

Long Island Traditions

NEWSLETTER

www.longislandtraditions.org
info@longislandtraditions.org

Vol. 26 No. 1
Winter 2019

African American Folk Arts Program

Feb 10, 2019 at 2 pm
East Meadow Library

Joan Hodges of Hempstead is an accomplished fiber artist and quilter from Hempstead. Joan Hodges was born in Brownsville, Brooklyn in the early 1940's. Both of Joan's parents came to New York during the "The Great Black Migration" that took place during 1920-60 to seek a better quality of life. In the 1960's Joan and her family moved to Long Island, where they bought a house in Lakeview. Joan went to college at the famous Fashion Institute of Technology in Manhattan in 1968.

Joan makes several kinds of quilts – some are based on traditional patterns such as the Log Cabin and the Courthouse Steps which are part of traditional African American patterns, while others use contemporary themes that relate to African American history. Her work has been exhibited at area museums and libraries. During the program Joan will demonstrate how she makes her quilts and share her life story.

Following the presentation by Joan Hodges will be the Elder Statesmen, a traditional gospel group consisting of several African American gentlemen whose families emigrated from the south during the Great Migration. On average the members are over 60 and their name "characterizes who they are collectively". The group consists of Teddy Williams, Douglas Covington, Fred Brinson, Keith Oliver, Tony Santodonato, and Arthur Johnson. They sing a variety of musical formats including hymns and spirituals, gospel and jubilee acapella-style and with instruments. Ted Williams is the longest member of the group, and a composer of many of the songs they sing.

See **Folk Arts** on page 2

New York Sportsfishing Federation Show

February 16-17, 2019
Freeport Recreation Center
130 E. Merrick Road, Freeport, NY

Join us at this annual event where you can learn all the latest news and trends of the coming fishing season. On hand are many knowledgeable folks who can share with you their tricks and tips on how to catch that big one. Learn what the latest regulations are for recreational fishermen, how to register for the NY fishing registry, and stop by our table in the lobby. Hours are Saturday, February 16, from 10 a.m.–6 p.m. and Sunday, February 17, 2015, from 10 a.m.–2 p.m. ■

Dan Pollera Print Raffle

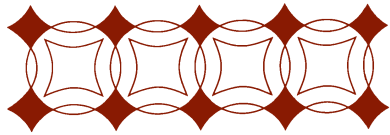
Artist Daniel Pollera has been painting scenic landscapes of the South Shore for many years, including this one of the Goodwin/Elkin Bay House. We are raffling off one framed print to the public, in order to support our work in preserving the maritime traditions of Long Island. The winner will be picked at 4 p.m. on Sunday, September 29 at the Tobay Boat Show.

Buy your chance to win this beautiful framed print: Each chance is \$10, 3 chances for \$25, and 5 chances for \$40. Chances will be sold at the NY Sportfishing Federation Show on February 16-17 in Freeport. If you can't join us we will make arrangements to deliver it to you, if you live on Long Island. You must be 18 years or older to purchase raffle tickets.



Dan Pollera's portrait of the Goodwin Elkin Bay House.

To buy your tickets visit www.longislandtraditions.org. ■



Long Island Traditions Inc.

Dedicated to the documentation and preservation of Long Island's living cultural heritage.

Executive Director: Nancy Solomon

Board of Directors: Mirna Cortez-Obers, Guy Edwards, Pat Healy, Ken Maltz, Dan Pollera, Ken Robinson, Jude Schanzer & Michael Scully

Advisory Board: Paul Bentel, John Eilertsen, Dorothy Jacobs & Wayne Wink

Program Coordinator: Ann Latner

Newsletter Designer: Barbara Koelbel Bange

LI Traditions is a non-profit, tax-exempt organization registered with the NY State Board of Charities.

For more information call: (516) 767-8803

write to us at: 382 Main St., Port Washington, NY 11050

E-mail: info@longislandtraditions.org or visit us

on the web at: www.longislandtraditions.org



Council on the Arts

Copyright 2019 by LI Traditions.

Permission to reproduce any article or portions thereof must be requested in writing.

Become a Member Subscribe to the Newsletter!

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

TOWN: _____

ST: _____ ZIP: _____

PHONE: _____

- \$35 Basic Membership
- \$40 Supporter
- \$50 Sustainer
- \$100 Champions
- \$200 Heroes

Please make your check payable to:
Long Island Traditions

Mail to:
Long Island Traditions
382 Main Street • Port Washington, NY 11050

Folk Arts continued from page 1

The Elder Statesmen have performed in numerous churches, folk festivals, gospel competitions and at local events. The music teaches about the cultural legacy of African Americans, and the historical role of gospel music. Their program includes explorations of the musicians' family histories and how African American culture is reflected in gospel performance. ■

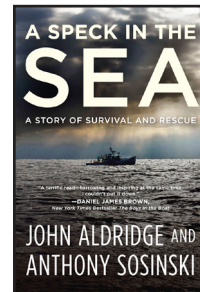
Close Calls on the Water

March 3, 2019, at 1 pm

Hallockville Museum Farm

6038 Sound Avenue, Riverhead, NY

John Aldridge and Anthony Sosinski are the authors of *A Speck in the Sea*, which describes how Aldridge survived in the ocean after falling overboard during one of their fishing trips. In this program, we will learn how Aldridge survived and how Sosinski was able to find him with the assistance of the Coast Guard. Fisherwoman Sarah Broadwell will also share how her vessel assisted in Aldridge's rescue. Copies of the book will be available for purchase. Reservations are requested. Tickets may be purchased in advanced by calling Hallockville Museum Farm at 631.298.5292 or online at <https://hallockville.com/events/close-calls-water/>. **Advanced tickets are \$10. Tickets at the door may be purchased on a first-come first-served basis for \$15 each or two tickets for \$25.** ■



Decoy Carving

April 7, 2019 at 1 p.m.

Hallockville Museum Farm

6038 Sound Avenue, Riverhead, NY

Decoy carving has a long history on Long Island, one that stretches back to the colonial period when native peoples and colonists hunted waterfowl to sustain them during the winter months when ducks migrated from the Mid Atlantic states to Canada. Hunters carved decoys from cork and wood to attract the waterfowl to the bay waters. Today there are hunters who carry on this tradition, carving show and working decoys for their own use and to support themselves. Joining us in this special program will be Don Law of Hampton Bays, Scott Lechmanski of Shelter Island, George Rigby of Center Moriches and Jack Combs of Southold. Reservations are requested. Tickets may be purchased in advanced by calling Hallockville Museum Farm at 631.298.5292 or online at <https://hallockville.com/events/close-calls-water/>. **Advanced tickets are \$10. Tickets at the door may be purchased on a first-come first-served basis for \$15 each or two tickets for \$25.** ■

The Bomba Master of Long Island

Editors' Note: Jose Santiago and Norka Hernandez Nadel's group, Bambula, will present a program at the East Meadow Library on April 14 at 2pm. This article is based on a recorded interview by Naomi Sturm.

By Ann Latner

Drum maker Jose Enrique Santiago, known as “Bomba Joe,” always had an affinity for the drums. “When I was in kindergarten in the Bronx there was a little red snare drum in the back of the classroom, and when the teacher said to go get an instrument I would run right for it,” he recalled. He described how an uncle, a merchant seaman, brought him back his first drum from India. “It was roughly made from crate boxes and had rope tuning. . . . My other uncle borrowed it and I never saw it again.”

In Aviation High School he learned some of the skills that would later help with drum making. “Machine shop, wood shop, electrical shop, sheet metal shop, welding. That’s where I learned to use all the tools.”

Born in Spanish Harlem, Santiago lived in the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Queens before settling in West Hempstead. After several years in the aviation industry, Santiago became a police officer. “I worked everything from undercover, to pickpockets, robberies, decoys, and after 30 years now I’m pursuing my passion, which is drumming.”

He studied with drum masters including Little Red Romero and Johnny Almendra, but credits Tito Saperra, folklorist and percussionist, as being his first mentor. “He taught me the bomba and plena rhythms, but I gravitated more to the bomba,” Santiago recalled. Bomba is the first native music of Puerto Rico, and is played on large, barrel drums. Plena music, which came later, uses handheld drums. Both involve a creative, interactive relationship between percussionists, singers, and dancers.

“Tito Saperra was a legend,” Santiago says of his mentor. Saperra would teach him how to play. “I owe him a lot.”



Photo courtesy Norka Hernandez Nadel

Bambula will perform Puerto Rican bomba y plena at the East Meadow Library on April 14.

Santiago describes meeting Puerto Rican bomba dancer/musician Norka Hernandez-Nadal. “I watched her dance and my hair stood up. I said ‘wow. This girl is the real deal.’” When he heard that she was going to be giving dance classes, he volunteered to be her drummer for free. “She comes from a long line of bomba dancers, and her father was a great *pleno*. . . . I still enjoy every time she gives a class. She gives a lot of history and insights.” Santiago became a founding member of Norka’s ensemble, Bambula.

Santiago’s foray into drum making was unplanned and evolved from his friendship with drum maker Jay Berrick, who Santiago says made the “Stradivarius of congas.” Santiago purchased numerous drums of all styles from Berrick. Eventually, the two became good friends and Santiago began helping at the shop. When Santiago became interested in the folklore of drumming, Berrick told him “you’ve got drum making in your heart.”

Santiago began by adjusting drum bands for other drummers. Then one day a drummer brought him a feta cheese barrel and asked whether it would make a good drum. And that was how it started. “My wife got on the internet and found a barrel place and I started ordering barrels and took it from there. Little by little, people liked the workmanship, and I was honing my drum making skills with what I learned in the aircraft industry and what I learned from Jay Berrick.”

Although he takes an economic loss in the labor of making the drums, “the main thing is that I’m able to contribute to my culture’s music and the instrument.” He keeps the prices reasonable so that he can help continue the tradition.

“Eventually what I want to do is teach it. I want to pass it on. I don’t want to take it with me,” he says. He’s already offered younger players the opportunity to learn to make and repair drums and has opened his shop to them. Santiago also does a lot of philanthropy work to ensure that the bomba tradition continues. “If I see talent and they don’t have a drum, I’ll make them a drum.” ■

Bomba Y Plena Puerto Rican Program

April 14, 2019 at 2 pm, East Meadow Library

A 2017 Newsday article by Daniel Bubbeo examined Jose Santiago who is a traditional *bomba y plena* drum maker residing in West Hempstead. Santiago is also a member of a recognized ensemble *Bombula*. The program will feature a performance by *Bombula* and a demonstration and discussion on how *bomba* drums are made. The program is free and open to the public, but reservations are suggested. To make reservations, call (516) 794-2570. ■

EVENTS OF INTEREST

PLEASE NOTE: If you have a Long Island concert or program that focuses on some aspect of traditional culture, drop us a line and we'll put it in our "Events of Interest" column.

Don't forget to visit our web site and our Facebook page for timely information.



February 10: African American Gospel Music and Quilting. 2 pm. East Meadow Library.
See accompanying article.

February 16-17: NY Sport Fishing Federation Show. See accompanying article

March 3: Close Calls on the Water Program. See accompanying article

April 7: Decoy Carving Program. See accompanying article

April 14: Puerto Rican Bomba y Plena Program. See accompanying article

 Printed on recycled paper

Long Island Traditions

382 Main Street

Port Washington, NY 11050