

YTS 2025 Workshop Descriptions

(Not all workshops are listed – feel free to find & ask the leader to learn more about a workshop that's not on this list)

T = teaching/practicing skills

S = singing session

P = presentation

D = discussion

Staff-Led Workshops:

Sixteen Tons and What Do You Get: The Underbelly of Coal Country in Story and Song (P/S) (Carrie and Michael Kline)

A lot of us like to sing the songs preserved in the Appalachian mountains. But what do we know about the people who have lived there? What is the history and present tense of Colonization? How was it deliberately orchestrated through the creation and militarization of company towns dotted through the region? What are the manifestations of multigenerational trauma, as well as resilience, from living in a National Sacrifice Zone? Michael and Carrie will share some of what's told in their book, *Written in Blood: Courage and Corruption in the Appalachian Coalfields* and lead the group in singing music of coalfield resistance with deeper knowledge and passion.

Bangum and the Wild Boar: Songs of the Allegheny Highlands of West Virginia (S/P) (Carrie and Michael Kline)

Join in singing Appalachian versions of songs which crossed the sea centuries ago on leaky old sailing ships, bounced along the frontier, to be preserved and rekindled by Appalachian settler families. And sing the songs made on this side of the ocean, by European and mixed-ancestry dwellers of the ancient forests. Michael Kline learned these songs from older generations of people living in West Virginia's Allegheny Highlands. Enjoy the mix of Irish lilt and Appalachian flair. Listen for Scots-Irish, English, African and Native American influence entwining in these old songs and ballads.

Immerse in rich imagery and melodically haunting songs, making deep connections with the culture, landscapes and history of Appalachia, and connecting with singers from generations past. Who were these singers, and how did these songs come to dwell in them? What are the hidden powers of the oral tradition in these Allegheny Highlands? How and why does it persist into our own times? We'll talk, we'll listen to narratives and songs performed by old people Michael knew and recorded, and we'll sing together.

Listening for a Change: Journey into Recording Appalachian Music Makers and Tellers (P) (Carrie and Michael Kline)

Join folklorists Michael and Carrie Kline for a journey into the soul of Appalachia. The Klines will impart songs, stories and their own oral history recordings to paint a portrait of the lives of the people who have made their homes in central West Virginia. With an array of recordings housed in their folklife collection at Berea College and radio productions published on the Talking Across the Lines podcast, the Klines will select recordings to share from Indigenous, African American, Scots-Irish, Eastern European or other communities highlighting image laden narratives and songs, along with interviewing techniques. This class will appeal to people who want to rest their voices and bodies, but delve more deeply into the culture of Appalachia and refine their skills in listening for a change.

Growing Up Storytelling: Stories From the Badgett Family (P) (Connie Badgett Steadman)

Connie Badgett Steadman grew up in a small community in North Carolina in the 1940s, in a household filled with stories. Sharing spoken-word stories was common in her family and community, but is much less so in our current cultural landscape. In this workshop, Connie will share stories from her mother and father, and some of the cultural and family history that led to the formation of the Badgett Sisters, recipients of the 1990 North Carolina Folk Heritage Award.

Songs from the Badgett Sisters Catalogue (P) (Connie Badgett Steadman)

In this workshop, Connie Badgett Steadman will share songs from a collection of tapes of her and her family's work. While we listen, Connie will share some of the stories that surround the songs - what it was like learning from her father Cortelyou Odell Badgett, a minister and gospel singer, and traveling to sing with her sisters. Connie will also share a piece of the continuation of her family's music by later generations - a new arrangement of a Badgett Sisters song from her son Mario.

Creative Harmonizing From North Carolina (T/S) (Connie Badgett Steadman)

In this workshop, Connie Badgett Steadman will share some of her father Cortelyou Odell Badgett's techniques for arranging gospel and bluegrass songs in the jubilee style of North Carolina. Attendees will select a song to lead and harmonize with, and learn about Cortelyou's approach to harmonizing, the Badgett Sisters' tendency to switch parts around, and the bluegrass and other influences that shaped their style of harmony singing.

Collecting Family Songs (T/D) (Miriam Hacksaw)

Even if you don't come from a long line of musicians, there is music in your blood. The question is, how do you find what your ancestors sang if they aren't still singing? In this workshop we will discuss the process of collecting source recordings, as folklorists call it, in the context of family and ancestral traditions. Miriam Hacksaw spent the last two years casually and formally interviewing members of her extended Malayali family from Kerala, India, and collecting songs from Kerala in Malayalam. This project brought intergenerational singing into the center of family gatherings, and has given this second generation of Malayali immigrants a connection to their elders and ancestral language. We will talk about different ways to find familial music, what questions to ask, what settings to bring music to, and how to learn music from people who don't identify as musicians. Music is present in all cultures, and can be an enlightening way to connect with one's roots. Everyone can have an authentic, non-commodified connection to song. Bring a notebook if it helps your learning style.

Polyphonic Harmony (T/S) (Miriam Hacksaw)

In this workshop we will take a song from the old time tradition and reharmonize it into polyphonic harmony. Polyphony is when multiple voices play independent melody lines together; polyphonic harmonies entwine melodies for new and interesting variations. Common in choruses, polyphony is also often applied to various styles of traditional music and is a fun way to play with simple melodies. Starting by learning a simple song, we will split into groups and take the song apart to put it back together. This workshop is beginner-friendly; all you need to bring is your voice!

Writing Into the Tradition (T/D)

Who writes traditional songs? No one person, perhaps? Or many people? As songs are passed through oral tradition, they evolve and change. A line is forgotten, perhaps, or edited to be more relevant. A common misconception of traditional music is that it is static, unchanging, passed down like a family heirloom. Every time we sing a song we reinterpret it! The oldest songs have been reinterpreted so many times it's as though they were written by many people across generations. But sometimes we have reasons to speed up that process.

Are there old songs that could be updated to reflect not just the feelings but the material reality of working people? Are there racist and misogynistic elements in songs that could be changed so we can feel more ownership singing the songs we've been gifted? Can we legitimize our existence as marginalized people (queer, trans, bi poc, etc) through representation in folk songs? Can we write songs from scratch that fit into the tradition, that other people might want to sing also?

In this workshop we will define what makes a traditional song, and re/write some music! Feel free to bring an old song you resonate with to edit, or come with pure raw inspiration and be prepared to write something stylistic from scratch! Bring a notebook; instruments are optional but encouraged!

Anti-Racism Track Organizer-Led Workshops:

Interrupting Racism in Folk Spaces (T)

Are you ready to step into an active role interrupting racism, but can't find the words and/or the confidence? This is the place to start growing those skills! We'll provide a collection of phrases and real-world scenarios to practice with, and most of our time will be devoted to small-group role-playing. We'll also do some debriefing and give some space to the complicated feelings that may arise.

Anti-Racist Book Club (D)

Curious about our traditions' complex past? Looking for more historical specifics about the songs we love to sing and their role? We will review and analyze Otto Mullers *Rural Aesthetics as a Eugenic Project* as a group then spend some time synthesizing, and reflecting (maybe even integrating and planning!) What comes up for us? How do we think about intentionally continuing our living tradition? Come nerd out with us!

Song Choice for Radically Inclusive Spaces (D)

Choosing songs to sing is one of the most important tools we have for making folk events inclusive. Which songs are appropriate for which contexts? Can we continue to sing songs by removing harmful lyrics? Does erasing the problematic content or context of a song contribute to the problem by erasing history? At this workshop, we will discuss these thorny questions as a group, and present tools for choosing and editing songs, as well as discussing song choice with attendees of your own events.