

For the past 35 years, the National Endowment for the Arts has honored our nation's master folk and traditional artists with the National Heritage Fellowship. This lifetime achievement award recognizes the ways these individuals demonstrate and reflect our nation's living cultural heritage and the efforts of these artists to share their knowledge with the next generation. The NEA National Heritage Fellowships celebrate America as a nation of nations, supporting ethnic and cultural diversity as a strength of national character.

**Number of
NEA National
Heritage Fellows
since 1982:**

413

HONORING THE ARTISTS

The NEA National Heritage Fellowships help to sustain artistic traditions of culturally-distinct communities and promote the vitality of those traditions.

- Past recipients include:
- bluesman B.B. King
- sweetgrass basketweaver Mary Jackson
- Cajun fiddler and composer Michael Doucet
- cowboy poet Wally McRae
- Kathak dancer and choreographer Chitresh Das
- gospel and soul singer Mavis Staples
- oud player and composer Rahim AlHaj
- ballad singer, musician, and storyteller Sheila Kay Adams
- Irish-American fiddler Liz Carroll
- Lakota flute player/singer/dancer Kevin Locke

In 2000, the NEA inaugurated the Bess Lomax Hawes NEA National Heritage Fellowship, given to an individual for achievements in fostering excellence, ensuring vitality, and promoting public appreciation of the folk and traditional arts. Recipients include:

- ethnomusicologist and folklorist Daniel Sheehy
- quilting community advocate Carolyn Mazloomi
- musician, cultural scholar and advocate Mike Seeger

Anyone can nominate an artist to be considered for a fellowship. Fellowship recipients are nominated by the public, often by members of their own communities, and then judged by a panel of experts in folk and traditional arts on the basis of their continuing artistic accomplishments and contributions as practitioners and teachers. The NEA awards up to nine National Heritage Fellowships each year, with each recipient receiving a one-time award of \$25,000.



CONNECTING THE MASTERS TO AUDIENCES

To give the public an opportunity to learn more about the NEA National Heritage Fellows and their art forms, each year the National Endowment for the Arts holds an awards ceremony and a concert in Washington, DC. The annual free concert featuring each year's fellows is a well-attended and much loved event with many people attending every year.

The concert features performances, craft demonstrations, and interviews with that year's honorees, and is streamed online.

- Awards Ceremony: Wednesday, September 28, 2016 at the Library of Congress
- Concert: Friday, September 30, 2016 at George Washington University's Lisner Auditorium

CREATING AND SHARING CONTENT

In addition, the [NEA website](#) contains a wealth of content about the NEA National Heritage Fellows, including:

- [Bios, photos, video, written interviews, audio and video samples](#)
- [Podcasts](#)
- [Video](#) from past NEA National Heritage Fellowships Concerts
- [Photos](#) from past NEA National Heritage Fellowships Events
- [Portraits](#) by photographer Tom Pich of nearly 200 NEA National Heritage Fellows in their homes, studios, and at sites that most vividly reflect the essence of their artwork

"Of all activities assisted by the Folk Arts program, these Fellowships are among the most appreciated and applauded, perhaps because they present to Americans a vision of themselves and of their country, a vision somewhat idealized but profoundly longed for and so, in significant ways, profoundly true."

—**Bess Lomax Hawes**, director, NEA Folk & Traditional Arts, 1977-1992

