

World Records Symposium:
Sustaining Scandinavian Folk Arts in the Upper Midwest
Participant Bios and Contact Information
April 12-14, 2018

Paul Dahlin

Born in 1954 to a Swedish-American family in Minneapolis, Minnesota, Paul began playing the fiddle at the age of nine. Learning from his grandfather Edwin, who came to the United States from Dalarna, Sweden, in 1924, and from his mother Nancy and his uncle Bruce, Paul was soon performing at Swedish-American events in the Upper Midwest. Together with his grandfather and his uncle, Paul took the lead in their group known as American Swedish Spelmans Trio. After his grandfather's death in 1985, Paul formed the American Swedish Institute Spelmanslag, which continues to play traditional Swedish folk music today. In 1996, Paul was recognized as a National Heritage Fellow by the National Endowment for the Arts because of his work with traditional Swedish music.

Laura Ellestad

Canadian Hardanger fiddler Laura Ellestad holds a B.A. in Traditional Music Performance and an M.A. in Performance. She is the recipient of several awards, including the Hardanger Fiddle Association of America's Ole Bull Scholarship, the Torleiv Bolstad Memorial Stipend, and she became the first North American Hardanger fiddler to advance to the elite A class at Landskappleiken (the Norwegian national folk music championships). She is a Lecturer and Deputy Department Head at the Institute for Traditional Art and Folk Music at the University College of Southeast Norway in Rauland. She is also currently a Ph.D. Research Fellow at the Norwegian Academy of Music in Oslo, where she is researching the Norwegian-American folk music in the American Upper Midwest. Laura pursues an active performance career as a soloist and in several ensembles. Her debut solo recording, *Valdresspel i Amerika*, released in 2014, received critical acclaim and was nominated for a Norwegian Grammy Award (Spellemannprisen) as well as a Norwegian Folk Music Award (Folkelarmprisen).

Bucky Halker

Bucky Halker is a musician and historian with 15 albums to his credit, including *Anywhere But Utah: Songs of Joe Hill* (2015), honoring martyred Swedish labor songster Hill, and *The Ghost of Woody Guthrie* (2012), an original music tribute to Guthrie. Halker, a Ph.D. in labor history, is the author of *For Democracy, Workers, and God: Labor Song-Poems* and

Labor Protest, 1865-1895 and the producer-scholar for the *Folksongs of Illinois* CD series, vols. 1-5. He has received numerous, including the Archie Green Fellowship from the American Folklife Center in 2012. Bucky also served a guest professor at Carl von Ossietzky University in 2016 in Oldenburg, Germany. Since 2007 he has been the director of Company of Folk, an organization devoted to folk and ethnic arts in Illinois.

Maja Heurling

Maja Heurling has played, written and recorded songs in the Swedish visa-tradition since the 1990s. The visa is a story-telling song, sometimes vocally dramatized in the performance and with an integrated relationship between melody and lyrics, both regarding form as well as content. Traditionally it also often has political content and/or detailed nature poetry. Heurling's lyrics are modern stories from her life as a young woman from an existential and philosophical point of view, and have been released on two CDs (2000 and 2012). A few years ago, Heurling was invited to join a songwriting project, together with three fellow songwriters, honoring the influential Swedish labor author and women's rights activist Moa Martinson (1890–1964). This work resulted in 12 new songs, telling stories from Moa's books and her life. The songs were recorded in 2014 in Moa's 18th century croft, which is today a museum run by Moa's granddaughter.

Christopher Goertzen

Professor Chris Goertzen teaches at the University of Southern Mississippi. He co-edited the Europe volume of *The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music* (2000), and authored *Fiddling for Norway: Revival and Identity* (1997), *Southern Fiddlers and Fiddle Contests* (2008), *Made in Mexico: Tradition, Tourism, and Political Ferment in Oaxaca* (2010) and George P. Knauff's *Virginia Reels and the History of American Fiddling* (2017). Current projects include books on Antebellum American Fiddling (half done?) and *Intensification of Revived Traditional Arts* (barely launched). He owns dozens of guitars, and doesn't understand why more people don't have enchiladas for breakfast.

Dwight Lamb

Dwight Lamb was born in Moorhead, Iowa, in 1934 into a musical family. His father was a fiddler and his mother played the pump organ. Dwight's maternal grandfather, Chris Jerup, left Denmark in 1893 and landed in Turin, Iowa, to work on a farm. He brought his fiddle and accordion and a head full of dance tunes with him. At the age of 12, Dwight started learning his grandfather's Danish dance tunes on the accordion. Dwight is considered a "source" musician for his "Missouri Valley" style of fiddling and also his Danish repertoire. In 2017 he was awarded a National Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts

and also traveled to Denmark to receive a medal from the Danish National Music organization of folk musicians.

LeRoy Larson

LeRoy Larson received his B.S. degree in music education from Bemidji State University and thus began a career in public school music. He received an M.S. degree from Indiana University and a Ph.D. in ethnomusicology from the University of Minnesota, at which time he conducted one of the concert choirs. Larson co-founded Banjar Records, Inc. and began recording his band The Minnesota Scandinavian Ensemble, which were regular performers on A Prairie Home Companion radio show. In 2003 the Ensemble performed at the Library of Congress and the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington DC. Other media performances include local and national TV, and Norwegian TV and radio specials. In 1989 they received a Minnesota Music Award. Larson is an internationally renowned banjo soloist and entertainer. His other combo, LeRoy's River Minstrels, have been very active during his career, specializing in early jazz, ragtime, and the great American songbook. He continues to compose and produce recordings and publications for Banjar Records, and is an active music educator.

Bill Musser

Bill Musser grew up on a farm near Spring Grove, MN, and was raised by parents and grandparents who still spoke Norwegian, though the families had been in the United States for 3 generations. His mother loved music, listening to the hits from the 30s and 40s and playing them on the piano. She instilled that same "ear playing" ability in Bill, who, after spending many happy hours dancing to old-time music at the Highlandville Schoolhouse in his later teen years, said "yes" to Beth Rotto's invitation to start a band, Foot-Notes. Bill is now in his 28th year with the band.

Phil Nusbaum

In the 1970s, Phil presented on KUNI-FM highlights of the traditional music recorded at Vesterheim's Nordic Fest. These recordings also formed the basis of a ½ hour program. Later, at the Minnesota State Arts Board, his field recordings led to a Minnesota Historical LP including detailed notes and an essay. With Leroy Larson and Bob Andresen, Phil co-produced a series of five 1-hour radio shows documenting Upper Midwest Scandinavian traditional music.

More recently, with the 501C3 Grassroots Culture, Phil produced the syndicated Bluegrass Review, helped manage an annual 1-day folk festival, and conducted interviews for oral histories about Minnesota Bluegrass music and the 2011 Minneapolis tornado. Currently

Phil does a weekly bluegrass music radio show over KBEM-FM (Minneapolis) and books traditional musicians into Twin Cities-area libraries.

Sara Pajunen

Based in Boston and born on the Iron Range of Minnesota, Sara Pajunen is a violinist and composer working in various genres and forms. With training in classical music and contemporary improvisation, her output has touched folk, electro-acoustic, tango, and sound art. Known for projects surrounding her Finnish ancestry, Pajunen's work approaches culture and tradition in progressive yet reverent ways.

Bill Peterson

Bill has been interested in folk music of all kinds since the early 1970s. He is co-founder of the Sioux River Folk Festival in Canton, South Dakota. The festival started in 1980 and is still going strong. Bill received a grant in 2001 from the South Dakota Arts Council to study fiddle with Dwight Lamb and has been studying, playing and traveling with him since then. Bill and Dwight have a company called Missouri Valley Music and have recently released a tune book of Danish dance tunes brought to Iowa in 1893 by Dwight's grandfather, Chris Jerup. Bill currently performs on fiddle and guitar with the Sergeant Creek Stringband and the Sioux Falls Ceili Band.

Saijaleena Rantanen

Saijaleena Rantanen works as a postdoctoral research fellow at the Sibelius Academy of the University of the Arts Helsinki, Finland. She is a music historian and her research interests are in the social, political and cultural history of music. Her current research project examines the music culture of Finnish immigrants in the USA and Canada at the turn of the 20th century from three main viewpoints: 1) music as a leisure activity and as entertainment, 2) music as a livelihood (agencies, tours, professional musicians, breakthrough of the audio record industry etc.) and 3) music as a mediator of ideologies. She also has a history as a performer and a piano tuner.

Beth Rotto

Beth Hoven Rotto plays her fiddle with the dance band, Foot-Notes and with other Scandinavian American musicians. She has collected and performed tunes in this tradition, entertaining at hundreds of community events including the World's Largest Schottische which she organized for Foot-Notes 25th anniversary, registering 1881 dancers at Decorah's Nordic Fest in 2015. Foot-Notes has held popular community dances at the Highlandville Schoolhouse for nearly three decades, enabling people of all ages to waltz,

polka and schottische together. Beth has helped raise funds to preserve this 1911 two room schoolhouse. She has worked at Oneota Community Food Co-op for nearly 40 years.

Mike Sawyer

“Clawhammer” Mike Sawyer is the driving force behind the Minnesota Fiddle Tunes Project and Upper-Midwest Old-Time recordings and blog. He is a collector, teacher and player of the region’s traditional music and plays a diverse range of instruments: banjo, autoharp, guitar, button box, and the fiddle. Mike’s projects revolve around learning tunes from old sources and bringing them back to life and into the repertoire of modern traditional musicians.

Kari Tauring

Professional Nordic root musician, storyteller, and spiritual teacher, Kari Tauring grew up in a Norwegian Lutheran home. Her quest for a deeper root led to the life long study of proto-Germanic runes (200 ACE), mythic poetry, cosmology, and metaphysics beginning in 1989. The ancient völva (staff carrying woman) merged with the kjærringa med staven of Norwegian folk song and dance in 2003. Collaborating with Karen Solgard, Hardingfele, Carol Sersland, Telemark tradition bearer and others, staff and stick rhythm merge with ancient poetry and technology creating a layered soundscape that is at once ancient and modern. Tauring received a Folk and Traditional Arts grant to explore the intersection of rune shapes made by the body in traditional Norwegian dance. She has three Nordic root recordings and authored "The Runes: A Deeper Journey."

Oren Tikkanen

Oren Tikkanen was born in 1943 and has lived most of his life around Calumet in Upper Michigan’s Copper Country. He earned degrees at the University of Minnesota (BA), and at the University of Michigan (MSW). While pursuing a career in clinical social work, Oren played old-time dance music on guitar, mandolin, 6-string banjo, and bass guitar with various bands, and also established Thimbleberry Recordings with his late wife, Toni Segal Tikkanen. The Tikkanens produced and distributed recordings by several older Finnish-American traditional musicians. For several years, Oren wrote regular columns about Finnish music for the Finnish American Reporter and for the New World Finn. In retirement, Oren continues to play for dances with the Thimbleberry Band, the Back Room Boys Jazz and Polka Band, and with Pasi Lautala’s Pasi Cats.