

# Louisville Folk School

## Arts Programming Overview + Teaching Artist(s) Bio

### Programming

Our most popular out-of-school-time programs are our 8-week sessions of group classes (ages 12 and up) taught by professional musicians who share their skills and knowledge with students while cultivating a sense of community and opportunities for lifelong learning. Our returning student rate is greater than 60%. We've seen new bands form from our classes, weekly jam sessions assembled in homes and public venues, and lifelong friendships and marriages blossomed from connections made within our classrooms. These classes are structured for students ages 12 and up and are most often attended by adults.

LFS offers an assortment of group classes like the above example each year. We present five seasonal semesters of group classes annually, with 16 to 32 unique classes offered each semester. To date, we have taught 40 sessions of eight-week classes since 2015 - over 600 adult group classes have been taught with thousands of attendees in the Metro area, and hundreds more through our virtual classes.

We currently offer in-person and remote classes from our Clifton location, as well as ADA-accessible classes at the Peterson Dumesnil House in Crescent Hill and at Louisville Nature Center in the Audubon Park neighborhood.

Our fastest-growing education component—in-school performances at JCPS elementary schools—blends Kentucky core curriculum requirements with live music performances. Performances occur at 10-15 JCPS elementary schools each year, serving about 1200 students. These programs are written for 3rd graders, but all elementary school students are welcome to attend. Priority is given to Title I schools and those schools closest to our Clifton classrooms.

These educational performances provide equitable access for children from diverse and often marginalized populations. Some performances are presented by touring national acts, while others are presented by up-and-coming local artists. Through this program, elementary students in JCPS learn about Kentucky culture and the diverse influences on Kentucky's traditional music, including the contributions of Black and immigrant populations.

LFS will begin offering summer camps to youth ages 5-12 in 2023. We are planning for 4 weekly all-day camps.

## Teaching Artist(s) Bios(s)

### Administrative Staff:

**Dave Howard** - Executive Director Dave Howard has enjoyed years of singing and playing mandolin throughout the U.S. with The 23 String Band and with Louisville based Relic Bluegrass band. Dave serves as Director of Louisville Folk School, a traditional music education community he founded in 2015, and sits on the board of Bluegrass Anonymous - Louisville's Bluegrass Music Association. Dave moved from his childhood home of Owensboro, KY to study Art History at University of Louisville, and recently apprenticed as a fiddler through a Kentucky Arts Council Masters Apprenticeship Grant for Folk Arts.

### Artistic Staff (this is an abbreviated list due to word count restraints):

**Angela Scharfenberger** has dedicated 30 years to a love of African music. She studied Zimbabwean mbira, song, and marimba with the late Dr. Sheasby Matiure (2005-2009) while earning her M.A. (2009) and PhD (2017) in Ethnomusicology and African Studies from Indiana University. Angela spent two summers (2006, 2012) discovering music in Ghana and Zimbabwe, and an intensive two weeks learning sabar drums and konting (banjo) in the Gambia (2021). She has produced dozens of workshops and concerts for visiting African musicians. Angela's LFS classes focus on African drumming and singing as a container for community building.

**Charles Amewudah** is originally from GHANA and is a professional certificate and degree holder in education from the University of Education Winneba, Kumasi-Ghana. A leader and instructor of Borborbor music of a student group between 2011-2012 at University of Education Winneba, Charles was also a member of a Blessed cultural troupe in Accra Ghana. Charles has been part of church choirs playing drums and teaching songs since 1995. He is the founder and instructor/artist of ASEYE ensemble. He is a regular participant of the Louisville community drum circle at DrumSmart. Charles' day job is in accounting, but he finds joy in teaching and music-making.

**Deborah Payne** is a fiddler raised with the influences of traditional Appalachian music. She carries many years of teaching music with experience playing in old time, bluegrass, and folk dance bands.

**Esmilda Galano Navarro** I was born in Havana, Cuba, and I have loved to dance since I enrolled in Classical Ballet when I was little. This practice contributed a lot to my physical and mental preparation because it takes a lot of perseverance and discipline. I have had the opportunity to give dance classes in Spain, Italy, Poland, and the United States. I want to teach Afro-Cuban dance in this program because I think it is important to maintain the African heritage that gives us so much cultural and spiritual wealth.

**Ian Thomas** Originally from Lexington, Kentucky Ian Thomas has been playing dobro and pedal steel in many central Kentucky bands over the past decades. A multi instrumentalist, he has also performed on banjo, drums and trombone. Currently Ian is involved in projects ranging from Surf to Hawaiian to Gypsy Jazz, Bluegrass and Country.

**Jake Groves** Jake is a harmonica player from Louisville, KY, who tours internationally in Colter Wall's band, performing at many world-class festivals and venues. Before beginning his stint with Colter Wall, Jake played in several regional acts and fronted his own band, Jack Rabbit and the Dirty Hares.

**Jose Oreta** Jose Oreta received a Master of Music with a concentration in Jazz Performance from the University of Louisville and a Bachelor of Music Performance from Morehead State University. His undergraduate studies included coursework in various styles of music; this included Bluegrass and Old-Time music at the Kentucky Center for Traditional Music in Morehead, Kentucky, as well as Brazilian music at the Universidade Federal de Goiás in Brazil. Currently, he is an active member of the Louisville music community, performing and recording with groups and individuals spanning a diverse mix of genres.

**Julia W. Purcell** is a vocalist and multi-instrumentalist and is 1/3 of the local band, Maiden Radio. Julia studied voice at Michigan State University and graduated with a music therapy degree.

**Matt Brown** is a musician, teacher, podcaster & producer who lives in Louisville, Kentucky. He has taught a GRAMMY-nominee how to play clawhammer banjo, played a square dance at Curtis Institute of Music, recorded with Tim O'Brien and Brittany Haas, performed on the Grand Ole Opry and at The Kennedy Center, and collaborated with Chess Records legend Barbara Carr. Matt has produced 10 albums including On Big Shoulders, an all-star tribute to the city of Chicago. He spent seven years in The Windy City teaching fiddle, banjo, and guitar at the Old Town School of Folk Music. Now he teaches online private lessons to old-time and bluegrass students worldwide.

Visit <https://louisvillefolkschool.org/pages/meet-the-teachers> for a full list of LFS staff and staff bios.

## **Artistic Content of Programming**

We envision our programs for the Greater Louisville Teaching Organizations Directory and HeARTS to include any of these three courses, however, we represent a diverse range of teaching artists and can be flexible with both the scope, focus, and delivery of our programs.

### **Community Singing**

- Louisville Folk School instructors will present an 8 part class exploring a diverse range of folk song traditions that could range from Appalachian to West African. Students can drop in to any of the classes in the series regardless of their experience or skill level. This course is for those who are interested in learning more about the vocal music traditions from around the world. We will explore original works, traditional tunes, work songs, play party songs, religious/spiritual songs, and ballads.

### **A World of Folk Dance Traditions**

- Louisville Folk School instructors will share the joy of movement with participants in this 8 week class that explores dance traditions from around the world. Each week, Louisville Folk School instructors will

present a different dance style or tradition that participants will explore and celebrate together. Both partner dances and individual dances will be presented as we tour the world with examples of dance traditions from Appalachia, West Africa, Cuba, Spain, and beyond!

### **Instrument Petting Zoo!**

- In this survey of folk instruments, Louisville Folk School instructors will teach beginner classes on a different instrument each week in this 8 week “hands on” drop-in series - no experience required! We will provide the instruments, all you need to bring is your curiosity. Instruments could include banjo, guitar, ukulele, mandolin, fiddle/violin, West African drums, harmonica, dulcimer, and more.

All of our participants are encouraged to fill out surveys that solicit anonymous feedback for our programs and instructors. Our Executive Director distributes those responses with comments to the instructors at the conclusion of the program.

### **Educational Content of Programming**

In addition to post-program surveys that solicit anonymous feedback, our instructors encourage students to conclude each class by practicing the lesson together as a class. The ultimate measurement of the outcomes of our instruction is what the students achieve together at the end of the class. A list of the skills and knowledge taught in each program is below each class description.

#### **Community Singing**

Students will learn: At least one song per class session Brief history of origin and influences of a variety of music traditions. The history and importance of Aural Learning/Tradition Basic music theory, music terminology, and specific stylings and techniques.

#### **A World of Folk Dance Traditions**

Students will learn: Elements of one unique dance style and/or technique each week. Brief history and cultural significance of a variety of dance traditions. The joy of movement as experienced from different cultures.

#### **Instrument Petting Zoo!**

Students will learn: Beginner technique and pro tips on a new instrument each week. How instruments function and their origins Cultural significance of a variety of instruments

### **Process for hiring, training, and evaluating performance/effectiveness.**

LFS’s Executive Director interviews and hires teachers who are experienced in both teaching and performing, ensuring that our reputation for providing high-quality arts experiences for all is maintained. Each student enrolled in our on-site group classes is sent surveys at week 2 of 8 and at the conclusion of the 8-week program, in which we ask about the pace of the lessons, how they are

engaged, and multiple other metrics. Our group class teachers are observed by administration as well as their peers so that we are constantly monitoring and improving our methods of delivering educational programs. For youth programming, LFS requires background checks for our teachers. LFS group class programs consistently see over 60% student retention - we consider our returning student rate the best measurement for our performance and effectiveness.

### **How are participants of all backgrounds and abilities included in programming?**

LFS has been intentional in ever-widening our offerings to include music and dance traditions from outside the United States, with foreign-born artists who live in Louisville. Further, we offer classes drawing on a wide range of abilities. Many of our classes have no prerequisites and are developed specifically as an easy entry point for beginners to experience the joy of playing music. The Louisville Folk School has within its mission to explore the creative contributions of Kentuckians, inclusive of a variety of folk music and dance traditions. We've leveraged a scholarship opportunity from the International Bluegrass Music Association to offer scholarships to BIPOC students enrolled in bluegrass classes.

LFS's spring 2022 Cupola Concert series presented exciting collaborations between diverse populations including refugee, immigrant, mixed race, and LGBTQ plus performers, such as Iraqi frame drum with Louisville-based Sanaan Hamza, paired with one of our faculty Julia Purcell; Andean multi-instrumentalist Fernando Moya; African American bluesman Tyron Cotton; Dom Flemons, the "American Songster"; and Tatiana Hargrees and Alison de Groot, known for their unique renditions of Old Time and Appalachian tunes. Tatiana is outspoken about creating safe spaces for LGBTQ musicians within the Old Time community.

We have also created new and expanded existing classes to promote greater equity and inclusion in our school and genre. Our West African music program is popular, so we added additional African traditions to our programming, including West African dance and other percussion styles. Our recent Afro-Cuban percussion and bass grooves of North and South America classes were taught by people of color and attracted diverse participants.

### **How do we engage teachers and community center staff before, during, and after programming?**

Executive Director Dave Howard is the main point of contact for community center staff before and after programming. Each program will be staffed appropriately depending on projected attendance, and our roster of teaching artists is deep enough to ensure coverage even in the event of illness or other absence.

Our teachers share information about the classes through written descriptions as well as through short videos that demonstrate the course experience. Teachers are available for conversations or emails in order to answer questions, and Dave Howard is available by email, phone, or text.

Our passion is to provide arts experiences for everyone and to make space for music and dance traditions that historically have not had institutional support. Folk music traditions are typically shared/taught orally or aurally, that is, they are learned through hearing rather than the reading of words or music, ordinarily in informal, small social networks of relatives or friends rather than in institutions such as school or church. A LFS collaboration with Louisville Metro community centers will provide opportunities for our community to learn together through these aural traditions.

### **How do we engage participants in the creative and learning process?**

LFS HeARTS programs are completely hands-on. Students learn about folk traditions by participating in them, through either learning an instrument, singing, or through movement and dance. We engage students by offering a supportive environment to learn. While many of our teachers are master-level musicians, we cultivate a community of support by giving people space to try new things, experiment, and give encouragement in the steps along the way.

In addition to the aural teaching that folk music is known for, we supplement our lessons with printed handouts, when appropriate, so that participants can take home lyrics, chord charts, and other cultural content related to the lesson plan. Most importantly, we want to allow participants to experience the joy of these traditions by participating in them.