



Annual Report

May 2025

Introduction

The Hungarian Folklife Association, Inc. (HFA) is a Maryland-based, tax-exempt nonprofit organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Established in late 2023, HFA serves as a global alliance of organizations and individuals dedicated to the preservation, promotion, and revitalization of Hungarian folk dance and music.

As the successor to the American Hungarian Folklore Centrum founded in 1975, HFA's mission is to foster collaboration, resource-sharing, grant facilitation, and professional development for Hungarian folklife, with particular emphasis on North America. This Annual Report outlines HFA's activities throughout 2024 and early 2025.

Major Achievements and Impact

Leadership

In 2024, HFA consolidated its volunteer leadership team, guided by a committed and accomplished trio of executive directors and an international Advisory Board comprising five distinguished members. This governance framework ensures a breadth of expertise and perspectives, with representation spanning North America, South America, Asia, and Europe.

Executive Directors:

- Kálmán "Öcsi" Magyar (USA/Canada): Advocate for Hungarian folklore, lawyer, and North America's foremost Hungarian folk musician.
- Anna (Panni) De Cheke Qualls (USA): Veteran educator, administrator, and cultural liaison, devoted to empowering future generations through dance and music.
- János Szűcs (Hungary): Award-winning folk dance educator and choreographer, formerly based in Chicago and among Hungary's most renowned folk dance instructors.
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Advisory Board Members:

- Noemi Toka Szűcs (Hungary, Chair): Former professional dancer and past leader of the Borozda Ensemble in Chicago.
- Eduardo Bonapartian (Argentina): Artistic Director of the Regös Folk Dance Ensemble in Buenos Aires and prolific builder of Hungarian communities in South America.
- Attila Egyedi (USA): Managing Director of Eszterlánc Hungarian Folk Ensemble, educator, and organizer of major cultural events in California.
- Liz Kovach (Canada): President of the Hungarian Kapisztrán Folk Ensemble in Winnipeg, a longstanding leader in multicultural festivals and community development.
- Tomohiko Yamaguchi (Japan): Champion of Hungarian folk dance in Japan and a connector of diaspora communities across continents.

The Advisory Board has already provided strategic guidance and insight on critical issues to the Executive Directors, helping to steer HFA and amplify its global impact on Hungarian folklore activities. Ongoing collaboration between the Advisory Board and Executive Directors will remain a cornerstone of HFA's sustained international influence.

Professional Development and Leadership

HFA has pioneered the inaugural series of conferences outside the Carpathian Basin specifically designed to deliver ongoing professional development and leadership training for folklife community members. The 2024 conference, hosted by the Kapisztrán Folk Ensemble in Winnipeg, Canada, convened participants from across North America for a weekend of collaborative knowledge exchange, networking, and strategic planning.

Discussions brought together practitioners, educators, and enthusiasts to address shared challenges - particularly recruitment, retention, and funding - to ensure the long-term sustainability of Hungarian folklife, especially in North America. The conference concluded with a vibrant, Winnipeg-style multicultural folkdance celebration featuring live music and participation from local Hungarian, Polish, and Croatian communities.

HFA leadership is currently evaluating the optimal timing, location, and format for future conferences, balancing the evident need for continued professional development and leadership training with the geographic, logistical, and financial realities faced by participants and hosts. Potential models under consideration for 2025 and beyond include pairing conferences with major Hungarian community events, fostering cross-cultural collaborations, and offering more frequent online content - or a combination of these approaches.

Folklife Ambassadors Program

HFA's flagship outreach initiative in 2024 was the launch of the Folklife Ambassadors Program, designed to support communities throughout the United States and Canada that lack substantial access to Hungarian folklife resources. The Program aims to provide folk dance education, performances, and choreography; foster youth and adult programming, including workshops, mini camps, folk crafts, and singing; and deliver administrative and logistical assistance, ensuring even small or remote communities can meaningfully engage in Hungarian folklife.

In implementing the Ambassadors Program, HFA recognized disparities in folklife resources and introduced a shared-resource model, allowing communities to apply online for Ambassador support, which was then allocated equitably. This approach revitalizes communities with limited or no existing folk programming, helps establish or sustain youth groups and dance ensembles, and facilitates access to new choreographies and expert instruction without the prohibitive costs and logistical complexities of bringing teachers from Hungary or Transylvania.

HFA is grateful for the funding awarded in 2024 by the Hungarian government under the Kőrösi Csoma Sándor Program, which enabled the first cohort of Ambassadors - Bence Hajdu and Kíra Kertész from Hungary - to be deployed to 21 different programs throughout the United States, geographically ranging from Phoenix, Minneapolis, to Boston, spreading the joy of folk dance. Based on the HFA's data collected from the participating communities, there remains a need for this high-quality Ambassador program and the communities' expected outcomes were indeed satisfied through the program. HFA leadership is conducting an assessment to address the financial and geographic challenges inherent in maintaining such an ambitious, continent-wide initiative, as the positive feedback from participating communities underscores the clear need for the Program.

Collaboration with the Kőrösi Csoma Sándor Program

HFA supported Kőrösi Csoma Sándor Program in two critically important ways:

1. Spearheaded (through Panni De Cheke Qualls) the B1 visa renewal for the U.S. KCSP fellows. HFA created the invitation/impetus letters and other strategic communications, used as a model by other organizations in successfully bringing their KCSP fellows overseas.
2. Through conversations with KCSP leadership, HFA participated in two online mentoring programs to incoming and current KCSP fellows. Each session included a panel of folklife experts, including former KCSP fellows, for the purpose of supporting the activities and professional development of KCSP fellows globally. Both sessions received positive feedback with requests to offer more such events.

Commitment to Youth and the Next Generation

HFA's dedication to youth engagement is reflected in its programming and leadership development

initiatives. By offering opportunities for young people to connect with Hungarian heritage through dance, music, and community, and by cultivating future leaders through programs such as HFA's development and leadership conference, HFA is laying the groundwork for the future of Hungarian folklife in North America and beyond.

In 2024, HFA formalized a collaboration agreement with Örökség Nemzeti Gyermekek és Ifjúsági Népművészeti Egyesület (Heritage National Association of Children's and Youth Folk Art), Hungary's largest national organization dedicated to promoting folk art, traditions, and dance among children and youth. HFA presented special awards at dance competitions to promising young talents, notably at the National Solo Folkdance Competition in Békéscsaba, Hungary.

HFA has also provided in-kind support and guidance to a range of large-scale organizations and events with significant impact on youth development, including Csipke Camp, Pontozo Festival, and Hungary's State Secretariat for National Policy. Moreover, HFA supported a dance workshop series in partnership with the Tamburitzans, an ensemble dedicated to preserving and celebrating international cultural heritages across North America while awarding talented performers with scholarships to Pittsburgh-based universities.

Expanding Access and Building Community

HFA's principal objectives remain expanding access to Hungarian folklore activities and organizations and fostering a vibrant folklife community. HFA has advanced these aims by developing a comprehensive online directory that connects individuals and organizations seeking Hungarian folk dancers, musicians, or instructors, thereby facilitating collaboration and knowledge-sharing. Additionally, HFA has established a centralized calendaring system, enabling Hungarian folklife organizations and communities to publicize their events and providing a "one-stop shop" for accessing worldwide folklore activities throughout the year. HFA also maintains a Google-based email communication platform, allowing folklife leaders and participants to reach a broad segment of the community for discussions on logistical and operational matters.

HFA remains committed to engaging with broader folklore communities and, in 2024, became an active member of two prominent North American organizations: Folk Alliance International and the National Folk Organization.

Conclusion and Looking Ahead

HFA stands as a beacon for the preservation and celebration of Hungarian culture in North America. Through its innovative programs, dedicated leadership, and global partnerships, HFA made significant strides in 2024 in bridging communities and ensuring the vibrancy of Hungarian folk traditions for generations to come. HFA remains committed to broadening access, nurturing leadership, and building sustainable networks that keep Hungarian folklife flourishing. The accomplishments of the past year are a testament to the passion and commitment of all involved -

volunteers, leaders, and community members alike.

HFA now operates with charitable status in the United States, making donations to the organization tax-deductible. In 2025, HFA aims to further its impact through fundraising, not only to support administrative expenses but also to provide financial assistance to folklife organizations, offsetting costs for hiring teachers, musicians, and venues for their events and programs. HFA is especially eager to support underserved communities - where folklife may be absent yet deeply desired. HFA is actively seeking tax-deductible donations and corporate sponsorships to bolster its operational budget and expand its reach.

For more information about HFA, to connect with a local group, discuss corporate sponsorship opportunities, or get involved with the organization, contact our leadership team at hello@hungarianfolklife.org or visit www.hungarianfolklife.org. To donate, visit <https://givebutter.com/HFAMicrogrants>.