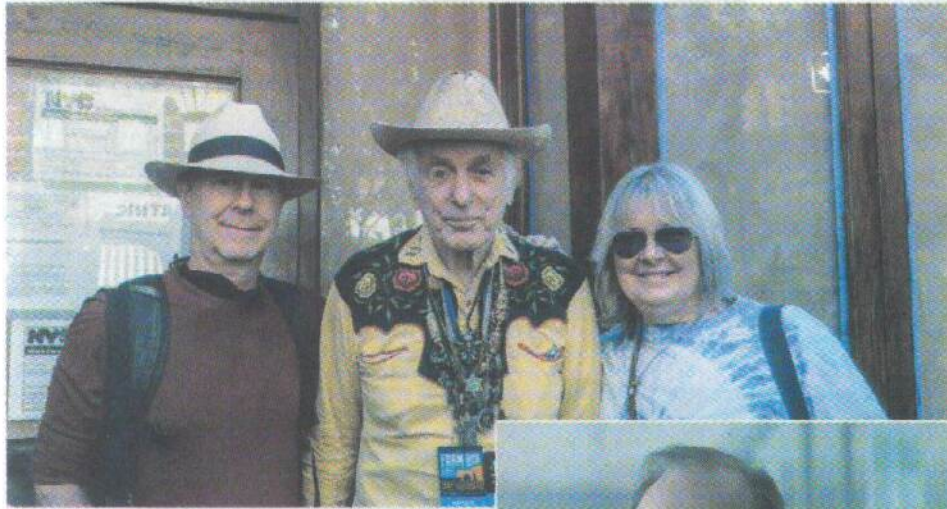


The Village Trip Festival

Where the Beat Lives On



LIZ THOMPSON AND CLIFF PEARSON WITH COMPOSER DAVID AVRAM (center), who will be spearheading several Kerouac-related events to celebrate Kerouac, his close friend, and colleague's centenary this year. Photo credit: Anonymous.

By Hannah Reimann

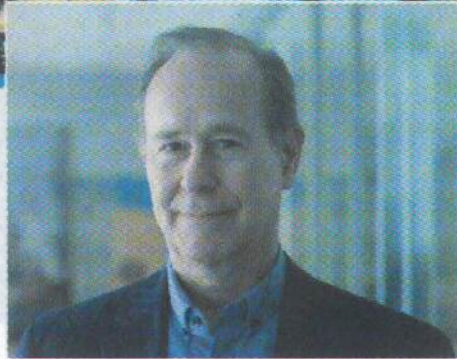
In celebratory collaboration, *WestView News* publisher George Capsis will participate in some opening remarks on the first day of the Village Trip Festival, The Eighth Street Experience, on September 10, 2022, from 2-7 pm, near the corner of West 8th Street and MacDougal Street.

Join TVT and the Village Alliance for musical, culinary and other family-friendly events all along West 8th Street between 5th and 6th Avenues. The roster of musical artists includes David Amram and Friends, roving electric-guitar group, Tilted Axes, and much more. There are roughly 50 events over fifteen days of concerts, exhibits, walking tours and commemorative parties this year, the most exciting and busy Village Trip since its inception in 2018.

I spoke with the festival's creator, Liz Thomson and her joint artistic director, Cliff Pearson, for in-depth knowledge about The Village Trip. I was delighted to hear first-hand of their passion for the history and ongoing artistic fruitfulness of the Village and its longtime residents.

WVN: Tell me about the origins of The Village Trip.

LT: As a teenager in London in the early 1970s, I became obsessed with the folk music of the Village and that led me to Joan Baez and Bob Dylan, the music of the New York folk revival. I got very interested in America's social politics and 1960s history. Once I came here in the 1990s, I found that the Village was not just about music, but everything under the sun and that it was a place where arts mingled with social activism. It had done so for more than a century. I stayed in the Washington Square Hotel for my first visit and I thought, "Why isn't there a festival here?" So many extraordinary things—Edward



CLIFF PEARSON, longtime Village resident and Thomson's joint artistic director. Photo credit: John Chu.

Hopper, Henry James, Eugene O'Neill, Mabel Dodge with her salon—think of the opening scene of the movie *Reds* with John Reed, all the political activists, Max Eastman, Emma Goldman. And Walt Whitman sort-of coming out (way before Stonewall) and then Stonewall itself, The Literal Club and the Heterodoxy Club, Elizabeth Irwin, I mean there was so much that was happening and it all happened around Washington Square. From the late 19th century on, it's never stopped. Wouldn't it be great to have an event in the park to celebrate that? I had envisaged Woodstock in Washington Square for one day as a one-off event. Janis, Ian and I talked about it and she said, "Make it annual!" I thought that was a good idea. The inaugural festival, 2018, was Thursday to Sunday; followed by 2019 too. And then we had a nine-day event last year and fifteen days this year. We missed one year because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

WVN: What are some top highlights of the festival this year?

- **Sept 24, 4-7 pm: Bringing It All Back Home to Washington Square—Free outdoor concert.** The signature closing event: A three-hour concert in Washington Square Park, Garibaldi Plaza featuring The Klezmatics, Joshua Nelson, Reverend Billy and the Church of Stop Shopping.
- **September 10 from 2-7 pm The Village Trip—The Eighth Street Experience** Opening event, The Eighth Street Experience with David Amram, George Capsis, Tilted Axes and more



LIZ THOMPSON (RIGHT), CREATOR OF THE VILLAGE TRIP FESTIVAL with Joan Baez backstage in Bristol in 2018. Baez was an inspiration for the festival and is the subject of Thomson's award-winning book, *Joan Baez, The Last Leaf* (Palazzo Editions). Photo credit: Gabriel Harris, Baez's son.

- **September 11 "Wonderful town," Walking Tour**, see website for times Celebrating the Leonard Bernstein musical which was set in the Village
- **September 11 the walking tour leads to a Cabaret event of songs with Janis Siegal of the Manhattan Transfer and Michael Kelly**
- **September 16 Children of the American Bop (and Mambo) Night! The Public Theater & Joe's Pub 425 Lafayette Street (at Astor Place), NY** Jack Kerouac's centennial was in March and we have a whole Jack Kerouac 100 theme with a reading with live music of *On the Road* at the Strand Book Store Rare Books Room, a show at Joe's Pub with Bobby Sanabria and David Amram, a concert at St. John's of classical music that Kerouac loved, and a panel discussion at the Jefferson Market Library of Kerouac's days in the Village featuring his then-girlfriend Joyce Johnson.

WVN: What's the mission of The Village Trip?

LT: The mission is a celebration of arts and activism in the Village. We intend to do both timely things and timeless things. For example, this year we'll have a discussion about Eleanor Roosevelt's work with human rights as a focus by public historian, Kathleen Hulser. Eleanor Roosevelt was very involved with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. She famously said, "Women's Rights are Human Rights." She lived in the Village on Washington Square, she had affairs with women, she was a woman ahead of her time in the White House. We'll celebrate her. That event is on September 21 at 6pm at the LGBTQ Center on 13th Street.

CP: Another discussion will be led by Public historian, Kathleen Holzer. It will take place at the LGBT Center on West 13th Street on September 21.

WVN: Liz, you wrote an award-winning

book about Joan Baez and have been attracted to authentic, roots and political singer-songwriters since you were a teen. What else can you tell us about this part of you and The Village Trip?

LT: Whatever spoke to me during the tail end of the 1960s led me to appreciate the musicians more. Politically it's very important. There's something about folk and acoustic music that I find very appealing. People still play guitars at home and sing to them here and in other places, not just in the Village. There's an honesty about people making real music on real instruments rather than on electronic ones. It speaks to all of us. It's nice that all of that still exists. It's an important part of our culture. Ever since Pete Seeger and Woodie Guthrie, all of whom lived and played in the Village, the politics and the music came together.

WVN: Cliff, you're a longtime West Village resident, writer and architect. What's your particular interest and involvement in The Village Trip?

CP: During COVID, I saw The Village Trip, an arts festival, as a way of strengthening the neighborhood. The more I've gotten into it, the more I realize that Greenwich Village is a global place. When you think of creativity and when you think of political movements and social activism, you have to think of Greenwich Village. There are only a handful of such places in the world.

WVN: What is the message you'd like to deliver to our WestView readers as you rev up for the first events on September 10th?

LT: Well, obviously come to the festival! And appreciate, recognize the history, the depth, the richness, the breadth, the fun, the seriousness... It's a beautiful neighborhood and it's also an important neighborhood globally in terms of what it's given to the world. Everything is in the Village!

thevillagetrif.com/program-2022