

# Folklore

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said. “All of those things contribute to what Maine is and who we are.”

Maine’s folklore rests on these traditions and the many cultures that have helped build and develop the state.

“[The Maine Folklife Center has] interviews with Italians who helped to set up Millinocket, Finnish people who worked in the quarries. We have many immigrants in this state from all over the world. They all bring their cultures with them and add to the richness of our state identity,” MacDougall said.

The folklore minor is unique in that it draws from various departments. Though primarily anthropology-based, students who minor in folklore can take courses in English, Native American studies, Maine studies and history, among many others.

From classes such as Franco American Women’s Experience to Folklore of



Pauleena MacDougall, director of the Maine Folklife Center, listens to Harold Jackson and Martin “Mark” Morris at the American Folk Festival on the Bangor Waterfront in 2013.

Maine and The Maritime Provinces, courses offered to complete the minor span a wide range of topics. In addition to class requirements, students also must complete a folklore-related senior project in their major, a mentored folklore senior project or an intern-

ship in a folklore related field.

“This gives them a chance to do something really concrete and conduct research,” MacDougall said.

Perhaps the most important question still remains: Why does it matter to offer students an option like this?

“We have to understand who we are,” MacDougall said. “Studying our own folklore helps us to understand who we are. When we look at other people’s folklore we understand who we are in relation to others in the world.”

# Music

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end stages of their life. The prescriptive music responds to the physiological needs of the patient. For example, O’Brien will observe heart rate, respiration and temperature, providing music unique to each patient.

“Every person is going to respond differently to any musical approach, so we pay very careful attention to the body,” O’Brien said. “Any movements of the limbs, the facial expression, moisture on the skin, the temperature of the skin — we pay very close attention.”

O’Brien uses rhythm, pacing, volume and tone to create something completely different for each patient, making music that truly is tailored to the needs of the person in that particular moment of their life.

“We don’t go in with a song list. It’s like a tool bag,” she said.

The harp has become an instrumental part of O’Brien’s life and work and has touched the lives of many others. As O’Brien sits in her own home, away from patients, hospitals and nursing homes, the music that flows from her harp is beautiful and hypnotic. It is not music-thanatology in this moment because she’s not playing for a patient, yet the sounds still seem to make time stand still.

Even though O’Brien is able to offer this service to families, there are many things she cannot do.

“I can’t change what’s going on,” she said. “I’m not there as a medical technician. I’m not trying to cure.” But for many families, including Wolfe’s, and nurses, such as Maureen Morse, curing and healing are two very different things.

“It doesn’t cure their medical malady like cancer or Parkinson’s or heart failure, but you can heal other things,” Morse, a nurse at Pen Bay Medical Center, said. Mentally, emotionally and spiritually, Morse believes O’Brien’s music helps prepare patients and their families for death.

“A lot of times during this process you just run out of things to say. There are no more words,”



Barbara Jean O’Brien plays her harp at her Northport home on Tuesday. O’Brien is the only certified music-thanatologist in the state, creating for people in the stages leading up to the end of life.

O’Brien said of the end-of-life process. “The end of someone’s life can be very isolating. Your whole identity is slipping away, piece by piece by piece.”

Part of her goal as a music-thanatologist is to help families reconnect with their loved one and continue a relationship until the very end.

“It can deepen connections and hold them together as they prepare for the next step,” she said. “I feel like it really exploits the incredible power of music in a way that’s so profound. It’s amazing work. The power of music to be assisting in people’s lives when they’re in such a fragile, vulnerable time is a powerful gift.”

As a nurse, Morse has watched families grapple with end-of-life care.

“I think the hard part is getting people to accept where their loved one is,” Morse said.

Once they have accepted that, Morse said families

begin to consider other options to make the end of their loved one’s life as comfortable as possible.

“I had never heard the word ‘thanatology’ before,” Morse said. Morse, who has an interest in hospice nursing and hopes to do it in the future, was fascinated by the concept and has watched O’Brien work.

“When she comes into the room she melts into the harp. The presence is the music and the harp. She doesn’t interject herself,” Morse said.

“They’re just looking for something that’s peaceful and calm. ... They just want the music to carry them out,” she said.

O’Brien, who has degrees in music and philosophy, never imagined her studies would one day come together to lead her on this path.

She learned about music-thanatology from her husband, who was away for a work conference and shared with her what he learned about it from a presenter.

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BARBARA JEAN O’BRIEN

“I had been looking for a way to use music in a more intimate way,” O’Brien said. “I wanted another venue, and this felt like it might be it.”

Although O’Brien has been learning the practice of music-thanatology for several years, she learns something new with every patient she visits.

“I will be a beginner at this for a long time,” O’Brien said. “It’s going to be a lifelong learning curve.”

Morse generally gets feedback from family after a music vigil has been held and has been told by many that it’s one of the nicest things that could have been done for patients at the end of their life.

Wolfe remembers the music vigil O’Brien held for her mother, and she holds onto it.

The day after the vigil, Wolfe’s mother died.

“It was a beautiful way to exit this life,” she said.

# Bangor

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connections among faculty in the humanities in many different disciplines. Our faculty represents over 20 units at UMaine. Secondly, we want to support better connections between UMaine faculty and their students. How can we organize events and activities that enrich classrooms and off campus activity that enhance student experience? Third — this is at the center of public humanities day — is to do a better job at community engagement.”

Riordan was chiefly responsible for organizing this year’s humanities PechaKucha kickoff event, which will take place 7 p.m. Friday, Jan. 29, at COESPACE in downtown Bangor. PechaKucha is an event where a variety of presenters show 20 images, each for 20 seconds.

Some of this year’s presenters include Riordan himself, a professor of history at UMaine, who will talk about his love for history; Claude de Lannee, a French teacher in Orono and Old Town who will present “How to get from Paris to Orono in 40 Years”; and Matt Bishop of the Bangor Historical Society, who will present about his popular “Ghostly Bangor” tour, among many others.

“It’s a great way to get a crash course about a bunch of different things going on in our region,” Riordan said, also adding that the trajectory of the PechaKucha is humanities themed, in that the presenters are all participants and proponents of the humanities, including art, music, history and languages.

“What the humanities center needs to do is explain that history and literature and art and philosophy — these too are essential things for Maine people to have the fullest and richest and most meaningful kinds of lives,” Riordan said. “This gives us a chance to demonstrate why the humanities are so crucial. We want people to think about the humanities in an inclusive way. It’s not narrow, technical or elitist. The humanities are about the human experience in its fullest manner.”

Michael Grillo, chair of the UMaine art department and professor art history, echoed that sentiment.

“The humanities are a public responsibility — they’re the core of society. They are crucial for who we are what we can imagine and what our future is,” he said.

Grillo organized the schedule of events Jan. 30.

Jan. 30 programs include a gallery talk at 12:15 p.m. by Phippsburg-based artist Dan Dowd, whose work is on display at the University of Maine Museum of Art. Grillo and Kat Johnson of UMMA also will discuss work by Richard Whitten, which is on exhibit.

Grillo, a strong supporter and lover of film, also brought a screening of short early 20th century films by Georges Melies at UMMA into the mix, which will show at 1:30 p.m. at UMMA, and a screening of the film “Hugo” at the Maine Discovery Museum at 2:30 p.m.

“Melies’ work is the subject of the film [‘Hugo’], so we’re going to look at his work specifically. It’s some of the most inventive early cinema that is,” Grillo said. “[They’re] wildly imaginative works, pre-first world war.”

The day will conclude with readings by the Norumbega Collective’s Chris Becker, Joe Linscott and Tyler Nute at 3:30 p.m. at the Bangor Public Library.

“All three are [Master of Art] candidates in the University of Maine’s creative writing program and will be reading their own original work,” Grillo said.

“I think this is really a crucial issue for the future of our region of the state. There’s been a downtown renaissance in Bangor,” Riordan said. “Taking the next step to make our region dynamic and magnetic to people will come from building the cultural and art and humanities connections.”

As director of the Humanities Center, Riordan expressed the importance of the connection between the region and its students.

“An important part of that is bringing UMaine students into downtown Bangor so they realize what an interesting place it is. A lot of them are from very small rural places in Maine and they come to campus and go to school but don’t necessarily think about the opportunities for them in the broader region.”

Grillo agreed.

“For students to be engaged in their own community is crucial. When we talk about the future of Maine, it’s about investing in our youth,” he said.

Riordan encourages the community to participate and hopes to see a good turnout this year.

“It’s a fun way to spend a Friday evening or a Saturday afternoon. Everything’s free. Everything’s downtown. We hope they’ll come and take a look and have a good time.”

For information about the event, visit [umaine.edu/umhc/bangor-jan-29-30/](http://umaine.edu/umhc/bangor-jan-29-30/).

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# Poet

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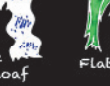





earned a Master of Fine Arts in writing from Vermont College of Fine Arts. He held the Hodder Fellowship at Princeton University and was a fellow at Yaddo and the MacDowell Colony. A former editor for The Beloit Poetry Journal and sometime teacher at College of the Atlantic, his primary occupation is as a work supervisor for the Acadia National Park Trail Crew.

The Acadia Centennial Task Force comprises Friends of Acadia volunteers and staff, Acadia National Park professionals and Mount Island community members, and it is led by Cookie Horner and Jack Russell.

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