



2026 National Heritage Fellows Lloyd Kumulā'au Sing, Jr. and May Haunani Balino-Sing

Hawaiian twined basketry artists, educators, and cultural stewards who have played a central role in the revival of ulana 'ie, a traditional Hawaiian weaving practice. Through more than four decades of shared work, the Sings have helped restore a nearly lost art form while training new generations of practitioners grounded in cultural knowledge, environmental care, and community responsibility.

National Endowment for the Arts 2026 National Heritage Fellows



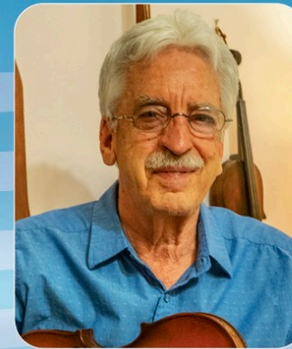
Belen Escobedo



Victor Pichardo and Juan Díes



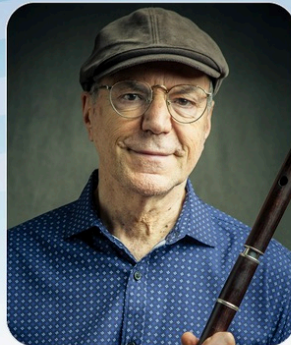
Giovanni Hidalgo



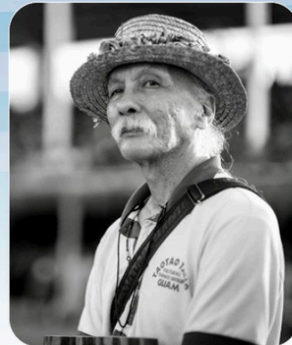
Gerry Milnes



Lloyd Harold Kumulā'au Sing, Jr.
and May Haunani Balino-Sing



Patrick Olwell



Frank Rabon



Cary Schwarz

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2026 National Heritage Fellows



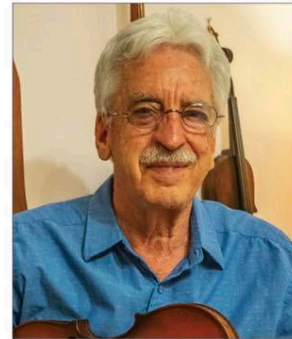
Belen Escobedo



Victor Pichardo
and Juan Dies



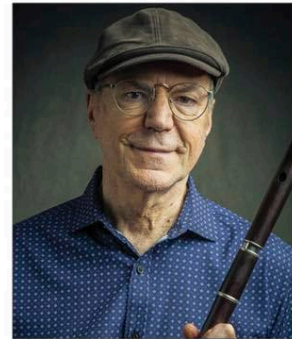
Giovanni Hidalgo



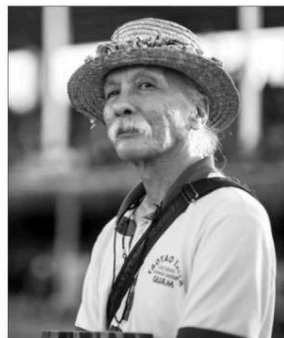
Gerry Milnes



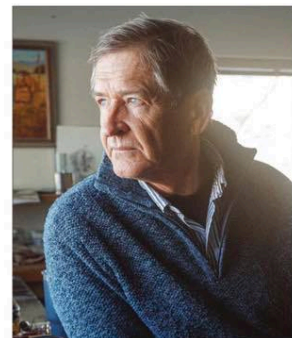
Lloyd Harold Kumulāau
Sing, Jr. and May Haunani
Balino-Sing



Patrick Olwell



Frank Rabon



Cary Schwarz



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Lloyd Kumulā‘au Sing, Jr. and May Haunani Balino-Sing announced as 2026 NEA National Heritage Fellows

APRIL 21, 2026

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The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) is pleased to announce the recipients of the 2026 NEA National Heritage Fellowships, **the nation’s highest honor in the folk and traditional arts**. This lifetime honor recognizes artists whose work reflects excellence, deep knowledge, and a lasting commitment to sustaining our nation’s cultural traditions.

Mary Anne Carter, chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, said, “The 2026 National Endowment for the Arts Heritage Fellows reflect the richness of America, carrying forward cultural practices that have been passed down over generations, sharing them with others, and continuing to shape who we are as a nation.”

Lloyd Kumulā'au Sing, Jr. and May Haunani Balino-Sing are recipients of the 2026 NEA National Heritage Fellowships and past recipients of Folk & Traditional Arts grants from the Hawai'i State Foundation on Culture and the Arts (SFCA). Exhibits of their work and work by their students have been displayed at Capitol Modern: the Hawai'i State Art Museum. They are the 22nd and 23rd of **Hawai'i's National Heritage Fellows** (<https://sfca.hawaii.gov/resources/cultural-resources/hawaiis-national-heritage-fellows/>). Learn more about them on their website, Ke Kumu Hawai'i ([KeKumuHawaii.com](https://kekumuhawaii.com)) (<https://kekumuhawaii.com/home>) and on the NEA website: [arts.gov/honors/heritage/lloyd-harold-kumulaau-sing-jr-may-haunani-balino-sing](https://www.arts.gov/honors/heritage/lloyd-harold-kumulaau-sing-jr-may-haunani-balino-sing) (<https://www.arts.gov/honors/heritage/lloyd-harold-kumulaau-sing-jr-may-haunani-balino-sing>).

Photos



2024-2025 "Nā Akua Ākea: the Vast and Numerous Deities" exhibit at the Hawai'i State Art Museum. The exhibit was the culmination of a year-long weaving journey of haumāna practitioners mentored by Lloyd Harold Kumulā'au Sing Jr. and May Haunani Balino-Sing. They led several guided tours of the exhibit.



2024-2025 “Nā Akua Ākea: the Vast and Numerous Deities” exhibit at the Hawai‘i State Art Museum. In this photo Lloyd and Haunani are leading a tour during a First Friday evening event.



2024-2025 “Nā Akua Ākea: the Vast and Numerous Deities” exhibit at the Hawai‘i State Art Museum. In this photo museum visitors explore the exhibit of ki‘i akua hulu manu made by students of Lloyd Harold Kumulā‘au Sing Jr. and May Haunani Balino-Sing.

2026 NEA National Heritage Fellows

- **Lloyd Kumulā‘au Sing, Jr. and May Haunani Balino-Sing**
([https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://www.arts.gov/honors/heritage/lloyd-harold-kumulaau-sing-jr-may-haunani-balino-sing__;!!LIYSdFfckKA!0yeNXq8dliRKHxVC-XMpLOwhDd74c8DxQtuxfHvz4piZ67zql8D2SUL4QoKtuK-tTxDIm2GuVQ0I2OT4w1tUAVg\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://www.arts.gov/honors/heritage/lloyd-harold-kumulaau-sing-jr-may-haunani-balino-sing__;!!LIYSdFfckKA!0yeNXq8dliRKHxVC-XMpLOwhDd74c8DxQtuxfHvz4piZ67zql8D2SUL4QoKtuK-tTxDIm2GuVQ0I2OT4w1tUAVg$)), Hawaiian Twined Basketry Artists (Wahiawā, Hawai‘i). Through decades of teaching and cultural stewardship, Native Hawaiians Lloyd Kumulā‘au Sing, Jr. and May Haunani Balino-Sing have led the revival of *ulana ‘ie*, a traditional Hawaiian weaving practice once near extinction. Their work has helped restore and sustain this art form for future generations.
- **Juan Díes and Victor G. Pichardo**
([https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://www.arts.gov/honors/heritage/juan-dies-victor-g-pichardo__;!!LIYSdFfckKA!0yeNXq8dliRKHxVC-XMpLOwhDd74c8DxQtuxfHvz4piZ67zql8D2SUL4QoKtuK-tTxDIm2GuVQ0I2OT4QGPpGQ4\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://www.arts.gov/honors/heritage/juan-dies-victor-g-pichardo__;!!LIYSdFfckKA!0yeNXq8dliRKHxVC-XMpLOwhDd74c8DxQtuxfHvz4piZ67zql8D2SUL4QoKtuK-tTxDIm2GuVQ0I2OT4QGPpGQ4$)), Mexican folk musicians (Chicago, Illinois). Through performance, teaching, and community work, Juan Díes and Victor G. Pichardo have helped sustain Mexican *son*, a rich tradition of regional folk music from across Mexico. As co-founders of Sones de México Ensemble, they have brought this music to national stages while training new generations of musicians.
- **Belen Escobedo**
([https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://www.arts.gov/honors/heritage/belen-escobedo__;!!LIYSdFfckKA!0yeNXq8dliRKHxVC-XMpLOwhDd74c8DxQtuxfHvz4piZ67zql8D2SUL4QoKtuK-tTxDIm2GuVQ0I2OT4QGcWDYE\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://www.arts.gov/honors/heritage/belen-escobedo__;!!LIYSdFfckKA!0yeNXq8dliRKHxVC-XMpLOwhDd74c8DxQtuxfHvz4piZ67zql8D2SUL4QoKtuK-tTxDIm2GuVQ0I2OT4QGcWDYE$)), Conjunto Tejano Fiddler (San Antonio, Texas) Rooted in the musical traditions of the Texas–Mexico borderlands, Belen Escobedo performs early Mexican and Tejano fiddle tunes once common across South Texas. Through decades on stage and in the classroom, she has helped keep this rare style alive.
- **Giovanni Hidalgo**
(https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://www.arts.gov/honors/heritage/giovanni-hidalgo__;!!LIYSdFfckKA!0yeNXq8dliRKHxVC-

XMpLOwhDd74c8DxQtuxfHvz4piZ67zql8D2SUL4QoKtuK-tTxDIm2GuVQ0I2OT4j4ckZ4E\$), Latin Percussionist (Ocoee, Florida). Known for his speed, precision, and expressive playing, Giovanni Hidalgo has reshaped Latin percussion on the global stage. A virtuosic performer and dedicated teacher, he continues to influence generations of musicians.

- **Gerry Milnes**

([https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://www.arts.gov/honors/heritage/gerry-milnes__;!!LIYSdFfckKA!0yeNXq8dliRKHxVC-XMpLOwhDd74c8DxQtuxfHvz4piZ67zql8D2SUL4QoKtuK-tTxDIm2GuVQ0I2OT4j-jwbbc\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://www.arts.gov/honors/heritage/gerry-milnes__;!!LIYSdFfckKA!0yeNXq8dliRKHxVC-XMpLOwhDd74c8DxQtuxfHvz4piZ67zql8D2SUL4QoKtuK-tTxDIm2GuVQ0I2OT4j-jwbbc$)), Folklorist & Documentarian (Elkins, West Virginia). During a career spanning more than 50 years, Gerry Milnes has documented and shared the traditions of Appalachia through recordings, films, and public programs. His work has brought lasting attention to the region's artists and cultural practices. *Milnes is the 2026 recipient of the Bess Lomax Hawes National Heritage Fellowship, presented in recognition of an individual who has made a significant contribution to the preservation and awareness of cultural heritage.*

- **Patrick Olwell**

([https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://www.arts.gov/honors/heritage/patrick-olwell__;!!LIYSdFfckKA!0yeNXq8dliRKHxVC-XMpLOwhDd74c8DxQtuxfHvz4piZ67zql8D2SUL4QoKtuK-tTxDIm2GuVQ0I2OT4IY9oncl\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://www.arts.gov/honors/heritage/patrick-olwell__;!!LIYSdFfckKA!0yeNXq8dliRKHxVC-XMpLOwhDd74c8DxQtuxfHvz4piZ67zql8D2SUL4QoKtuK-tTxDIm2GuVQ0I2OT4IY9oncl$)), Flutemaker (Athens, Georgia, and Nellysford, Virginia). Central to Irish traditional music is the sound of the wooden flute—an instrument Patrick Olwell has helped revive and redefine. Drawing on historic designs and decades of study and craftsmanship, his flutes have set the standard for today's makers and players.

- **Frank Rabon**

([https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://www.arts.gov/honors/heritage/frank-rabon__;!!LIYSdFfckKA!0yeNXq8dliRKHxVC-XMpLOwhDd74c8DxQtuxfHvz4piZ67zql8D2SUL4QoKtuK-tTxDIm2GuVQ0I2OT4rDRxfk\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://www.arts.gov/honors/heritage/frank-rabon__;!!LIYSdFfckKA!0yeNXq8dliRKHxVC-XMpLOwhDd74c8DxQtuxfHvz4piZ67zql8D2SUL4QoKtuK-tTxDIm2GuVQ0I2OT4rDRxfk$)), CHamoru Dancer & Choreographer (Hagåtña, Guam). For more than four decades, Native Pacific Islander Frank Rabon has led efforts to restore and sustain CHamoru dance, an Indigenous tradition of Guam and the greater Mariana Islands. His work continues to pass on the history, language, and cultural knowledge of the CHamoru people.

- **Cary Schwarz**

([https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://www.arts.gov/honors/heritage/cary-schwarz__;!!LIYSdFfckKA!0yeNXq8dliRKHxVC-XMpLOwhDd74c8DxQtuxfHvz4piZ67zql8D2SUL4QoKtuK-tTxDIm2GuVQ0I2OT41yX_PH0\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://www.arts.gov/honors/heritage/cary-schwarz__;!!LIYSdFfckKA!0yeNXq8dliRKHxVC-XMpLOwhDd74c8DxQtuxfHvz4piZ67zql8D2SUL4QoKtuK-tTxDIm2GuVQ0I2OT41yX_PH0$)), Saddlemaker & Leather Artist (Salmon, Idaho). Working at the intersection of function and design, Cary Schwarz creates custom saddles known for their strength, balance, and craftsmanship. His nearly five decades of work have helped sustain and advance the traditions of the American West.

Each Heritage Fellowship includes a \$25,000 award and the recipients will be honored in Washington, DC in fall 2026. More details will be available later this summer.

Nominate a National Heritage Fellow

Each year, NEA National Heritage Fellowship recipients are nominated by the public—often by members of their own communities—and then judged by a panel of experts in the folk and traditional arts. The panel's recommendations are reviewed by the National Council on the Arts, which sends its recommendations to the NEA chairman. **The deadline to submit a nomination for the 2027 class of NEA National Heritage Fellows is Monday, May 11, 2026.** Visit the National Endowment for the Arts website for more information and to **submit a nomination** ([https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://www.arts.gov/honors/heritage/make-a-national-heritage-fellowship-nomination__;!!LIYSdFfckKA!0yeNXq8dliRKHxVC-XMpLOwhDd74c8DxQtuxfHvz4piZ67zql8D2SUL4QoKtuK-tTxDIm2GuVQ0I2OT48IW-h-k\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://www.arts.gov/honors/heritage/make-a-national-heritage-fellowship-nomination__;!!LIYSdFfckKA!0yeNXq8dliRKHxVC-XMpLOwhDd74c8DxQtuxfHvz4piZ67zql8D2SUL4QoKtuK-tTxDIm2GuVQ0I2OT48IW-h-k$)).

About the National Heritage Fellowships

The National Heritage Fellowships are the nation's highest honor in the folk and traditional arts. Including the 2026 class, the NEA has awarded 502 National Heritage Fellowships since 1982, recognizing artists working in more than 200 distinct art forms, including bluegrass musicians, blacksmiths, tap dancers, quilters, folklorists, a birchbark canoe builder, children's folk singer, and many others. More information about the National Heritage Fellows is available on the [arts.gov/Heritage](https://www.arts.gov/Heritage)

([https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://www.arts.gov/honors/heritage__;!!LIYSdFfckKA!0yeNXq8dliRKHxVC-XMpLOwhDd74c8DxQtuxfHvz4piZ67zql8D2SUL4QoKtuK-tTxDim2GuVQ0I2OT4iSD9xoM\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://www.arts.gov/honors/heritage__;!!LIYSdFfckKA!0yeNXq8dliRKHxVC-XMpLOwhDd74c8DxQtuxfHvz4piZ67zql8D2SUL4QoKtuK-tTxDim2GuVQ0I2OT4iSD9xoM$)).

About the National Endowment for the Arts

Established by Congress, the National Endowment for the Arts is an independent federal agency that is the largest funder of the arts and arts education in communities nationwide and a catalyst of public and private support for the arts. By advancing opportunities for arts participation and practice, the NEA fosters and sustains an environment in which the arts benefit everyone in the United States. To learn more, visit [arts.gov](https://www.arts.gov/)

([https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://www.arts.gov/__;!!LIYSdFfckKA!0yeNXq8dliRKHxVC-XMpLOwhDd74c8DxQtuxfHvz4piZ67zql8D2SUL4QoKtuK-tTxDim2GuVQ0I2OT4LNYBTBI\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://www.arts.gov/__;!!LIYSdFfckKA!0yeNXq8dliRKHxVC-XMpLOwhDd74c8DxQtuxfHvz4piZ67zql8D2SUL4QoKtuK-tTxDim2GuVQ0I2OT4LNYBTBI$)) or follow us on [Facebook](#)

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([https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://www.instagram.com/neaarts/__;!!LIYSdFfckKA!0yeNXq8dliRKHxVC-XMpLOwhDd74c8DxQtuxfHvz4piZ67zql8D2SUL4QoKtuK-tTxDim2GuVQ0I2OT4uc_xZ1Y\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://www.instagram.com/neaarts/__;!!LIYSdFfckKA!0yeNXq8dliRKHxVC-XMpLOwhDd74c8DxQtuxfHvz4piZ67zql8D2SUL4QoKtuK-tTxDim2GuVQ0I2OT4uc_xZ1Y$)), [X](#)

([https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://twitter.com/NEAarts__;!!LIYSdFfckKA!0yeNXq8dliRKHxVC-XMpLOwhDd74c8DxQtuxfHvz4piZ67zql8D2SUL4QoKtuK-tTxDim2GuVQ0I2OT4ZAeZkz4\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://twitter.com/NEAarts__;!!LIYSdFfckKA!0yeNXq8dliRKHxVC-XMpLOwhDd74c8DxQtuxfHvz4piZ67zql8D2SUL4QoKtuK-tTxDim2GuVQ0I2OT4ZAeZkz4$)), and [YouTube](#)

([https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://www.youtube.com/user/NEAarts__;!!LIYSdFfckKA!0yeNXq8dliRKHxVC-XMpLOwhDd74c8DxQtuxfHvz4piZ67zql8D2SUL4QoKtuK-tTxDim2GuVQ0I2OT45rvRc0U\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://www.youtube.com/user/NEAarts__;!!LIYSdFfckKA!0yeNXq8dliRKHxVC-XMpLOwhDd74c8DxQtuxfHvz4piZ67zql8D2SUL4QoKtuK-tTxDim2GuVQ0I2OT45rvRc0U$))

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Capitol Modern

- **Capitol Modern Website**(<https://www.capitolmodern.org>)
- **Rent the Museum**(<https://www.capitolmodern.org/rent-space>)

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