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World Records Symposium Brings Musicians and Scholars from the Upper Midwest and Nordic Countries to Madison

Madison, WI (March 27, 2018): From April 12–14, the World Records Symposium: Sustaining Scandinavian Folk Music in the Upper Midwest is welcoming musicians and scholars to Madison from the Upper Midwest and the Nordic countries. The symposium, which is free and open to the public on the University of Wisconsin–Madison campus, will include several roundtable discussions with artists and academics, two nights of concerts featuring two NEA Heritage Fellows, and a keynote address from Dr. Christopher Goertzen, professor of musicology at the University of Southern Mississippi. The three-day event will conclude with a Saturday-evening community dance featuring Foot-Notes at Folklore Village in Dodgeville, WI.

Life in the Upper Midwest brims with reminders of Nordic mass migrations to North America. Whether it's lefse and lutefisk or fiddle tunes and folk art, the region has been transformed by the millions of Nordic immigrants who came to the United States at the turn of the twentieth century, settling predominantly in Wisconsin, Minnesota, Northern Michigan, and surrounding states. While some eventually returned to their countries of origin, the vast majority remained permanently in their new country, contributing vitally to its culture and society.

The symposium is bringing together musicians and scholars to focus specifically on the influence of Nordic migration on folk music in the region and how that music is being re-created, re-imagined, and revitalized. "Events like Sustaining Scandinavian Folk Music in the Upper Midwest," says Jim Leary, Grammy-nominated professor emeritus of folklore and Scandinavian studies, "really help local people learn about and understand their cultures, update their conceptions of the Nordic region, and create relationships with folks in the Nordic region as well as elsewhere in the Upper Midwest."

Community members will have the chance to meet with and learn from musicians and scholars who specialize in Nordic and Nordic-American folk music from Illinois, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, South Dakota, and Wisconsin, as well as Canada, Finland, Norway, and Sweden. "We're especially excited to host so many talented musicians, including Dwight Lamb and Paul Dahlin, who have received National Endowment for the Arts National Heritage Fellowships," says Anna Rue, Community Curator of Upper Midwestern Scandinavian Cultures. "We'll also be joined by Laura Ellestad from Norway and Maja Hurling from Sweden. By listening to the local and the global sounds of Nordic migration, we can better understand the ways that migration continues to have effects long after it occurs."

The World Records Symposium is sponsored by the Center for the Study of Upper Midwestern Cultures; the Department of German, Nordic, and Slavic; the Mills Music Library; the Sustaining Scandinavian Folk Arts in the Upper Midwest grant; the National Endowment for the Humanities; and the Mayrent Institute for Yiddish Culture.

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