



Finlandia Foundation® National

Inspiring, celebrating and connecting the Finnish-American community since 1953

2016 PERFORMER OF THE YEAR



PIRJO POLARI-KHAN

2016 Performer Of The Year: Pirjo Polari-Khan

In 1996 Finlandia Foundation National (FFN), the premier network of Finnish-American organizations in the United States, inaugurated its Performer of the Year (POY) program to encourage appreciation of Finnish and Finnish-American culture, traditions and talent through live performances at FFN chapter across the U.S.

FFN is pleased to present the multi-talented Pirjo Polari-Khan as POY for 2016-17. Since the POY program's founding the artists selected---with the exception of one comedic lecturer---have been musicians. This is the first time FFN has

chosen a POY program designed to engage youth. Through her poetry, puppetry, song and humor, the engaging storyteller weaves themes of Finnish culture, history and richness of the language into her presentation.

A native of Seinäjoki, Finland, Pirjo has lived in San Jose, California, for more than 30 years. Born into a family of artists, writers, musicians and storytellers, Pirjo trained as a ceramic artist at Wolverhampton Polytechnic in England, and has published short stories, poetry and a CD of her songs.

Her recent project The Etiquette Village, is a book of poems--which she also illustrated--with manners and wisdom for children. While meeting characters such as "Harbo Cydrate," "The Old Royale

Pot," and "Double U & Double Me," children learn about good behavior as well as other valuable life lessons. She also has something to share for the adults in the audience, including a humorous look at the Finnish language.

Her POY programs seek to re-create the old storytelling times when people gathered together in villages to pass on daily news and knowledge, to sing and just have fun.

Pirjo hopes to encourage Finnish and Finnish-American audiences of all ages to develop a greater interest in their heritage and culture.

FFN funds a travel grant for POY appearances at a minimum of eight chapter

events during the 12-month schedule, which begins on September 1 and concludes August 31 of the following year.

For additional information or to book the POY program please contact POY Coordinator Betsey Norgard at norgard@paulbunyan.net

Find further information on Pirjo Polari-Khan, the Performer of the Year program and POY hosting information at the FFN website: FinlandiaFoundation.org.

PREVIOUS PERFORMERS OF THE YEAR:

2015 Sara Pajunen, violinist and composer, Minnesota

2014 Olli Hirvonen, jazz guitarist, New York City

2013 Marja Kaisla, classical pianist, Philadelphia

2012 Maria Kizirian, singer and songwriter, Los Angeles

PREVIOUS POY, CONTINUED:

2011 Wilho Saari, tradition bearer of the Finnish kantele, Naselle, Washington

2010 Finn Hall, band from Oakdale, Minnesota

2009 Terhi Miikki-Broersma, multi-instrumentalist, Lyndon, Washington

2008 Brent Buswell and Bert Stromholm, accordion duo from Donegal, Pennsylvania and Pompton Plains, New Jersey

2007 Maria Männistö, soprano, Seattle

2006 Kaiku, female vocal duo from New York City

2005 Richard Koski, two-row diatonic button accordionist, Trumansburg, New York

2003-04 Maarit Vaga, soprano, Albion, New York

2002 Ulla Suokko, flutist, New York City

2001 Vicki Gornick, organist, Chisholm, Minnesota

2000 Diane Jarvi, singer, poet and songwriter, Minneapolis

1999 Craig Randal Johnson, pianist, string bassist and conductor, Minneapolis

1998 Bernhard Hillila, comedic lecturer, Valparaiso, Indiana

1997 Koivun Kaiku, kantele ensemble from Minneapolis

1996 Merja Soria, kantele artist and vocalist, San Diego, California

Find more information on past POY programs at FinlandiaFoundation.org

The Performer of the Year term begins September 1 and runs through August 31.

To book the POY program contact POY Coordinator Betsey Norgard at norgard@paulbunyan.net

POY application deadline is mid-February of each year. For information: FinlandiaFoundation.org

Finlandia Foundation National, founded in Pasadena, California in 1953, administers grants, scholarships and programs supporting and celebrating Finnish heritage and Finnish-American culture and traditions.

FFN is a 501(c)(3) organization. For more information: FinlandiaFoundation.org



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