



# Finlandia Foundation® National

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



**Performer of the Year  
Kent Washburn**

# Evenings of Folk, Orchestral and Film Music with Kent Washburn

In 1996 Finlandia Foundation National (FFN), the premier network of Finnish-American organizations in the United States, initiated its Performer of the Year (POY) program to showcase a variety of talents related to the culture and traditions of Finland and Finnish America at live performances at FFN chapters across the U.S.

Music has always been important to FFN, and most of its POY have been musicians, from singers to traditional folk, jazz and classical instrumental artists.

That musical tradition continues with current POY Kent “Aarne” Washburn. The keyboard artist has in his repertoire a host of Finnish musical experiences—primarily on organ, but he also performs on piano.

Kent grew up in Ithaca, New York, where his mother (born in Finland) and his father were founding members of the Finger Lakes Finns. He began piano lessons at age nine and organ studies at age 14, while enjoying participating in local Finnish music and dance activities. He went on to complete organ and music studies at Syracuse University.

Washburn lives in the Washington, D.C. metro area and is organist at Arlington Memorial Baptist Church in Arlington, Virginia. He has performed on piano at the Finnish Embassy for Kalevala Night, and enjoys playing organ concerts of Finnish orchestral music.

As POY, Washburn performs a wide range of Finnish orchestral music that he has transcribed for organ, including traditional folk music, patriotic marches and songs, and favorites such as “Kulkurin valssi,” “Kotimaani ompe Suomi” and “Finlandia.”

Washburn has written musical scores for two Finnish silent films, *Laveata Tieta* and *Mustalaishurmaaja* (*The*

*Gypsy Charmer*). One of his presentations as POY is the screening of the 1929 *The Gypsy Charmer*, with his accompaniment on organ.

The film was written and directed by Valentin Vaala and Teuvo Tulio, two Russian immigrants to Finland. It features a Rudolph Valentino-like gypsy played by Tulio.

Washburn scored the film entirely with Finnish music. To the colorful gypsy life on screen, he matched a wealth of equally colorful folk and popular music. The film soundtrack premiered at FinnFest USA 2013 in Hancock, Michigan.



**F**ind more about Finlandia Foundation National, its Performer of the Year and other programs at the website: [FinlandiaFoundation.org](http://FinlandiaFoundation.org)

**PAST PERFORMERS OF THE YEAR:**

**2018** Juli Wood, jazz saxophonist, Chicago

**2016-17** Pirjo Polari-Khan, children's author, poet and storyteller, San Jose, California

**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

**2010** Finn Hall, folk band, Oakdale, Minnesota

**2009** Terhi Miiikki-Broersma, multi-instrumentalist, Lynden, 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, Minneapolis

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



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

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