



ANNUAL

NATIONAL COUNCIL
FOR THE
90
YEARS
TRADITIONAL ARTS

REPORT

2023

Letter from the Chair

Dear friends,

It's been an especially consequential year for the National Council for the Traditional Arts (NCTA). Our legacy festivals in Lowell, MA; Richmond, VA; and Butte, MT, have roared back from the COVID-19 pandemic, bigger and stronger than ever. And we launched an exciting new program to present recipients of the National Heritage Fellowship (the nation's highest honor bestowed to folk and traditional artists) in National Parks throughout the country. Just shy of half a million people attended NCTA-affiliated events in 2023.

It's also been a year of transition. After a productive five-year tenure as executive director and guiding the NCTA through the pandemic, Lora Bottinelli has departed the organization to take up new challenges in the realm of arts and culture. She is succeeded by Blaine Waide, who has served the NCTA in a senior-management capacity for the past several years, and brings an abundance of talent, passion, and ability to the leadership position.

The year 2023 was special for another reason. It marks the astonishing 90th anniversary of the founding of our organization. It all began in the depths of the Great Depression when a remarkable woman from Kentucky named Sarah Gertrude Knott had the notion that a celebration of America's diverse folk-arts traditions would be good for the country. She set to work, and by 1934 had wrangled enough support to present the 1st National Folk Festival in St. Louis, the first major multicultural folk festival in the nation.

In the divided America of today, Ms. Knott's prescription for strengthening the nation's social fabric is as timely in the 2020s as it was in the 1930s. And it's why the work of the NCTA is more vital than ever.

The National Folk Festival and its legacy events are just one of the ways the NCTA makes a difference in peoples' lives and helps preserve our cultural heritage. Our partnerships with the National Park Service and the National Endowment for the Arts' National Heritage Fellowship program further supports our mission, and the NCTA has built one of the premier archives of recorded traditional music in the world, much of which resides at the Library of Congress.

We could not do this work without your support. Our deepest appreciation for your generosity in previous years and in those to come.

Warmly,



George Holt
Chair, Board of Directors



SEASON HIGHLIGHTS 2023



Mission

The National Council for the Traditional Arts (NCTA) is the oldest folk arts organization in the nation, and the only one committed to producing live, multicultural traditional arts events and programs throughout the entire country. Since 1933, the NCTA has celebrated diversity and tradition-based creativity in American society through programs that provide powerful, authentic cultural experiences—inspiring people to connect, to cultivate common ground, and to appreciate the richness and diversity of our nation's complex culture.

To learn more about our work, please visit [NCTA-usa.org](https://ncta-usa.org).



ncta-usa.org



National Council for the
Traditional Arts (NCTA)



[ncta_usa](https://www.instagram.com/ncta_usa)

475,000+

EVENT ATTENDEES

550+

ARTISTS

60+

TRADITIONS REPRESENTED

25

STATES AND TERRITORIES

9

COUNTRIES

100+

**HOURS OF PROGRAMMING
ADDED TO OUR ARCHIVES**

Photography throughout: unless otherwise noted, all photos by Remsberg, Inc.

Staff

Blaine Waide
Executive Director

Madeleine Remez
Senior Associate Director

Winston George
Finance Manager

Colleen (CJ) Holroyd
Program Services Manager

Colleen Arnerich
Production Manager

Becky Hill
Programming Manager

Bridgette Hammond
Festival Logistics Coordinator

Keenan Dubois
Production Assistant

Kayt Novak
Festival Assistant

Joel Savoy
Program Manager

Julia Gutiérrez-Rivera
Program Coordinator

Amy Millin
Development Specialist

Ariya Hayes-Lawson
Development Specialist

Elaine Randolph
Administrative Specialist

Vitoria Ido
Finance Assistant

Julia Olin
Executive Director Emerita

Lora Bottinelli
Consultant

Board

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Brian Morrison
Falls Church, Virginia

Barry Lee Pearson
Hyattsville, Maryland

Charlie Seemann
Elko, Nevada

Daniel Sheehy
Falls Church, Virginia

Dena Stoner
Alexandria, Virginia

Andy Wallace
Thomastown, Maine

Phil Wiggins
Takoma Park, Maryland

Dwain Winters
Bethesda, Maryland

Festival Crew & Volunteers

NCTA events and programs succeed, in large part, because of the hardwork and dedication of an outstanding group of production, audio, and technical personnel, over 100 annually, some of whom volunteer their time to help build and create these events. We thank them for their dedication to the mission of the NCTA, their tireless work behind the scenes, and their invaluable contributions in bringing folk and traditional arts programs to the American public. The NCTA and its partner communities owe them a considerable degree of gratitude for the success of these efforts.



Remembering Chris Strachwitz

By Daniel Sheehy
NCTA board member and Smithsonian Folkways Director and Curator, Emeritus

Chris Strachwitz (1931-2023) left a major mark on American musical life. A post-World War II German immigrant to the United States, he not only adopted his new land; he devoted the rest of his life to reveling in the musical creations of its working-class people. As a young boy in the 1930s, he followed his curiosity about people different from him—people from Poland, Denmark, and France displaced during the War, as well as Jews physically marked as “other” by the Nazis—by collecting coins and bills that represented them. He later added music recordings to his collecting habits, setting the stage for his future career as founder of the landmark folk music record label, Arhoolie Records.

Following the War in 1947, he joined family in California, where he attended high school and college. His college career was nearly derailed by his unbridled enthusiasm for American roots music he heard on the radio—hillbilly, blues, and New Orleans jazz in particular. Listening to this music, much of which came from Mexican radio stations blasting their signals far north of the border, he heard more than music. The pains and passions of the people playing them touched his heart, and he could not contain himself from seeking them out. As he set out to discover these people who inspired him, he was also discovering himself, as he charted his own future path. After a brief stint as a high school German teacher, he parlayed his true passion—“down home” music—into a career.

Chris founded Arhoolie Records in 1961. He eventually opened his Down Home Music record store in El Cerrito, California, which became a regional, national, and international beacon for the sound and soul of southern blues, Cajun and zydeco, hillbilly, and a host of other Americana musics. At one point, he turned his attention to Mexican music along the border, applying his collecting cravings to amassing what is likely the world’s largest single collection of historic U.S.-Mexico border recordings, known today as the Strachwitz Frontera Collection of Mexican and Mexican American Recordings, housed at UCLA. Another logical step was to launch a Music of Mexico series of new recordings of grassroots Mexican musicians. This is when our paths crossed. Right before New Year’s Eve in 1977, Chris drove from California to Boca del Río, Veracruz, where I was researching and recording the local traditional music, son jarocho. I introduced him to six of my musician friends, all of whom came from rural areas to play their traditional music for interested diners and tourists, mainly Mexican, visiting the picturesque Gulf Coast on holiday. Chris’s passion for the musicians and their creative genius, as well as his nearly two decades of recording experience, were clear to all. Despite his nearly total lack of Spanish skills, he quickly developed a warm rapport with all involved. As a producer, he captured the spirit of the music and the creative potential of the individual musicians. They named their ensemble Alma Jarocho—Jarocho Soul—and the result was the album *Sones de Veracruz* by Conjunto Alma Jarocho, which to this day stands as one of the most insightful and creative recordings of son jarocho from that era. Another result was that Chris and I discovered ourselves to be soulmates in our mutual admiration for the honest music of unpretentious, grassroots musicians, and we remained friends and collaborators for the rest of our lives.

Chris made hundreds of recordings, documented thousands of musicians, and touched the hearts and lives of millions of music of people. His legacy lives on in his Arhoolie Records label available from the Smithsonian, his Frontera archival collection, the Arhoolie Foundation, and the National Council for the Traditional Arts, for which he served decades as an advisor and board member.



Lowell Folk Festival

JULY 28-30, 2023

Despite a rainy Saturday, the 36th Lowell Folk Festival was an unforgettable weekend for everyone. The festival kicked off Friday evening with a parade through the streets of Lowell led by Haitian mizik rasin group Lakou Mizik—who also treated audiences to an impromptu concert and dance party in a parking garage during Saturday's storm. Sunday dawned mild, and the warm sunshine and exceptional performances ended the weekend on a high note. Three decades after we brought the National Folk Festival to this historic mill city, we're proud it remains a beloved New England mainstay.

LOWELL, MASSACHUSETTS · 130,000 FESTIVAL ATTENDEES



Montana Folk Festival

JULY 14-16, 2023

BUTTE, MONTANA · 165,000 FESTIVAL ATTENDEES

The 14th Montana Folk Festival took place this July in scenic downtown Butte. Produced by Mainstreet Uptown Butte, the NCTA curates the festival's artistic program. Over 20 performing groups representing a myriad of traditions and cultural communities were presented, coming together for an uplifting experience for artists and audience alike. With the mountains as the backdrop, festivalgoers eagerly hit the streets of Butte to soak up the beautiful weather and world-class artists.





Richmond Folk Festival

OCTOBER 13-15, 2023

RICHMOND, VIRGINIA • 175,000 FESTIVAL ATTENDEES

The Richmond Folk Festival never disappoints, and this year—the festival's 19th—was no exception. All weekend, amazing performances with sounds from across the globe brought audiences to their feet. Even steady rain on Saturday couldn't keep Richmond audiences away. Prior to the festival kickoff on Friday evening, six festival artists performed in Richmond-area public schools, filling auditoriums and classrooms with performances and presentations of deeply rooted cultural expressions.

Named Style Weekly's 2022 Richmonder of the Year, we can't disagree with that designation.

There is something for everyone at the Richmond Folk Festival!



NEA NATIONAL HERITAGE FELLOWSHIPS

SEPTEMBER 28 & 29, 2023

WASHINGTON, D.C. • 600 IN-PERSON ATTENDEES

R.L. Boyce
hill country blues musician
Como, Mississippi

Ed Eugene Carriere
Suquamish basketmaker
Indianola, Washington

Michael A. Cummings
African American quilter
New York, New York

Joe DeLeon
"Little Joe" Hernández
Tejano music performer
Temple, Texas

Roen Hufford
kapa maker
Waimea, Hawaii

On behalf of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), the NCTA once again managed and produced the National Heritage Fellowship activities. As the first in-person gathering since 2019, four classes of Fellows were honored, and new friendships and exciting connections were made.

Elizabeth James-Perry
wampum and fiber artist
Dartmouth, Massachusetts

Bess Lomax Hawes Award
Nick Spitzer
folklife presenter, educator,
and radio producer
New Orleans, Louisiana

Luis Tapia
sculptor, Hispano
woodcarving tradition
Santa Fe, New Mexico

Wu Man
pipa player
Carlsbad, California



Gathering in Fellowship: The Legacy and Impact of NEA National Heritage Fellows

A day-long event at the National Museum of the American Indian provided an opportunity for Fellows to collectively reflect on the impact of the award. A special public presentation called Native Art Making in Place featured a film screening and panel discussion about Native art making and the land. Fellows shared firsthand stories of place and belonging as understood through their life's work as traditional and community-based artists.

NEA National Heritage Fellowship Award Ceremony

The Library of Congress hosted the current class of Fellows, along with the classes from 2020-2022, for this year's awards ceremony. Afterwards, a joy-filled reception and dinner celebrated the Fellows in the LOC's Great Hall.

Stay tuned for news on the videos showcasing the artistry of each of the 2023 National Heritage Fellows, their home community, and their traditions.



NATIONAL TREASURES

A TOUR OF CULTURE BEARERS IN NATIONAL PARKS

A Program of the National Council for the Traditional Arts

Since 1970, the NCTA has had a cooperative agreement with the National Park Service (NPS) to assist parks with research, development, production, and documentation of cultural programs, exhibits, and special projects. This year, we expanded on this five-decade partnership with *National Treasures: A Tour of Culture Bearers in National Parks*. *National Treasures* presents recipients of the NEA's prestigious National Heritage Fellowship at National Parks and illustrates their connections to signature places throughout the American landscape.

The NCTA presented over 10 programs and explored additional programming opportunities at National Parks throughout the country. From a series of performances across southeast Louisiana; to quarry mining in Pipestone, Minnesota; from a celebration of Cambodian heritage in Lowell, Massachusetts; to several workshops delving into Navajo techniques in wool weaving and dyeing at Canyon de Chelly in Arizona, and more, *National Treasures* has left lasting impressions on Fellows and participants.

OUR NPS PARTNERS

Birmingham Civil Rights National Monument, Alabama
Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve, Louisiana
Lowell National Historical Park, Massachusetts
Blue Ridge Music Center, Virginia
Pipestone National Monument, Minnesota
Richmond National Battlefield Park, Virginia
Everglades National Park, Florida
Canyon de Chelly National Monument, Arizona
Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program
Wolf Trap National Park for the Performing Arts, Virginia



RARRA

For three years, RARRA (Resource Alerts: Resilience, Reframing, Actions) has increased the visibility of diverse resources and opportunities available for our country's arts and cultural sector. Through newsletters, community networking and conversations, social-media engagement, and a free, searchable database of arts opportunities, RARRA is just one of the ways the NCTA promotes the sustainability and resilience of traditional artists of all expressions and backgrounds.

In 2023...

NEW website launched!

RARRA.ncta-usa.org

\$3.5M

In shared funding opportunities

65%

Open to individual artists

250+

Resource posts published

18%

Open to arts organizations or non-profits

90%

Grant resources

22%

Open exclusively to folk & traditional arts expressions



Artist Roll

We were honored to work with the following outstanding folk and traditional artists at events and programs around the country in 2023.

Angkor Dance Troupe
Cambodian dance

Anita Fields
Osage ribbon worker

**Annie &
The Caldwell Singers**
gospel

**Baba Commandant *
& the Mandingo Band**
Manding

Bio Ritmo
salsa

The Blue Ridge Girls
old-time

Bob Zuellig
square dance caller

Brandon Broussard
Cajun dance instructor

C. Brian Williams
step artist and producer

Catherine Russell
jazz, blues, and swing

Cedric Burnside
hill country blues musician

Cedric Watson
Cajun

Chaksam-pa
Tibetan opera, folk song, and dance

Cheres
Ukrainian

**Chris Thomas
& His Smoke Dancers**
Haudenosaunee social dance

Chuck Mead
rockabilly and honky-tonk

**Cyril Neville with
Omari Neville & the Fuel**
New Orleans funk and R&B

Ed Eugene Carriere
Suquamish basketmaker

Edwin Colón Zayas
Puerto Rican cuatro

Elizabeth James-Perry
wampum and fiber artist

Eva Enciñias
flamenco

Excelsior Band
brass band

Fort Belknap Singers
Native American drumming

Fran Grace
sacred steel guitar

Francis Palani Sinenci
master Hawaiian hale builder

**Fred Thomas of
the JB's**
Funk Genticorum Québécois

Greenbelt S.I.T.Y. Stars
precision jump rope

Grupo Mono Blanco
son jarocho

Hālau ‘O Lilinoe
traditional Hawaiʻian hula

**Heart of Afghanistan
featuring Ahmad Fanoos
& Sohail Karimi**
Afghan ghazals

Helobung
traditional Tboli music and dance

High Fidelity
bluegrass

Hot Club of Cowtown
western swing and hot jazz

Hugo N. Morales
radio producer & radio network builder

Jarene Fleming
zydeco dance instructor

Jason Samuels Smith
tap dance

Joanie Madden
Irish

**Joe DeLeon
“Little Joe” Hernández**
Tejano music performer

John Morris
old-time fiddle and banjo player

Kala Ramnath
Hindustani violin

Karen Ann Hoffman
Haudenosaunee raised bead worker

**Ken Heath &
the True Disciples**
gospel

Kiki Valera y Son Cubano
son Cubano

**Korean Performing
Arts Institute of Chicago**
pungmul and *samulnori*

Lakou Mizik
Haitian *mizik rasin*

**The Legendary
Ingramettes**
gospel

Los Lobos
Mexican American band

**Los Matachines de la
Santa Cruz de la Ladrillera**
traditional religious dancers

Luis Tapia
sculptor, Hispano woodcarving tradition

Lutchinha
Cabo Verdean

Mal Barsamian Trio
Armenian

Melody Angel
Chicago blues

Michael A. Cummings
African American quilter

**Michael Cleveland
& Flamekeeper**
bluegrass

Musique à Bouches
Québécois

**Nathan &
the Zydeco Cha Chas**
zydeco

Nick Spitzer
folklife presenter, educator, and radio producer

Panfilo’s Güera
tejano conjunto fiddle

R.L. Boyce *
hill country blues musician

Red Baraat
dhol and brass

The Red Trouser Show
circus arts

Redd Volkaert
Telecaster guitar

**Reginald “Reggio the
Hooper” McLaughlin**
tap dance

REVMA
Greek

**Ricardo Lemvo
& Makina Loca**
Congolese/Angolan

Roen Kahalewai Hufford
kapa maker

Sara Correia
Portuguese fado

**The Savoy-Doucet
Cajun Band**
Cajun

Shaka Zulu
New Orleans black masking craftsman,
stilt dancer, and musician

Sona Jobarteh
Manding griot

Springfield Exit
bluegrass and traditional country

**Stanley &
the Ten Sleepless Knights**
quelbe music

**State of the Ozarks
String Band**
Ozark old-time

T’Monde
Cajun

**Tagumpay Mendoza
De Leon**
rondalla music

TahNibaa Naataanii
Navajo/Diné textile artist and weaver

Teada
Irish

Tom Davenport
filmmaker, documentarian, and media curator

Trian
Irish

Tsering Wangmo Satho
Tibetan opera and dance

Wayne Valliere
birchbark canoe builder

**Winnsboro Easter Rock
Ensemble**
Black religious ritual ensemble

Wong Pleng Khmer Band
Cambodian

Wu Man
pipa player

Yary Livan
Cambodian ceramist

Zakarya * & Naomi Diouf
West African diasporic dancers

Zuni Olla Maidens
Zuni dance and song

*Deceased

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR THE TRADITIONAL ARTS
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2022
WITH SUMMARIZED FINANCIAL INFORMATION FOR 2021

ASSETS		2022	2021
CURRENT ASSETS			
Cash and cash equivalents	\$	431,141	\$ 579,794
Investments		8,838	9,312
Grants and contracts receivable		513,576	488,624
Prepaid expenses		-	7,105
Total current assets		<u>953,555</u>	<u>1,084,835</u>
FIXED ASSETS			
Equipment		130,947	123,434
Storage trailer		<u>21,571</u>	<u>21,571</u>
		152,518	145,005
Less: Accumulated depreciation		<u>(129,121)</u>	<u>(118,446)</u>
Net fixed assets		<u>23,397</u>	<u>26,559</u>
OTHER ASSETS			
Right-of-use asset		249,475	-
Deposits		<u>5,417</u>	<u>5,417</u>
Total other assets		<u>254,892</u>	<u>5,417</u>
TOTAL ASSETS	\$	<u>1,231,844</u>	\$ <u>1,116,811</u>
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS			
CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Economic impact disaster loan	\$	2,265	\$ -
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities		48,524	31,766
Accrued salaries and related benefits		44,929	25,975
Operating lease liability		83,502	-
Refundable advance		<u>6,842</u>	<u>-</u>
Total current liabilities		<u>186,062</u>	<u>57,741</u>
LONG-TERM LIABILITIES			
Economic impact disaster loan, net of current portion		109,535	111,800
Operating lease liability, net of current portion		176,393	-
Deferred rent abatement		<u>-</u>	<u>7,146</u>
Total long-term liabilities		<u>285,928</u>	<u>118,946</u>
Total liabilities		<u>471,990</u>	<u>176,687</u>
NET ASSETS			
Without donor restrictions			
Undesignated		694,581	875,851
Board designated		<u>50,023</u>	<u>50,023</u>
Total net assets without donor restrictions		744,604	925,874
With donor restrictions		<u>15,250</u>	<u>14,250</u>
Total net assets		<u>759,854</u>	<u>940,124</u>
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	\$	<u>1,231,844</u>	\$ <u>1,116,811</u>

As prepared by GRF CPAs & Advisors

Current year financials, once audited, will be made available upon request.
Please contact info@ncta-usa.org



A Spotlight on 90 Years of the NCTA

By Blaine Waide
Executive Director

On a cool, sunny afternoon at this year’s Lowell Folk Festival, captivated, overflowing audiences watched revered Afghan vocalist Ahmad Fanoos longingly perform ghazals, age-old songs of love rooted in the mystical Sufi tradition. Ahmad is a recent arrival to the United States, one of the thousands upon thousands of people who fled Afghanistan as the Taliban returned to power two summers ago. Several bustling downtown streets away, in the heart of Lowell National Historical Park—one of the country’s first urban National Parks—the Zuni Olla Maidens performed songs and dances celebrating the role of women in their New Mexico pueblo, among the oldest continuously occupied sites in North America.



Ahmad Fanoos mesmerized audiences at the 2023 Lowell Folk Festival with his beautiful performances of *ghazals*.



A snapshot from our history—30 years ago, we hosted the first of our American Roots Independence Day concerts, held at the Washington Monument.
Photo: NCTA Archives

Through the afternoon and into the early evening, packed audiences were treated to thrilling performances of blues, Cajun, bluegrass, funk, Irish, western swing, tap dance, and more. This panoramic view of one festival afternoon encapsulates the NCTA’s history for the past 90 years: presenting the finest traditional artists from the nation’s diverse cultural communities, both longstanding and recently arrived, at festivals that bring downtowns to life, often in partnership with the National Park Service.

The National Council for the Traditional Arts emerged from the idealistic vision of Sarah Gertrude Knott in 1933, and she staged the inaugural National Folk Festival a year later, the nation’s first multicultural traditional arts festival. Ms. Knott hoped to “change the nation” by bringing people of different backgrounds together to form new bonds and connections. In the decades since, the work of the NCTA has grown and evolved, and ebbed and flowed. The National Folk Festival has been presented in nearly 30 communities, we’ve produced national tours in 49 states, organized international cultural exchanges sponsored by the Department of State, worked in National Parks across the country, preserved distinctive cultural traditions on thousands of hours of recordings housed at the Library of Congress, reached millions with our programs, and celebrated countless traditional artists. We’ve also had to reimagine the National Folk Festival, our flagship event, more than once.

Yet, our mission has remained steadfast and consistent, as we develop programs that hold up excellence in the traditional arts as a force that brings us together, represents the country at its best, and strengthens our sense of civic identity and feeling of connection. Through wars, decades of social tumult and upheaval, economic crises, and a pandemic, the NCTA has remained resilient, determined, and full of faith that our work makes the world a better, more decent, more compassionate place.

As we look ahead to our next 90 years, we hope you will continue to join us as we partner with communities nationwide to present programs that are exhilarating and joyful, and that make new ways of seeing the world possible.



OUR FUNDERS



GENERAL DYNAMICS

Sage Foundation

Donate Now



SAVE THE DATES

Music from the Crooked Road
at The Barns at Wolf Trap
Vienna, Virginia
March 23, 2024

Montana Folk Festival
Butte, Montana
July 12-14, 2024

Lowell Folk Festival
Lowell, Massachusetts
July 26-28, 2024

NEA National Heritage Fellowships
Washington, D.C.
September 2024

Richmond Folk Festival
Richmond, Virginia
September 27-29, 2024

Details and updates for the
National Folk Festival will be shared in 2024

Please consider supporting the NCTA as we continue our vital work, celebrating the vibrant, varied, living traditions of the American people!

To inquire about supporting Planned Giving, or a gift to NCTA's Trust for Tradition Endowment Fund, please contact us at:
giving@ncta-usa.org

Thank you to everyone who donated this year in recognition of NCTA's 90th anniversary.

National Council for the Traditional Arts (NCTA)
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Silver Spring, MD 20910 USA
ncta-usa.org

