



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. The content is directed at children ages six and older, and adults also find it enjoyable.

Her POY program seeks 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.

During 2017, as the centennial of Finland's independence is celebrated, Pirjo will include in her program thoughts and illustrations about the importance of the *Kalevala* and its poetic language in Finnish culture.

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

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

PREVIOUS POY, CONTINUED:

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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