

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 the vitality of America's folk and traditional arts, supporting ethnic and cultural diversity as a strength national of character.

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

**422**

## 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:

- ballad singer, musician, and storyteller Sheila Kay Adams
- oud player and composer Rahim AlHaj
- quilters of Gee's Bend Mary Lee Bendolph, Lucy Mingo, and Loretta Pettway
- Irish-American fiddler Liz Carroll
- Kathak dancer and choreographer Chitresh Das
- Cajun fiddler and composer Michael Doucet
- sweetgrass basketweaver Mary Jackson
- bluesman B.B. King
- Lakota flute player/singer/dancer Kevin Locke
- cowboy poet Wally McRae
- bluegrass musician Bill Monroe
- gospel and soul singer Mavis Staples

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:

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

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: Thursday, September 14, 2017 at the Library of Congress
- Concert: Friday, September 15, 2017 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 more than 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

