



Artist Profile

Patty Looman

Lap dulcimer player, Patty Looman, is a unique artisan who also plays the hammered dulcimer. Ms. Looman studied hammered dulcimer from renowned players, Worley Gardner and Russell Fluharty. John Lilly writes, "The spirit and music of each of them lives on in Patty." The mountain or fretted dulcimer is an Appalachian invention while the hammered dulcimer is from an ancient Middle-Eastern instrument. (See "Kubla Khan" in Addendum.) Ms. Looman owns the largest collection of historical instruments in the state and makes it her personal mission to research

and document traditional music that otherwise might only be known in the oral tradition. "...I was supposed to be a professional musician. My parents went out of their way to train me. For two years I was excused from school and rode the train to Wheeling to take organ lessons. They gave me private piano lessons and then I went to Fairmont State and took music courses." (Lilly) Ms. Looman was born in Mannington, West Virginia, and has a degree in education from Central Michigan University. She was a high school teacher for 35 years. Today, she regularly teaches group classes throughout the region. Like all great teachers, as payment, she commissions her students to go and teach others. Each year, "Patty Fest" is held in Morgantown, West Virginia, in her honor. In 2007, Ms. Looman was awarded the Vandalia Award, West Virginia's highest folk life honor for those who have made outstanding contributions to the continuation of the state's folk heritage.



Lap Dulcimer rendering