late trailblazing singer-songwriter and banjo player Ola Belle Reed, another Cecil County resident. Francis's family came to Maryland from Kentucky and Virginia, like so many in that part of the state, and they brought their music with them; to this day, Cecil County is known for its Appalachian music legacy. While Ann had been learning old-time bass for some time, this apprenticeship gave her the opportunity to hone her skills under a strong female old-time musician.

At the National, Ann will join Arty Hill & the Long Gone Daddys as well as Bill Kirchen for a rocking Maryland honky-tonk country revue.

Links

Video:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=QP03t9pmX7c](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QP03t9pmX7c)

## Artesanas Mexicanas

piñata and *flor de totomotxle* making

Baltimore, Maryland

2014-15 Folklife Apprenticeship Award recipient

Artesanas Mexicanas is a group of women artisans hailing from Mexico, Ecuador, and El Salvador who now call Southeast Baltimore home. With funding from the National Endowment for the Arts and operating out of Creative Alliance, a nonprofit arts center, the group honors their shared Latin American heritage by demonstrating, sharing, and teaching Mexican traditional craft. The program includes professional development training in Spanish for immigrant artists, after-school enrichment programs, and public community workshops at festivals and area schools. The Artesanas recently launched the Artesanitos program, pairing master artists with seven apprentices (ages 8-13). At the National Folk Festival, several members of the group—Flor Gallegos, Lilia Torres, Carmen Lopez, Fabiola Lopez, and Yesenia Mejia—will demonstrate traditional piñata making, for which they received a Folklife Apprenticeship Award from Maryland Traditions in 2015, and will lead hands-on *flor de totomotxle* (corn husk flower) making workshops.

Piñatas: more than just fun and games

Piñata-breaking is a beloved part of Latin American culture. The modern piñata in Mexico is a blend of Mesoamerican and European traditions that emerged as early as the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The seven-pointed star, which Artesanas Mexicanas so adeptly craft, is a Mexican Catholic symbol. Highlighting the struggle of man against temptation, each of the points represents the seven deadly sins. The pot in the center of the piñata represents evil, and the treats hiding inside represent temptation. The blindfold, which was first used by the ancient Aztec culture, represents faith. As participants beat the piñata, they are enacting the struggle against evil and temptation; the rewards of keeping faith rain down once the piñata succumbs to enough blows.

Flor de totomotxle

Flor de totomotxle are beautiful flowers made of dried, dyed corn husks. Corn is a common crop throughout the Americas. Totomotxle, or the leaves of the corn (also known as *tomoite* and *totomoitli*), are valued for their use in traditional art as well as for their medicinal properties and use as animal feed.

The husks of an ear of corn are a versatile material that can be dyed, shaped, and transformed into beautiful works of art, such as flower bouquets and dolls. The flores de totomotxle, as they are called in some Indigenous Mesoamerican cultures, have long been made to celebrate special holidays. Artesanas Mexicanas will hand-dye each corn husk that will be used in these workshops.

Links

Artist's website:

[www.creativealliance.org/programs/artesanas-mexicanas](http://www.creativealliance.org/programs/artesanas-mexicanas)

Video:

<https://vimeo.com/193739531>

## **Arty Hill & the Long Gone Daddys**

honky-tonk country

Baltimore, Maryland

*2013-14 Folklife Apprenticeship Award recipient*

*San Antonio Express* said of Arty Hill, “One of the best country singers going right now is not from Texas or from Tennessee—he’s from Baltimore, and his name is Arty Hill.” While this bit of journalistic phrasing might come as a surprise to Texans, Marylanders know honky-tonk and country music are as native to their shores as blue crabs are to the Chesapeake Bay.

Born on Maryland’s historic Eastern Shore, Arty grew up listening to classic country music, as well as the rock, pop, and jazz favored by his parents. Now a resident of Baltimore City, he spends his time with his ace band, the Long Gone Daddys, writing and recording songs that he describes as “marrying the soul of classic country with the wry storytelling of Guy Clark and Townes Van Zandt.”

Arty is the cofounder of the Hank Williams Songwriting Workshop in Montgomery, Alabama. He received a Folklife Apprenticeship Award from the Maryland Traditions program in 2013-2014 to apprentice under master artist Mel Price, a Maryland country music legend who passed away in 2014 at the age of 94. With his energetic live shows and a singing style that has been compared to Johnny Cash, Arty continues to carry the flame for honky-tonk country in Maryland.

### Links

Artist’s website:

[www.artyhill.com](http://www.artyhill.com)

Video:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=wnQ0K7MNXfo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wnQ0K7MNXfo)

## **Brendan Mulvihill & Emily Martin**

Irish fiddle and mandolin

Virginia (formerly of Silver Spring) and Boyds, Maryland

*2018-19 Folklife Apprenticeship Award recipient*

Fiddler Brendan Mulvihill is one of the finest Irish fiddlers in the U.S. and Ireland, and a keeper of a long Irish musical legacy. He was born in England in 1954 into a family of musicians, including his father, Martin, a master fiddler from County Limerick, Ireland, and a National Heritage Fellow, the highest honor in the U.S. for traditional artists. The family immigrated to New York when Brendan was 11.

After learning fiddle from his father and others in New York, Brendan returned to England at 17. While there, he won both the junior and senior All-Ireland Fiddle championships as well as the Senior All-Ireland duet with accordionist Billy McComiskey. Returning to the United States, Mulvihill settled in the Washington, D.C., region and, along with McComiskey and singer/guitarist Andy O'Brien, formed the Irish Tradition, a trio credited with establishing the area's rich Irish traditional music community. When the trio disbanded, Mulvihill went on to perform alongside such notables as Paddy Keenan, Martin Hayes, and John Williams, as well as on the Masters of the Folk Violin Tour alongside fellow Marylander, pianist Donna Long.

Apprentice Emily Martin also hails from a musical family, albeit one that draws from old-time string band traditions. An accomplished mandolin, mountain dulcimer, and tenor banjo player and singer, Emily has been working with Brendan this past year to learn the rich history of Irish traditional music as well as the appropriate ornamentation and variations of tunes.

For their performance at the National Folk Festival, they will be joined by Irish step dancer Shannon Dunne.

Links

Artist websites:

<http://www.irishscroll.com/index.html>

<https://emilymartinmusic.com/>

Video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-1PP539yiyg>

## **Carla Tomaszewski**

Polish *pisanki*

St Mary's County, Maryland

*2010-11 Folklife Apprenticeship Award recipient*

Carla Tomaszewski is a third-generation Polish American who uses dyes, batik (wax resist), etching, and painting to create dazzling designs on fragile eggshells. Called *pisanki*, these intricately decorated eggs are most commonly found at Easter time; they are associated with birth, new life, and resurrection. Decorating eggs as an ancient symbol of rebirth has roots in Polish communities dating back to at least the 10<sup>th</sup> century. It is a delicate art that was brought across the Atlantic to America and, in Polish communities like the one Carla grew up in in Baltimore, was preserved by immigrants and their descendants. Traditionally, *pisanki* are made from fresh boiled eggs, which are decorated on Easter Saturday and later shared at the breakfast table on Easter Sunday.

While *pisanki* often feature floral designs, Carla's work includes both realistic and decorative bird motifs reflective of Polish folk art as well as the Tidewater region of southern Maryland that she now calls home. Carla was awarded the Cavalier's Cross of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Poland by the President of Poland in 2009 for her numerous artistic contributions towards furtherance of knowledge and appreciation of Polish culture.

Links

Video:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=fHLt6NRbzfY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fHLt6NRbzfY)

**Carlene Dowell**

fiber arts

Cumberland, Maryland

*2014-15 Folklife Apprenticeship Award recipient*

Carlene Dowell lives in Cumberland, Maryland, where she raises specialty wool sheep and alpaca on her farm, The PrAiry. Her interest in fiber arts started when she was living and working in Wyoming, raising and showing Afghan hounds as a hobby. During this time, she began experimenting with spinning the hair of Afghan hounds blended with sheep wool.

In 2010, Carlene retired and bought The PrAiry. As she says, “The abundant rain, sunshine, and long growing season in western Maryland give growth to rich fields that can become the perfect sheep pasture, an essential part of sustainability. Western Maryland's close proximity to universities and county extension offices, soil and water advisers, and others who know the lay of the land offers numerous opportunities to learn how best to become self-reliant and self-sustaining. It's healthy up here.”

Carlene connected with Mountain City Traditional Arts in Frostburg and master fiber artist Elaine Pressman, who mentored her in the art of rug making. The pair received a Folklife Apprenticeship Award from Maryland Traditions in 2014-15 to support their work together.

Since taking on the farm, Carlene has become interested in the genetics of fiber and has bred animals with gorgeous fleeces. She has taught weaving, felting, and hat making and dyeing, and she sells yarn, combed tops, socks, scarves, hides, and a variety of items made from the fibers of her animals—including her beloved Shetland sheep, Tinkerbelle, who will be joining her at the National Folk Festival.

## **Carolyn Rapkievian & Kristine Antanesian with the Hyetones**

Armenian dance and music from the Anatolia region

Clarksburg, Maryland

*2018-19 Folklife Apprenticeship Award recipient*

Master Armenian dancer Carolyn Rapkievian has been teaching Kristine Antanesian traditional Armenian dances from the Anatolia region. Many of these dances are in danger of dying out due to a long history of political and social repression that culminated in the 1915 expulsion and genocide of Armenians in Ottoman Turkey. This tragedy saw the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Armenians. The Anatolian homeland is in Turkey; this region's cultural traditions were dealt a nearly fatal blow. Today, even 100 years later, Armenians are still struggling to hold onto a cultural heritage that was nearly lost.

Carolyn grew up in an Armenian family and learned dances from her grandparents and other family elders who escaped the genocide in their youth. Traditionally, music and dance accompanied everything from family celebrations to work in the fields. Like much Eastern music, Armenian music is modal, based on untempered scales instead of octaves, with unusual rhythms such as 5/4 and 9/8 time.

Traditional Armenian dance from Anatolia includes unique line and circle dances, graceful improvisations featuring delicate arm and hand movements, and lively energetic dances. From Carolyn, Kristine is learning how to teach these dances as well as the history of each one. Carolyn is also instructing Kristine about how to work collaboratively with live musicians for performances and for public dance workshops. At the National, the two will be joined by the Hyetones, a trio—David Rapkievian on *oud*, Kylie Hilali on *kanoun*, and Cindy Connelly-Ryan on percussion—that performs traditional Armenian music.

[More about Armenian dance from Carolyn Rapkievian](#)

## **Cheick Hamala Diabate**

Malian griot and ngoni player

Adelphi, Maryland

*2008-09 Folklife Apprenticeship Award recipient*

Born in Mali and based in Maryland, Cheick Hamala Diabate is a steward of the 800-year-old West African griot tradition. Oral historians, singers and musicians, griots belong to a special social caste and are part of a hereditary lineage passed from parent to child. The son of two prominent griot families, Cheick was trained from birth in oral history, song, and music. Under the tutelage of his maternal grandfather, the griot Demba Tounkara, Cheick was taught, and soon mastered, the ngoni, a traditional stringed lute considered one of the ancestors of the banjo. After studying at the National Institute of Arts in Bamako, the capital of Mali, as a teenager, he began an international touring career.

In 1995, Cheick came to the United States to pursue a career as a performer, lecturer, and instructor. Since arriving in the U.S., he has expanded his sound and style. Most notably, he has taken up the banjo, placing the instrument in a traditional griot musical context. His live band melds the ancient and the modern with an electric sound and a deeply rooted spirit. Lyrically, his words tell the tale of Mali and its people, or offer praise to those who are worthy of such things, but musically, the band builds a sound formed at the crossroads where Mali meets Maryland, with musical influences hailing from far and near.

Links:

Artist website:

<http://cheickhamala.com/>

Video:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=ykEnSrhinvs](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ykEnSrhinvs)

**Daniel Van Allen**

furniture restoration

Baltimore, Maryland

*2006-07 Folklife Apprenticeship Award recipient*

As a young artist living in Washington, D.C., Daniel Van Allen crossed paths with a furniture restorer, and was taken with the beautiful color palette and tools carried by the artisan. Soon, he got a job doing furniture touch-ups with the Reliable Furniture Company. This small, regional chain would send a touch-up person, such as Daniel, with furniture deliveries to fix the minor nicks and scratches that often occur during furniture moves; an artist with a paint set was cheaper than delivering an entirely new piece of furniture.

Daniel eventually opened his own shop in D.C. Then, from 1976 to 1978, he apprenticed under a master furniture restorer in Italy, learning traditional methods in furniture restoration, from making his own shellac to French polishing.

Returning to D.C., Daniel took on more furniture restoration work, and also deployed his skills in a partnership with a ship carpenter in Annapolis. In 1981, he moved to Baltimore, where he still makes his home. In his Southwest Baltimore workshop, he handles almost any furniture restoration that comes his way, from minor paint touch-ups to full conservation work.

In addition to furniture restoration and woodwork, Daniel is a self-taught artist, puppeteer, and community activist.

## **Daryl Davis**

boogie-woogie piano

Silver Spring, Maryland

*2008-09 Folklife Apprenticeship Award recipient*

A child of a Foreign Service officer, boogie-woogie pianist Daryl Davis was born in Chicago but spent much his childhood bouncing around the globe with his parents. Chicago did leave an impression though; it was here that Davis absorbed the sounds of African American musicians from the Deep South who had traveled North to Chicago during the Great Migration. He also began to dream of performing with Chuck Berry.

Davis eventually came to the Washington, D.C., region to earn a degree in music from Howard University. By then, he was an avid fan of piano styles invented far before he was born; his piano chops came naturally, but the training to learn the musical nuance was not easy. Davis sought out his musical heroes whenever and wherever he could. "I learned a lot from listening to recordings," he says, "but I learned many hands-on things from visiting and making friends." In 1985, 72-year-old Pinetop Perkins, considered one of the great blues and boogie-woogie pianists, selected 27-year-old Davis to succeed him in the Muddy Waters-influenced Legendary Blues Band. Johnnie Johnson, Chuck Berry's renowned original pianist, has been equally unstinting in his praise of Davis's mastery of the boogie-woogie style. Even Chuck Berry saluted him with his best recommendation: "You really ought to hear him!"

The who's who list of artists Davis has performed with also includes Bo Diddley, Jerry Lee Lewis, Elvis Presley's Jordanaires, and the great Piedmont blues duo Cephas & Wiggins. Davis has also released three solo albums. And, yes, he did fulfill his dream of playing with the legendary Chuck Berry.

### Links

Artist's website:

[www.daryldavis.com/](http://www.daryldavis.com/)

Video:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=pm\\_IcgYA5pA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pm_IcgYA5pA)

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=mGdTf9n86eE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mGdTf9n86eE)

**James McMartin, James Beggins, & Mark Wiest**

furniture making

Wittman, Maryland

*2018-19 Folklife Apprenticeship Award recipient*

James McMartin and James Beggins own and operate McMartin & Beggins, a custom furniture-making company that employs traditional techniques. A self-taught furniture maker, McMartin founded the company in St. Michaels, Maryland, drawing on his expertise as a boat builder and restorer. Beggins too began his woodworking career building boats. The pair has gone on to build many notable pieces of furniture, including the desk of the Governor of Maryland, made from the famed Wye Oak tree.

Apprentice Mark Wiest also has a background in boatbuilding. As he is learning through his apprenticeship, the woodworking of a boat builder and the woodworking of a master furniture maker are similar and yet far from the same. As Mark states, “The scale of my work on large skipjacks or workboats is typically measured to the 1/16th of an inch, whereas Jim and Jim measure to the 1/64th of an inch.”

Over the course of this apprenticeship, McMartin and Beggins will work with Mark on milling techniques, choosing wood, hand-sharpening tools, and using hand tools to create dovetails as well as mortise and tenon joinery (a centuries-old method for joining two pieces of wood, often at right angles). At the conclusion of this apprenticeship, Mark will be at home woodworking on land and on sea.

Video:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=nR8BOQls7wE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nR8BOQls7wE)

## **John Van Alstine**

building and rigging crab pots

Shady Side, Maryland

*2018-19 Folklife Apprenticeship Award recipient*

Master crab pot maker and Chesapeake Bay waterman John Van Alstine builds every piece of equipment he uses, from crab pots to gill, eel, fyke and pound nets, as well as dredges and pot tongs. Each year, he builds between 100 to 300 crab pots.

A fixture on the Chesapeake Bay, crab pots are built of an enclosed wire framework with four openings; baited and dropped to the bottom of the bay, they create an inescapable trap for any crab that enters. When John began to work full-time on the water in 1995, he was unable to find someone to teach him the trade skills necessary to build all the equipment. This was not due to lack of entrenched knowledge among his fellow waterman; rather, a competitive nature prevails on the water, and he was seen as new competition for the same finite catch. So, John began the slow process of teaching himself how to build everything he needed by trial and error.

That body of knowledge is slowly taking a backseat as today's watermen can get by with commercial crab pots. John is working to keep alive the traditions he taught himself, showing others how to build their own pots. There is interest in this craft; he counts fifth-generation watermen among his students. John is teaching apprentice Brian Middeldorf (who is unable to attend the festival) how to build different styles of pots, where to source construction materials, and how to establish a production process to build a large quantity of uniformly built pots.

Links

[“Culling crabs with the watermen of the Chesapeake Bay”](#)

Video:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=fGmPr3nGzVM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fGmPr3nGzVM)

## **Joseph Kavanagh & Patrick Kavanagh**

localized metal annealing

Baltimore and Abingdon, Maryland

*2018-19 Folklife Apprenticeship Award recipient*

Joseph Kavanagh and his nephew, Patrick Kavanagh, work together at the Joseph Kavanagh Company, a metal bending and rolling company established in 1866 by Joseph's great-grandfather, Joseph M. Kavanagh. Today, Joseph owns the company with his brother and sister and is a master of localized annealing, a technique in which a small section of metal is heated and softened for bending while the remaining metal stays hard. A casual observer might think it is an easy process; a casual observer would be wrong. Annealing is an art form that involves subtle hand movements and absolute control of the section of metal being heated. Joseph's mastery of the process has allowed him to refine the craft into a subtle art, with the visual changes in the metal as well as the smell of the heated aluminum factoring into his process and decision making.

The Kavanagh family first entered the business in 1866 as coppersmiths. It is fitting, then, that Joseph and Patrick's apprenticeship began with the two working together annealing copper, the simplest material to anneal and work. From there, Patrick and Joseph have worked with steel, brass, and finally aluminum. Each material presents its own challenges and lessons. Through the apprenticeship, Patrick has learned the subtle hand skills that are necessary to move the metal while managing the blowtorch. At the end of this apprenticeship, Patrick will be trained with the necessary skills and craftsmanship for this careful work.

### Links

Artist website:

<http://josephkavanaghco.com>

Video:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=EBwyVwj6110](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EBwyVwj6110)

## **Katherine Fahey**

crankie and paper cut artist  
Baltimore, Maryland

Katherine Fahey is an artist, puppeteer, designer, and nationally beloved creator of scrolled panoramas known as crankies, branded as such for the hand cranks necessary to move the scroll—and, literally, the story—forward. While moving panoramas of all sorts have been used as storytelling media for centuries, Fahey is a leader among the new generation of artists rediscovering and reviving this traditional art form.

Fahey found her way to making crankies through paper cut art. She has taken to this medium—or perhaps it has taken to her—and she has shown herself to be an exceptionally adept crankie storyteller and designer. Through her crankies, she has brought folktales to life using delicately cut paper, expertly displayed in her intricate custom-made crankie frame. With her partner, artist Dan Van Allen, she has become involved with the Arabber Preservation Society in their Hollins Market neighborhood of southwest Baltimore. The society is dedicated to preserving the dying tradition of arabbing, or selling fruits and vegetables from horse-drawn wagons. Kathy will be performing a crankie about arabbers that illustrates the relationship between community and cart, with help from arabber and Maryland master Leonard Wills.

Links

Video:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=JYrNBbVqQGE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JYrNBbVqQGE)

## **Lafayette Gilchrist**

jazz piano

Baltimore, Maryland

*2007-08 and 2009-10 Folklife Apprenticeship Award recipient*

Lafayette Gilchrist is a D.C.-born, Baltimore-based self-taught pianist/composer whose playing rings with influences that span nearly a century of African American vernacular music—from stride piano and funk to go-go and hip hop.

Gilchrist taught himself piano while attending the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC). He has since fronted his own group, and gone on to play alongside such luminaries as David Murray. Through the Maryland Traditions program, he apprenticed under saxophonist Carl Grubbs, a student of John Coltrane's. He has been a master artist in this program as well.

Gilchrist is a polymath of jazz performance; one of his solo sets often connects music separated by decades through a process of free association. Echoes of Thelonious Monk or Baltimore's own Eubie Blake can butt right up to notes from Motown and the go-go of his D.C. upbringing with unquestionable ease. (Chuck Brown, the father of go-go, practiced within earshot of his aunt's home). Perhaps because he started playing when he was nearly an adult, his style, at once heady and fun, fluid and funky, is a lilting dance across the keyboard that taps into jazz's vast cultural history.

Links

Facebook:

[www.facebook.com/LafayetteGilchristMusic/](http://www.facebook.com/LafayetteGilchristMusic/)

Video:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=MEMxwHaZLdU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MEMxwHaZLdU)

## **Leonard “Felix” Wills**

arabber wagon restoration

Baltimore, Maryland

*2018-19 Folklife Apprenticeship Award recipient*

Once a common site in many American cities, arabbers—street vendors hawking fruits, vegetables, and other household goods from colorful horse-drawn carts—are a rare breed now only found in Baltimore. Their jingling carts and street cries may seem antiquated, but they serve a real and important function: they bring much-needed fresh produce to city residents who otherwise would have little access to fresh food. The term “food desert” might be new, but Baltimore arabbers have been working to solve the problem of access to healthy food long before any think tanks or urban gardens got involved

Leonard “Felix” Wills has been arabbing for well over 50 years. Like most arabbers, Felix has had many helpers and apprentices throughout much of his career; he himself received a Folklife Apprenticeship Award from Maryland Traditions to apprentice under master artist James Cooper in 2008. In 2019, Wills is the master artist, focused on teaching the restoration and rebuilding of traditional arabber wagons using existing antique gear and other parts from broken wagons to his apprentice, Ahmaud Chase (who is unable to attend the festival). Wagons are becoming harder to come by, which is just one in a litany of hurdles faced by Baltimore’s arabbers.

Links

[To learn more, the Arabber Preservation Society](#)

Video:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=AINIE3o6tq8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AINIE3o6tq8)

## **Lustre Quartet & Electric Avenue Quartet**

barbershop quartet singing

Baltimore, Maryland

*2018-19 Folklife Apprenticeship Award recipient*

The all-female group Lustre Quartet, the 2018 Sweet Adelines International Quartet Champions, among several other notable regional and international awards, are masters of the barbershop quartet tradition.

One of the most widely known a cappella harmony singing traditions, the barbershop quartet style consists of four-part harmony, but not necessarily four singers. The tradition can be traced to 19<sup>th</sup>-century African American culture, improvisation in particular, combined with European harmony traditions. By the time phonograph recording first documented the sound, most performers were white, obscuring for many its roots in black culture. In 1938, two men from Tulsa, Oklahoma, founded the Society for the Preservation and Encouragement of Barber Shop Quartet Singing in America, Inc. While the group's name was intended to parody the "alphabet soup" of New Deal agencies, the organization—now officially known as the Barbershop Harmony Society—has had a lasting impact on American singing.

Singers can be both male and female, but it is rare to see a mixed group. Male groups are known as barbershop quartets, while female groups are known as Sweet Adelines (named for the song of the same name). Sweet Adelines International now lists over 30,000 singers in its membership from countries worldwide.

Master artist Jenny Harris sings bass with the Lustre Quartet. She has been working with apprentice Donna Vincent Roa, who herself leads a Sweet Adelines group known as Electric Avenue Quartet. From Jenny, Donna has been learning about quartet history, breathing, and technique, as well as stage presentation. At the festival, both quartets will show off their skills.

Links

Artist websites:

[www.lustrequartet.com/](http://www.lustrequartet.com/)

[www.facebook.com/ElectricAvenueQuartet/](https://www.facebook.com/ElectricAvenueQuartet/)

Video:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=dCM9q2pjVaw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dCM9q2pjVaw)

## **Marimba Linda Xelajú**

Guatemalan marimba

Silver Spring, Maryland

*2009-10 Folklife Apprenticeship Award recipient*

Silver Spring's Marimba Linda Xelajú is a family ensemble that carries on the tradition of Guatemalan marimba playing.

The marimba is at the core of Guatemala's musical traditions; it is a musical instrument with West African roots that can be found throughout northern Central America and southern Mexico. The marimba is Guatemala's official national instrument, and government ordinances require broadcasting of marimba music daily. The contemporary marimba's construction is like that of the xylophone, while its key arrangement resembles that of a piano—the "black keys" are set above and behind the "white keys."

Robert Girón chose to start his family ensemble in 1995 to promote the marimba tradition within the United States, as well as to pass it on to his children. He had a marimba hand-built in Guatemala, and the family band literally features "all hands" in the family playing on a beautifully ornate marimba at once. Though playing the marimba has traditionally been a male pursuit in Guatemala, Robert has chosen to share his love and knowledge of the marimba with his daughters as well as his son.

Links:

Artist website:

<http://www.marimbaxelaju.com/>

Video:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=BNh2k3Zmm2M&t=741s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BNh2k3Zmm2M&t=741s)

## **Meki's Tamure Polynesian Arts Group**

Tahitian drumming and dance

Brooklyn Park, Maryland

*2018-19 Folklife Apprenticeship Award recipient*

Drumming and dancing have become symbols to the world of Tahiti's and French Polynesia's proud cultural heritage. The Toalepai family has shared these traditions with audiences in Baltimore for nearly half a century.

Master Polynesian drummer Meki Toalepai's father arrived in the U.S. from Tahiti in the early 1960s as part of a traveling drum and dance group. He eventually relocated to the Baltimore region, where he provided the entertainment at the Hawaiian Room at the Emerson Hotel in downtown Baltimore and, later, formed his own group. In 1992, Meki took over the ensemble, traveling to Hawaii to learn from master drummers there. This past April, he was appointed as Governor Larry Hogan's commissioner for the Asian Pacific American Affairs Office, the first Pacific Islander ever to serve in the role.

Meki is teaching his 23-year-old son, Meki Toalepai Jr., the tradition of Tahitian drumming. Meki Jr. will learn to play the lead drum. He will have to memorize the basic structure of several Tahitian drum patterns, and will eventually learn to play two drums simultaneously, with the left hand playing a straight rhythm on a bass drum called the *pahu*, and the right hand playing a complex melody on a hollowed-out log called the *to'ere*. At the conclusion of the apprenticeship, Meki Jr. will be able to play any drum in the ensemble and be ready to accompany dancers. The ability to communicate with dancers through subtle cues is essential to this tradition that is both vigorous and graceful.

### Links

Artist's website:

<http://mekistamure.com/>

Facebook:

[www.facebook.com/hula410/](http://www.facebook.com/hula410/)

Video:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=et4gRtoJ4Kc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=et4gRtoJ4Kc)

**Pete Ross**

banjo maker

Baltimore, Maryland

*2009-10 Folklife Apprenticeship Award recipient*

Pete Ross is a widely respected banjo maker, researcher, and musician. Ross makes gourd banjos, ranging from those of his own design to exact replicas of historic instruments, especially from the colonial era. This is when the instrument first appeared in the Americas, brought by enslaved Africans. His latest creations are inspired by the "classic era" banjos of the 1890s–1910s but made for the contemporary old-time music setting, with intricate mother-of-pearl inlays, engravings, hardwood necks, and ebony fingerboards.

In 1994, Ross began apprenticing with Scott Didlake, a master early-banjo builder living in Jackson, Mississippi. After Scott's death, Ross returned to his home state of Maryland, where he has continued the research needed to authentically recreate the banjo in its earliest New World form.

His reconstructions of 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup>-century banjos have been featured internationally in museums, art galleries, movies, documentaries, and live performances. In 2014, Pete cocurated *Making Music: The Banjo in Baltimore and Beyond* at the Baltimore Museum of Industry with fellow banjo players and scholars Greg Adams and Robert Winan; the exhibit explored the mid- to late 19<sup>th</sup>-century Baltimore banjo maker William E. Boucher, Jr. and the transformation of the banjo into a commercial product. Pete lectures on banjo history and will be giving a talk about the banjo in the Chesapeake region during the National Folk Festival.

### Links

Artist's website:

[www.banjopete.com/](http://www.banjopete.com/)

Video:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=x3fJEWc08to](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x3fJEWc08to)

**Rico Newman**

Native American finger weaving

University Park, Maryland

*2013-14 Folklife Apprenticeship Award recipient*

Rico Newman of the Choptico Band of the Piscataway is a master in finger weaving, also known as Indian braiding. Finger weaving is an ancient art of flat braiding that predates the loom. While cultures around the world developed their own variations of finger weaving, Native American peoples in the present-day eastern United States cultivated finger weaving into a fine art.

While a range of materials can be used in finger weaving, from the inner bark of a tree to wool and animal hide, the basic concept for weaving remains the same: several lengths of material are tied to a secure post or tree, and the dangling materials are tightly woven in an under-over pattern, moving away from the fastened end.

For centuries, these intricate braids have been used to make sashes, belts, and garters, fulfilling a range of ceremonial and practical functions. Rico's mother was skilled at many forms of weaving, but upon her passing, no one picked up the tradition. He had to search out Pueblo and Shawnee artists who taught him the basic techniques. With the recent recognition (2012) of the Piscataway people by the State of Maryland, there is a resurgence of pride and interest in their tribal traditions, and Rico has created many sashes and garters worn as part of traditional Piscataway regalia.

Rico sits on the Maryland Commission on Indian Affairs and is the Chairman of Maryland Indian Tourism Association., Inc.

Links

Video:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=S2Bf7TCSb-s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S2Bf7TCSb-s)

## **Ruben Dario Corona & Oliver Trinidad Corona**

Dominican barbering

Baltimore, Maryland

*2018-19 Folklife Apprenticeship Award recipient*

On the tradition of Dominican *barberia*, Ruben “Dario” Corona says, “All Dominicans, if they’re not baseball players, they’re barbers.” Cutting hair is universal; in the Dominican Republic, the practice has been elevated to an art. Dominican barbers are known for original haircuts, renowned for using blades to create custom designs.

Dario is the proprietor of Dario’s Barbershop in Southeast Baltimore. He started barbering on a whim, cutting a friend’s hair using the scissors he had on hand for creating particular plumage on his gamecocks. This, he says, is a very Dominican way to enter the trade. He eventually learned to cut hair more formally and opened his own business. In 2003, after opening his own shop and teaching his brother how to barber, he left his home for this U.S. He eventually settled in Baltimore, where he saw a need for his advanced skill in the Dominican community. In addition to providing some of the sharpest fades and designs, he has taught the craft to half a dozen barbers, now including his nephew, Oliver. At least four other shops have been opened as a direct result of his teaching.

During their apprenticeship, Dario is working with Oliver on fades, finishing with scissors, using different scissors to thin hair, learning to “read” people to pick haircuts, the 16 passes used to shave with a blade, designing and shaping with a blade, hygiene, and, finally, customer relations. Both barbers will be at the festival providing attendees haircuts, so they can look sharp as they enjoy some of the finest traditional artists from across the country.

### Links

Facebook:

[www.facebook.com/DariosDominicanBarbershop/](https://www.facebook.com/DariosDominicanBarbershop/)

Instagram:

[www.instagram.com/DariosDominicanBarbershop/?fbclid=IwAR1etlStD7YVUeoBKcxGW-KB4bhm\\_77eTyBsqGYdKN6aj8W164Cutnflv7o](https://www.instagram.com/DariosDominicanBarbershop/?fbclid=IwAR1etlStD7YVUeoBKcxGW-KB4bhm_77eTyBsqGYdKN6aj8W164Cutnflv7o)

Video:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=kU82UIMw2BQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kU82UIMw2BQ)

## **Shanthi Chandrasekar**

Indian kolam painting

North Potomac, Maryland

*2010-11 Folklife Apprenticeship Award recipient*

Shanthi Chandrasekar is a master Indian kolam painter from North Potomac, Maryland. A kolam is a symmetrical, geometric line drawing that consists of curved loops drawn around dots in a grid pattern. In Sri Lanka and South India, it is widely practiced by Hindu women; Shanthi learned the tradition from her grandmother in Tamil Nadu, India.

Traditionally, Indian women begin their day by drawing a kolam with rice flour outside their front door; the kolam is a sign of welcome to guests, as well as a way to invite prosperity to the home. Additionally, the kolam offers an easy meal to ants, birds, and other small creatures—a daily reminder of our co-existence with nature.

Designed to be temporary, throughout the day the drawing is trod upon, blown by the wind, and washed away by the rain. In the morning before sunrise, Indian women wash the surface where they placed the previous day's kolam and create a new one while the surface is still damp enough to hold the design. In this way, kolams embody the ephemerality of life.

Shanthi also has a deep interest in scientific inquiry; she finds her greatest inspiration creating kolams and other art forms that lie at the intersection of science and spirituality. Shanthi has taught her children how to make kolams, and led kolam-drawing workshops throughout the region.

### Links

Artist website:

[www.shanthic.com/](http://www.shanthic.com/)

## **Tebabu Assefa & Sara Mussie**

Ethiopian coffee ceremony

Takoma Park, Maryland

*2014-15 Folklife Apprenticeship Award recipient*

Ethiopian natives Tebabu Assefa and his wife and partner, Sara Mussie, are dedicated to keeping the Ethiopian traditional coffee ceremony alive. Washington, D.C., and vicinity are home to the largest Ethiopian community outside of Ethiopia, and Ethiopian music, arts, and foodways can be found throughout the area. Integral to Ethiopian cultural and social life is the ceremony that is conducted around the roasting, brewing, and drinking of coffee. Coffee is said to have originated in Ethiopia. Far from the quick cup you might grab at the local coffee franchise, the Ethiopian coffee ceremony lingers for an hour or more and is meant to be a communal experience shared with family and friends. A beautiful and ornate process, the ceremony encourages those involved to focus their attention on the smell, look, and taste of the beans. Guests typically drink three rounds of fragrant, sweet coffee.

Tebabu and Sara own Blessed Coffee, one of the first Benefit Corporations in Maryland; it shares its profits with Ethiopian coffee pickers and community organizations in Takoma Park. They will be presenting three 90-minute traditional coffee ceremonies daily (including roasting and serving).

Video:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=om4m0PFinBg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=om4m0PFinBg)

## **The Painted Screen Society of Baltimore**

screen painting

Baltimore, Maryland and Ocean City, Maryland

*screen painters have received Folklife Apprenticeship Awards multiple times*

How does a community tradition begin? For the painted screens of Baltimore, it began with meat and produce. Or rather, a salesman painting the screens of his store with images of meat and produce to attract customers. Those first colorful screens painted on woven wire in 1913 by William Oktavec, a Czech grocer, were admired by neighbors. They liked the aesthetic qualities and appreciated that a painted screen (you can see out, but people can't see in) maintains a semblance of privacy while also creating much-needed air flow in the pre-air conditioner summertime in Baltimore's cramped row home communities.

Oktavec opened a shop in 1922 to sell screens, which he did by the thousands. At their most popular, in the 1940s and '50s, Oktavec and other artists supplied upwards of 100,000 painted screens to homeowners, who thought their idealized, bucolic scenes were an essential feature of a modern Baltimore home. Soon the popularity of painted screens slowly started to wane, aided by the ubiquity of air conditioners, changing definitions of modernity, and changing demographics.

The Baltimore Painted Screen Society was founded in 1985 to preserve this tradition. Several current and past members have received Folklife Apprenticeship Awards from Maryland Traditions to teach others this distinctive tradition. A number of current painters learned from William Oktavec's students or imitators. Many have developed their own styles; times change and so do painted screens. The society acts as a clearinghouse for information and classes, hosts workshops and tours, and facilitates demonstrations, artist residencies, and community outreach.

Links

Artist's website:

<http://paintedscreens.org/>

Video:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=18Qnwhcayo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=18Qnwhcayo)

## **Trinidad & Tobago Baltimore Steel Orchestra**

steel pan orchestra

Baltimore, Maryland

*2013-14 Folklife Apprenticeship Award recipient*

Founded in Baltimore in 1971, the Trinidad & Tobago Baltimore Steel Orchestra is led by master steel pan player and teacher Richard Semper. Across almost five decades, Semper has taught generations in the region, while his orchestra has had a celebrated career representing Maryland's Trinidadian community.

The steel pan (also known as steelpans, steel drums or pans) is a musical instrument that was created on the island of Trinidad and Tobago in the early 1940s. Orchestras that in the late '30s performed on frying pans, dustbins, and oil drums gave way to steel pan ensembles by the '40s. When the United States Navy arrived on Trinidad in 1941, sailors were amazed by the steel pan music and helped popularize it internationally.

Steel pans were originally made from 55-gallon industrial drums that were hammered to create individual notes; today, many instruments are created to custom specifications. The repertoire of a modern orchestra may include reggae, pop tunes, and, of course, instrumental interpretations of the calypsos so closely associated with the island.

Richard Semper immigrated to the U.S. in 1968 from Trinidad. His steel orchestra quickly became a mainstay, performing concerts throughout the mid-Atlantic region, touring Europe in 1978 as Goodwill Ambassadors for the City of Baltimore, entertaining crowds at the 1979 and 1983 Major League Baseball World Series in Baltimore, and playing for former President Carter at the Kennedy Center. Recognizing the orchestra's significance, the late mayor and governor of Maryland William Donald Schaefer named it the "official steel orchestra of the City of Baltimore." Today, the group boasts three generation of pan players.

Links

Facebook:

[www.facebook.com/TrinidadandTobagoBaltimoreSteelOrchestra/](http://www.facebook.com/TrinidadandTobagoBaltimoreSteelOrchestra/)

Video:

[www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=1&v=Jfwq-U-eOL8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=1&v=Jfwq-U-eOL8)