



For immediate release:

February 10, 2025

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Maryland State Arts Council Announces 2025 Heritage Award Winners

BALTIMORE, MD — The Maryland State Arts Council (MSAC) has announced the winners of the 2025 Heritage Awards through its traditional arts program, Maryland Traditions. Recognizing long-term achievement in the traditional arts, the program accepts nominations annually in three categories: Person or People, Place, and Tradition. Six awards were given this year, each including a \$10,000 grant.

“This year’s Heritage Award winners show us that Maryland’s cultural fabric is made up of traditions from around the corner and around the world,” said MSAC Chair Ruby Lopez Harper. “We’re pleased to recognize their work with this honor and so glad these artists choose to call Maryland home.”

- **Junious Brickhouse** (Person or People award category) is an internationally-recognized performer and educator who has been devoted to the cultural sustainability of urban dance for more than 40 years. In 2005, he founded the dance school Urban Artistry, through which he and his dedicated staff have mentored over 10,000 young people.
- **Spyridon Koliavasilis** (Person or People award category) has performed, taught, and researched traditional Greek music for over 20 years. Raised and trained in Greece, he is now a mainstay of Mid-Atlantic Greek-American communities, as well as the founder of the Mediterranean Notes Music School, where he has taught hundreds of students.
- **Edwin Maysonet** (Person or People award category) is the author of more than a thousand songs and poems highlighting the cultural identity of the Puerto Rican community in Maryland. He is also the former lead singer and drummer in *Raíces de Borinquen*, the first ensemble in the region to perform the Puerto Rican dance and percussion traditions of *bomba* and *plena*.
- **Anuradha Nehru** (Person or People award category) is an internationally acclaimed dancer, choreographer, and educator in the Indian classical dance form *Kuchipudi*. Since founding the Kalandhi Dance School and Company more than 30 years ago, Anuradha has expanded it across the region and trained over 600 students in *Kuchipudi*.
- **Samuel Wallace** (Person or People award category) has maintained and innovated Jamaican pottery traditions for over 30 years. He has mentored students across Maryland and the country, notably in the Jamaican coil technique, and facilitates an international exchange of pottery knowledge and innovation between Maryland and Jamaica.
- **Russian folk dance** (Tradition award category) is rooted in centuries-old Eastern European seasonal festivities and religious rituals. It is highlighted in Maryland through the

multi-generational, greater Baltimore-based Kalinka Dance Ensemble, founded in 2002 by immigrants from former Soviet republics to preserve and celebrate their cultures.

“The announcement of Heritage Award winners is always a special time,” said MSAC Executive Director Steven Skerritt-Davis. “Not only do they connect the arts with history and culture, but they’re also grounded in community through our public nomination process. Congratulations to our six honorees for 2025.”

Heritage Awards have been awarded annually since 2007 in honor of Dr. Alta Schrock, a Garrett County community leader who taught biology at Frostburg State University and founded groups, events, and publications to support traditional arts in Appalachian Maryland and beyond. To date, MSAC has given 66 Heritage Awards. Previous winners can be viewed in the [Maryland Traditions Archive](#).

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About MSAC

Founded in 1967, MSAC is an agency of the State of Maryland Department of Commerce that plays an essential role, ensuring every person has access to the transformative power of the arts. MSAC advances the arts in our state by providing leadership that champions creative expression, diverse programming, equitable access, lifelong learning, and the arts as a celebrated contributor to the quality of life for all the people of Maryland. To do this, the agency awards grants to not-for-profit, tax-exempt organizations for ongoing arts programming and projects, awards grants to individual artists, and provides technical and advisory assistance to individuals and groups. MSAC receives its funds in an annual appropriation from the State of Maryland and from grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency. The Council may also receive contributions from private, non-governmental sources. For more information, go to msac.org.