Up At the Crack of Midnight With Ciúnas

BY BROOKE ALBERTS

I'd like to establish right away that I'm fairly familiar with the members of the Southern California-based Irish Traditional band, Ciúnas. Over the course of several years I've played alongside them at various Irish sessions and musical gatherings in the L.A. region. I've even had the distinct pleasure of traveling with fiddler Kira Ott and bodhran player Joey Abarta to the Frankie Kennedy Winter School (of Irish traditional music) in Donegal, Ireland. It was always a treat when flute and whistle player Nick Buckmelter would come down from the Eastern Sierra and enliven the Celtic Arts Center's Monday night session, where guitarist Jimmy Murphy could usually be coaxed into a rendition of Clare to Here. Add any one of them to a session, and the energy bumps up perceptibly.

Ciúnas' first CD Up at the Crack of Noon contains much of what makes each of these four players so special: Kira's lyrical swing, Joey's inventive rhythms and energy, Jimmy's variety of voicings, dynamics and groove, and Nick's dancing drive. Put them all together, add a varied and intriguing repertoire and watch them go. It's clear they have a lot of fun together stoking their musical dynamo.

I asked Nick about their “band house” where they host the occasional session, and he told me what makes it work for them:

“We share an old craftsman-style house, built in 1913, in downtown Fullerton. To the west is a vacant lot, to the east, a salon; to the south, a sushi bar, and to the north, a telephone company. We have no residential neighbors, which makes for great craic (ed. Irish word for fun/enjoyment) at odd hours. The prospect of music at any hour without fear

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Larry Wines’ Tied to the Tracks

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& much more...
Dear Readers,

If you scour the back pages of this newspaper, you will undoubtedly realize that we have no shortage of great music to hear from Santa Barbara to San Diego to Riverside. Wherever you live, opportunities abound. As our columnist Larry Wines whispers out “From bluegrass to bluegrass, Cajun to cowboy to Celtic, Quebecois, new old, alt, post folk, they’ve got the best of acoustic renaissance,” we cover it in these pages.

Why do we put together this series of FolkWorks if you look at the series, you will see musicians, mostly local, who are in-tune with the FolkWorks vision - high caliber, exciting and uplifting. And multi-cultural. The first three concerts that we produced were an amazing success – far exceeding our expectations. Abigail Washburn, the amazing banjo picking singer with the imaginative cellist Ben Sollee kicked it off. Yuval Ron with Asher and the Sion Band, two master Israeli drummers, played to an overflowing crowd. This was followed 10 days later with another standing room only concert: Moira Smalley and VO,CO, the local vocal wizards who just keep on getting better and better.

The March/April concerts promise to be just as exciting and fulfilling. In celebration of St. Paddy’s day, we will feature... the popular young Irish band, Cúinns. They are featured in this issue, so you have an opportunity to get to know more about these fine players. Then, in April, Ashley Maher will be playing with her mini Band. We would have booked the big band, but in April, Ashley Maher will be playing with her mini Band and the Yuval Ron Ensemble. While the majority of concerts will be in our local treasures, we are also presenting a few new names that we were lucky to have caught on tour. The concerts are limited to one month to help save what is left of our sanity. The good news is that we are getting lots of help, with new volunteers. Of course, we can still use additional help with promotion and getting out those press releases.

By the way, our benefit concert was a great success. We had an overwhelming response. People remarked about the excellence of the musicians, the diverse genres and the sense of community. Many of the bands that were featured will be performing at CAFAM. We had a great team of folks who made the event possible, including our amazing sound guys Dennis and Wayne. We can’t thank them enough. We had such a great time that the very next day we were planning our next World Music Concert. So, how can we keep juggling all these plates, you ask? There is only one answer that comes to mind, you, our readers, we writers, our researchers, our distributors, our listeners, our volunteers. The opportunities abound. We always need more volunteers, for both the promotion and the concerts. We need more distributors (2 – 3 hours every two months), assignment writers, concert publicists, club shleppers, clean-up crew. And, the only job that we can actually pay for: display ad salesperson (we will pay a 20% commission on ads sold!).

Is it your turn... come out to the concerts, bring your friends…. and help out if you can. You will appreciate it as well.
THESE SONGS ARE MADE FOR WAULKING

BY LINDA DEWAR

It's hard to find a culture that hasn't some tradition of work-songs in one form or another. Scandinavia, Britain and North America have their sea chanties, the Balkans have a long tradition of songs to be sung while harvesting crops, and in Taiwan you can hear the Alishi tribes of fishing and cultivating rattan.

There is something special about songs that are meant to be sung to the rhythm and sway of physical labor. Sometimes their lyrics tell us about the work that's being done; more often they tell us about the people who are doing the work and what they'd rather be doing instead. These songs are easily learned, and therefore handed down through generations, so that even when the labor they once accompanied is no longer a part of daily life they often live on in the folk tradition.

In Scotland, the best known work songs are called “waulkings” songs, named after the labor they accompanied. Performed primarily in the north and west of the country, these songs were sung to the rhythm of the work itself. The women sang together to a steady beat: the women who were doing the work. The others followed, singing to the rhythm of the cloth as it was being made, and were often inventing verses of their own. As the work was performed, the songs were sung, more or less, to promote the work.

As the women worked, they would sing, to entertain themselves and to keep the rhythm of their work. Their songs, sung only in the Gaelic language, were known as “waulkings,” an ancient word from Gaelic for the cloth on which the song was sung. Many of the songs were sung to the rhythm of the cloth as it was being made, and were often inventing verses of their own. As the work was performed, the songs were sung, more or less, to promote the work. The influence of waulking songs on American roots music is easy to see. Scots who came to our shores as “indentured servants” worked side by side with African slaves in the cotton and tobacco fields, and many of their songs were sung to the rhythm of the work as it was being done. Here’s a song that was sung by Harriet Tubman, the famous conductor of the Underground Railway, to the rhythm of the cloth as she was working: "Lama Ding Dong."

The beat is a steady ONE-two, ONE-two, ONE-two that defined the beat of the cloth on the wooden table: Dark and thorny is the path where every singer will find his way, where every singer will find his way.

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I f you are anything like me, you’ve long been confused about Modes. There’s good reason for that but read on (all the way through), and it will become clear as a church bell.

As we use them today, essentially are scales built on the successive white keys of the piano. The modes are referred to by their Greek names or by a numerical designation using Roman numerals. Look at the piano keyboard in Figure 1 and notice that the spacing of the white keys is uneven, broken up by the occurrence of black keys between some of them. Starting on the white keys, the second and successive white key results in the note spacing that we recognize as the modern Major scale. Thus, the same spacing is also known as Ionian or Mode-I (see Table 1). This mode covers most “normal” songs like Happy Birthday to You and Twinkle Twinkle Little Star. If you start on the next scale at D instead of C and, again, play only the white keys, the half-step whole-step spacing is in a different layout giving us the Dorian mode or Mode-II. Dorian mode has a sad, mysterious sound and is used for songs like What Shall We Do with a Drunken Sailor. Continuing this process of starting each mode on the next white key will give us all seven of our modern key modes as noted in Table 1.

To make it a little easier to compare the spacing shown in Table 1, they can be lined up as shown in Table 2. From this alignment we can see that four of the modes have a minor 3rd (b3) so that I-III, Dorian, Phrygian-IV, Mi- and Mixolydian have major 3rd intervals and are considered major key modes. The remaining three, I-Ionian, IV-Phrygian, and VII-Locrian are considered minor key modes. The Greek system used only the diatonic notes, the white keys, and recognized only four keys: D, E, F, and G. The Greeks did not yet think in terms of key.

The note spacing of each mode defines what chords it can produce. The I-Ionian mode—or our modern Major mode—is the only one that has a naturally occurring V7 (dominant 7th) chord. Table 2 shows more information about the intervals and chords for each mode. The rebel in this family is VII-Locrian mode. Locrian’s lowered 5th (the dreaded tritone) produces a diminished tonic chord (I diminished) which makes this mode almost unusable. All of this seems pretty straightforward, so why then are modes always perceived as confusing? One explanation may lie in the use of the Greek names and their historical mis-application. The ancient Greeks had a system of modes. They named their modes after some of the regions and peoples of ancient Greece. The system used only the diatonic notes, the white keys, and recognized only four keys: D, E, F, and G. The Greeks did not yet think in terms of scales and keys. Instead each mode was defined by its finalis, the equivalent to our concept of key. The finalis was the tonal center of its mode, and melodic lines would be constructed around it. Then, like now, the final note of a melody usually indicated the key. The reciting-tone was the secondary tonal center and was roughly equivalent to our dominant note. The reciting-tone was usually, but not always, a fifth (or four diatonic steps) above the finalis. The range of a mode stipulated the bottom and top allowable notes for melodies in that mode. The ranges of the four original modes were bounded top and bottom by their finalis (see Table 3).

The Greeks used a four-string lute, and there is some speculation that the modes were named as designations for the tunings that were popular in various regions. This may also explain the Greek limitation of only four keys. The lute evolved into an instrument with strings between, and as we realize this, the modern system of keys may have evolved with it. The four original modes were called the authentic modes. Each of these was then paired with another mode that was called plagal. The plagal modes kept the same finalis but had a different range and reciting-tone. This was true because they were constructed both above and below the finalis, they were in an authentic mode; if they ranged both above and below the finalis, they were in a plagal mode. The eight resulting modes were numbered in order. Within each pair, the authentic was odd-numbered and the plagal was even-numbered (see Table 3).

The plagal mode kept the name of its authentic pair but added the prefix, hypo (again see Table 3). The Greek word plagos apparently means side or oblique and plagal melodies can extend to either side of the finalis. This modal method of defining tonal centers came to be the system of Church Modes and provided a musical structure that was religiously (snicker) adhered to for quite some time. If all this seems overly complex and darkly mysterious, let me remind you that the Church Modes were also known as the Medieval Modes.

The Church Modes supported a system of liturgical chants and plainings. These had only horizontal melody and no vertical harmony. In modern times the harmony became just as important to the melody and required a different approach. The modern system of modes began with the same four modes: Dorian, Phrygian, Mixolydian, and Aeolian. Since there was no longer the restriction of the four key limit which had spanned the plagal overlay system, the three additional modern modes of Ionian, Locrian and VII-Aeolian were added (see Table 1).

The Ionian mode—I-Ionian mode—was odd-numbered and, again, used only the white keys of the piano. The modes are referred to by their Greek names or by the modern Major scale. That fact that both the old and new systems use Greek names without a one-to-one correspondence is a major point of confusion. Also the original assignment of the Greek names is lost in the haze of history and those that survived may be a matter of speculation or misinterpretation by music theorists of the past. The system of Roman numerals instead of Greek names may be less ambiguous but it is also less romantic.

Having said all that, I hope that the Church Modes don’t seem like Greek to you anymore. Now might be a good time to get your seven-stringed lute out of the closet and, as usual, stay tuned.

Roger Goodman is a musician, mathematician, panster, reader of esoteric books and sometime writer, none of which pays the mortgage. For that, he is a computer network gay for a law firm. He has been part of the Los Angeles old-time & contra-dance music community for over thirty years. While not a dancer, he does play fiddle, guitar, harmonica, mandolin, banjo & songs. Roger has a penchant for trivia and obscure and sometimes tries to explain how the clock works when asked only for the time. He lives with his wife, Monika White, in Santa Monica.

MUSIC INSTRUCTION

JOELLEN LAPIDUS

Joellen Lapidus is one of the pioneers of contemporary fiddling. She teaches music by ear, so no musical background is necessary! Her students have won awards at festivals from Topanga, California to Galax, Virginia. More importantly, she shows you how to play fiddle in your own time. She’s a friendly person and as such, you’ll enjoy learning from her. You’ll learn the technique, bowings, and styles of traditional Appalachian musicians so you can play at local jam sessions, bang away on your front porch, or saw like mad at local festivals and contests. For lessons call David at 818-524-6123, or email him at davidbragger@yahoo.com.

DAVID BRAGGER

David Bragger teaches traditional fiddle and banjo to students of all ages and levels. He teaches music by ear, so no musical background is necessary! His students have won awards at festivals from Topanga, California to Galax, Virginia. More importantly, he shows you how to play fiddle in your own time. You’ll be learning the technique, bowings, and styles of traditional Appalachian musicians so you can play at local jam sessions, bang away on your front porch, or saw like mad at local festivals and contests. For lessons call David at 818-524-6123, or email him at davidbragger@yahoo.com.

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SWEET DREAMS OF GEORGIA

BY FRON HELLER

Once again my husband and I were lost in rural Georgia sixty miles south of Atlanta. We were to go to visit family for Thanksgiving in 2003. The flat highway lined with red clay and pine trees held few landmarks for us to follow. We pulled into the town of Milner, and found a little wood framed building that had been a gas station. A big sign on top said “Swint’s.” Stepping inside, we saw a glass counter full of candy. A short legged man trundled in from the back.

“We just need directions to Crane Road,” I quickly said.

Without a word he plopped samples of candy on the counter. One taste of fried pecans dipped in white chocolate and we were converts. He then plied us with other sweets such as fudge, nougats, and pralines. A while later we left with the directions and two bags of candy.

We had just been introduced to Ken Grant and the candy store that has been in his family for three generations. For the past five years Ken and his wife Beverly have been running the store with help from their two daughters and three grandchildren. The candy that melted our hearts is called “Sweet Dreams”. We had stumbled upon a true Georgia treasure. Two years later we visited again, this time to get the whole story of Swint’s Pecans and Candies. Before we left, we had bought two more bags of sweets.

Ken invited us across the street to his home. We stepped on pecan strewn over the ground and passed two rocking chairs on the porch. It was a cool day, but Ken met us at the door wearing red Bermuda shorts, a red bandana, and a short-sleeved shirt. His feet were bare. A ceiling fan whirled slowly in the front room.

First, Ken showed us a picture of his grandparents in a wooden frame on the wall. His grandmother was the oldest of ten children, and she had nine of her own.

Ken said, “My great granddaddy owned all of the land around for twenty five miles, and three miles wide. They grew cotton until the boll weevil came. It was in his blood, but the boll weevil kept showing up. One day the train from Virginia to Florida broke down right here in Milner, loaded with pecan (pronounced PEE-can) trees. My great granddaddy owned twenty miles around. He had to move them, Ink said, “Like ‘em! Hell, I don’t think we can make ‘em fast enough.”

But they hit a roadblock when Aunt Doodle refused to sell them. She was seventy-five years old and “her brain couldn’t hold anything more.” So the family just covered them wanted the family to slip something out the back door.

After selling a claim, Ken found that the white chocolate had melted in the car. He was very hungry so he “borrowed three salted pecans and ran it through the melted chocolate.” They were so good he kept eating them.

When he asked his uncle if he liked them, Ink said, “Like ‘em! Hell, I don’t think we can make ‘em fast enough.”

Without a word he plopped samples of maple pecan pralines, and sold it at the family gas station which had been built in 1927. That became the first candy sold at Swint’s. Slowly they added to their repertoire. Ken’s grandmother, not wanting to waste anything, made candied orange peels from the Florida oranges. Later, she developed a recipe for orange coconut fudge. She also started frying the pecans in land in a big black skillet, and lightly salted them. Some were seasoned with cinnamon and other spices. Crunchy glazed nuts were made by cooking them in corn syrup. Today Swint’s offers twenty five kinds of nuts and candy, and Ken assured me that vegetable oil is now used instead of lard.

While Ken’s Uncle Ink and Aunt Doodle ran the candy store, he was an insurance salesman for thirty five years. In the mid-sixties Aunt Doodle got the idea from a Swedish man to make white chocolate candy. Thirty years later Ken went on a business trip to Griffin ten miles away. He planned to deliver some white chocolate to a ninety six year old woman, and some pecans to a man who “wanted them bad.” After setting a claim, Ken found that the white chocolate had melted in the car. He was very hungry so he “borrowed three salted pecans and ran it through the melted chocolate.” They were so good he kept eating them.

When Ken’s grandparents planned to make an all day trip to Atlanta, Ken’s uncle was five years old at the time, and nicknamed “Inkspot” or “Ink” because of a birthmark on his face. At Ink’s request, he and his seven year old brother Jamie were given permission to sell pecans out of a pup tent while their parents were away. The only road from the North to Florida ran right by the house, and there were plenty of Yankee tourists kicking up dust as they traveled through. Ink and Jamie sold $60 worth of pecans that day, greatly impressing their parents. After that, fourteen to seventeen people sat outside shelling the pecans, which were sold off the porch. Some of the nuts were sold to ice cream parlors in Atlanta.

One day, Ken’s grandmother made up her own recipe for maple pecan pralines, and sold it at the family gas station which had been built in 1927. That became the first candy sold at Swint’s. Slowly they added to their repertoire. Ken’s grandmother, not wanting to waste anything, made candied orange peels from the Florida oranges. Later, she developed a recipe for orange coconut fudge. She also started frying the pecans in land in a big black skillet, and lightly salted them. Some were seasoned with cinnamon and other spices. Crunchy glazed nuts were made by cooking them in corn syrup. Today Swint’s offers twenty five kinds of nuts and candies, and Ken assured me that vegetable oil is now used instead of lard.

In 2002, Fron Heller retired as a social worker. Now she is attempting to find time for her many interests: writing, attending festivals, playing old-time music and studying art. She also enjoys traveling and sharing life in general with her husband Bill Mason.
THE SPRING ROUNDPUP

Ye, that's an ol' cowboy term for gathering the cattle to see how they fared through the winter, and to drive ‘em to spring pastures and fresh, tasty grazing. So, git yore yee haws ready, an’ we’ll mosey out to check those beckonin’ green pastures, and the Western music that’s soon fill ‘em.

COWBOY FESTIVAL BRINGS A STAMPEDE OF MUSIC

This year’s Santa Clarita Cowboy Festival is a great opportunity to find many of the best Western Americana and Western folk artists, from saddle trap troubadours to Western Swing bands. The 2005 festival won the coveted National Cowboy Symposium’s “Cowboy Culture Award” at September’s National Cowboy Symposium and Celebration in Lubbock, Texas.

That was after it was nearly cancelled, and kept alive by the innovation of Michael Fleming, leader of the landmark cowboy band New West – and a city and cadre of volunteers that wanted it to continue. Fleming’s first chore as head of the festival was to find workable compromises with the venue, Melody Ranch Motion Picture Studio, and the HBO series, Deadwood, who wasn’t inclined to interrupt its shooting schedule or see its venue, Melody Ranch Motion Picture Studio, and the HBO series, Deadwood, who wasn’t inclined to interrupt its shooting schedule or see its

This year’s lineup for the Cowboy Festival, April 26–30, may be the best ever. Music headliners include Don Edwards (nominated with Peter Rowan in 2002 for a Folk Grammy), 2005 Western Female Vocalist Juni Fisher, R.W. Hampton, Dave Stamey, Sourdough Slim, Sons of the San Joaquin, Beenie Hill, Whit Smith’s Hot Jazz Caravan (descendants of Whit’s previous group, Hot Club of Cowtown), youthful star Ginny Mac, favorite Sons of the San Joaquin, Lorraine Rawls, Kip Callahan, Syd Masters and the Swing Riders, Curly Muagrave, Sky Shivers, Davy Gravey and the Sour Duo, and Wylie and the Wild West (Wylie supplies Yahoo’s yodel) and there are many other delightful performers.

The Festival’s cowboy poets include 2005 Poet of the Year Larry Maurice, ever popular past champions Baxter Black and Waddie Mitchell, Central California’s inimitable Pat Richardson, locals Gary Robertson and Joe Harrington, and the cowgirls are ably represented by quilter, antique quilt author and poet Yvonne Hollenbeck.


Among those I’ll hear for the first time are Andy Nelson, Richard Ellroyan and Whit Hadsyn. Again, the best place to discover artists new to you is a festival.

The festival includes symposium on violence in the Old West, Wyatt Earp, western art and more.

There are more dimensions, like the annual “Spaghetti Western” train ride on the Fillmore & Western Railway, and the charity trail ride for a riding program that helps handicapped and disabled children. And the Canyon Theatre Guild Playhouse will present a local-cast production of Oklahoma!, the high spirited musical set in Western Indian Territory just after the turn of the century. (Note that a national touring cast brings their Broadway-style revival of the 1943 Rodgers and Hammerstein musical to the Cerritos Center in May.)

RIDIN’ HERD BEYOND THE COWBOY FESTIVAL

Whether or not you attend the festival, other local shows by outstanding artists in the Western genre are worthy of your attention, as well. Those known at press time follow.

Distinguished actor Ronny Cox is a lifelong roots musician with a mountain climber, museum founder and former political pundit. He has written, recorded, performed as part of his Western Tramp Troubadours. On April 7th, Coffee Gallery Backstage offers Randy Crawford & The Cowboy Beans, an evening of cowboy-themed songs.

Coffee Gallery Backstage in Altadena was named best small venue of the year Longines of all time, releasing rave reviews in the New York Times and Washington Post. On April 28, he brings his trademark act, 1930s movie cowboy sensibilities, great songs and comedy to Coffee Gallery Backstage.

Meantime, see ya on the radio!

Whatever your favorite genre, support live music. If you head out to a festival or fete Western music show, be sure to say howdy, because I’m probably there. Meantime, see ya on the radio!

Larry Wines is producer and host of an acoustic Americana radio show in Los Angeles, also called Tied to the Tracks. Offering live in-studio performers and recorded music from Maine to Mexico, New Orleans to Nova Scotia, the Rocky Mountains to the rocky coast, Texas border squarebodas to Memphis harmonica, it’s blues to bluegrass, cowboys to Cajun to Celtic to Quebecois, new old, trad, alt and post folk, and the acoustic Renaissance, with local, national, and international roots/Americana artists. It airs Saturdays, 6-10 a.m. on KCSN 88.5 FM, simulcast at www.kcsn.org. Larry is a writer, songwriter, journalist, mountain climber, museum founder, and former political pundit. When you’re done, check out our website, Ghost Riders in the Sky.

Sourdough Slim has played all the prestigious venues, receiving rave reviews in the New York Times and Washington Post. On April 28, he brings his trademark act, 1930s movie cowboy sensibilities, great songs and comedy to Coffee Gallery Backstage.

TIED TO THE TRACKS

BY LARRY WINES

Stage, and BBC Radio Scotland.

On April 5th, the Cerritos Center presents Ruthie Foster. She grew up in the tiny town of Gause, Texas, and brings a voice rooted in Gospel, Blues and Folk, influenced by Sam Cooke and Curtis Mayfield. Foster has a powerful, unique, and compelling musical style all her own. She’s been on Austin City Limits and broke the attendance records at the legendary Vancouver Folk Festival.

On April 7th, Coffee Gallery Backstage offers the longest-running Western Band, Foy Willing’s Riders of the Purple Sage. Willing’s name was reattached after many decades, following the 2004 retirement of Buck Page, the band’s last founding member. With Cody Bryant at the helm, the band continues to do motion picture soundtracks and play local and road gigs, playing new originals alongside classics that include a hit for them in 1947, Ghost Riders in the Sky.

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UKULELE VIRTUOSO
KEEPS LEGENDARY
HAWAIIAN BAND ALIVE

BY AUDREY COLEMAN

When theater manager David Palmer made the announcement, the audi-
ence at the Shannon Center for the Performing Arts erupted in cheers. The April 8th Aloha Series concert, which until then had been billed "TBA," would feature Eddie Kamae and The Sons of Hawaii. The outpouring of delight from the Hawaiian-music aficionados who filled the cozy 400-seat theater attested to the leg-
denary status of Eddie Kamae—ukulele virtu-
oso, vocalist, roots music researcher, and film-
maker—and member of the groundbreaking

group he formed over thirty years ago with
Gabby Pahinui, The Sons of Hawaii.

In the late 1940s, a young ukulele player
named Eddie Kamae entered a Hawaiian musi-
cal scene that had disturbing limitations for
Hawaiian musicians. The floorshows at resorts and clubs in Waikiki played little or no music with deep Hawaiian roots, but instead featured hapa haole songs, that is, Hawaiian-style num-
bers composed by non-Hawaiians, as well as ballads taken from Hollywood musicals.

Perhaps even more disturbing, most Hawaiians themselves weren’t hearing much Hawaiian music beyond their own family jam sessions.

In Honolulu, this down-home Hawaiian music could be heard at regular jam sessions. Eddie Kamae showed off his jazzy Latin picking
style at the jam held at Charlie’s Cab Company and enjoyed how it felt when the audience threw money on to the stage. He went there every week for a while, but Hawaiian roots music did not rub off on him.

By the early 1950s, Eddie was dazzling audiences on the islands and the mainland as part of a duo called The Ukulele Rascals. He also managed to
fit in occasional gigs for some of the Waiikiki floorshows where his impres-
sive solos helped change the image of the little ukulele from modest backup
instrument to solo status. Ironically, it was a floorshow gig that turned his attention to Hawaiian music. Vocalist Haumani Kahalewai insisted that he
learn a song written by Queen Lili’uokalani, the last reigning monarch of
Hawaii, to play as an instrumental solo. It was called Ku ‘u Pua I Paoakalani.

“She gave me a lead sheet of a song written by Queen Lili’uokalani. So I said, ‘Okay, I’ll play it in the show.’ And that was the first time I had the feeling for playing a Hawaiian song.”

Something stirred in Eddie as he learned this melody, one of hundreds composed by Lili’uokalani, whose song Aloha Oe remains the best known Hawaiian song. The Queen was well schooled in European-style composi-
tion, but she had also absorbed the traditional chants that influenced the music in country towns throughout the islands and her deep love of
the islands shone through all her songs.

A brief historical detour will help explain how Hawaiian culture came to
be suppressed and why many Hawaiians to this day remain ambivalent about their cultural background. In 1893, a group of American businessmen deposed Lili’uokalani and created a provisional government. The rebels per-
mitted in holding on to power even after President Cleveland determined the coup to be illegal. After the Queen staged a counterrevolution in 1895, the provisional government jailed over 400 Hawaiians and kept their queen
under house arrest in the Iolani Palace. Eventually, President McKinley per-
ceded that Hawai’i was not an important U.S. expansionist ambitions and
Hawaii was declared a territory of the United States. The Queen was released to a quiet life of composing songs and overseeing charity projects.

Missionary influence had already affected the culture by labeling local customs sinful, and banning public hula performances until Lili’uokalani’s
predecessor, King David Kalakaua, presided over a joyous revival of the hula. After annexation to the U.S., the American educational system carried out an assault on the Hawaiian language. Children were punished for speak-

ing Hawaiian in school and the traditional arts were not taught.

Perhaps, then, it is no coincidence that a song by Queen Lili’uokalani
was the way he plucked his instrument. I never heard everything so sweet.

“I had a beautiful guitar strum, but he was a bass player, steel guitar—as
strings,” said Eddie. “He even played mandolin. What struck me (most)
was the way he plucked his instrument. I never heard everything so sweet.

So I stayed there, playing with him, not knowing anything about Hawaiian
music, but I also found out that everything happens from the soul, from the
gut feeling. He was a natural man. That’s what I saw in Gabby.”

A naturally gifted vocalist and master of slack key guitar, Charles Phillip
Pahinui, Jr. (called Gabby for his trademark plucked gabardine trousers) was
a born showman, equally comfortable with hapa haole and down-home style
numbers. In the late 1950s he was playing at little cafes as well as at the
Queen’s Surf Hotel in Waikiki. “He had this beautiful kind of old Hawaiian
voice and I’m looking at him (singing and playing slack key) and I say to
myself, ‘Wow. This is special.’ I fell in love with the sound of his voice and
Hawaiian music.”

That country-Hawaiian sound had developed over generations since
Spanish and Mexican cowboys introduced the guitar to the islands in the
1830s. The paniolo (Hawaiian cowboys) adapted to the instrument with the
uniquely Hawaiian kiho’alu or “slack key” guitar style. They created numer-
ous slack key tunings allowing them to play the bass with the thumb while the
other fingers played the melody and improvised in a finger-picked style.

As the decades passed, Hawaiian roots music was nurtured on country veran-
das and at backyard parties where people played their ukuleles, guitars, and
steel guitars into the night by the light of kerosene lamps.

When Gabby Pahinui befriended Eddie Kamae, the jam sessions at
Gabby’s house in Waimanalo on Oahu’s southeast side, were already leg-
denary. “It was a place of partying and everybody loved to see things hap-
pening at Gabby’s place,” said Eddie. “It was a magic place. People would
arrive Friday night and start jamming. More people join in on Saturday and
sometimes Sunday, more people jamming, who’s ever left there. Some people
sleep overnight. Oooh and we had fun…”

At the time he met Eddie, Gabby had been searching for a musical direc-
tion, a way to bring the beauty of his country tradition to a wider audience.

Ripe for cultural awakening, Eddie became friends with a musician who
ignited his interest in the Hawaiian musical tradition: Gabby Pahinui. When
Gabby invited the younger musician to jam, the musical chemistry was
immediate.

“He had a beautiful guitar strum, but he was a bass player, steel guitar—
all strings,” said Eddie. “He even played mandolin. What struck me (most)
was the way he plucked his instrument. I never heard everything so sweet.

So I stayed there, playing with him, not knowing anything about Hawaiian
music, but I also found out that everything happens from the soul, from the
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At the time he met Eddie, Gabby had been searching for a musical direc-
tion, a way to bring the beauty of his country tradition to a wider audience.

The more they jammed and talked about music, the more they felt that the

HAWAIIAN BAND page 22
The highlights here. It is a tribute to her ability and the obvious joy that she gets from playing that her personality shines through everything, from the jigs and reels that populate disc one to the guest vocalists ranging from traditional singers to rappers to a very gruff Steve Earle, on his own The Galway Girl. It’s more of a folk-rock record than a traditional one, featuring electric instruments and full-band arrangements, but though she doesn’t sing a note, Shamon’s ability and taste is the star here.

Then there’s reviewer by Karen Matheson, (!) this issue’s “don’t call it new age” CD, relaxed in tempo but not at all dull. Matheson’s a beautiful singer, with a strong tone completely free of the fragile vibrato that usually accompanies the upper ranges she’s able to reach. The songs, a blend of traditional and contemporary and Gaelic and English, though often based around either the piano of pro-

SUNDAY

ON THE INTERNET

FOLKROOTS (KSBR)

Marshall Andrews

Chuck Hoppe (Bluegrass, Old-time, many historical recordings)

Betto Arcos (Latin and Latin roots music)

Garrison Keillor (Live - variety show)

Cowboy Nick (classic Country music)

Buddy Miller (Blues, Rock, Americana, Old-time, Cajun, Old-time, New Orleans, Quebecois)

Amanz-i (South Asia)

Christina Burne (Vocalist)

Karen Matheson

James Grant, are nicely varied. Rhythmic vocals by Matheson feature along with subtle arrangements, such as the ambient instrumentation that surrounds the harp backing song, Laudh Dubh, an original by Shaw with words by Aonghas MacNeacail. The oft-recorded Ptura A Bhein is given new life by a full-band arrangement and fast-paced vocals by Matheson that show off her considerable range and power. Guest includes the excellent Lunny, on bodhran and bouzouki and wonderful Scottish bassist Ewan Vernal. The musicians do a fine job of mixing tempos and moods, but it’s Matheson that keeps things interesting.

It occurs to me that all CDs this issue are from the fine people at Compass Records (www.compassrecords.com). More evidence that this label is doing wonderful things for Celtic music in the U.S. Some day I may get tired of saying how wonderful they are, but it hasn’t happened yet.

RATING SCALE:

[!]—Classic, should be looked back on as such for generations to come.

[!!]—Great, one of the year’s finest. If you have even a vague interest in the artist, consider this my whole-hearted recommendation that you go out and purchase it immediately.

[!!!]—Very good, with considerable appeal for a fan of the artist(s). If you purchase it, you likely won’t be disappointed.

—Good/solid, what you would expect.

[X]—Avoid. Either ill-conceived, or artistically incoherent in some way.

March-April 2006

On-going Storytelling Events

SLATE OF NIGHTS

Los Angeles Community Storytellers

2nd Thursdays • 7:00 pm

Temple Beth El

1127 Venice Blvd., West Hollywood

Andrea Kupper • 323-467-9247 • kupper@atalantic.net

Family Storytellers

various

11:00 am, tea, 11:00 am • Farmington Center

Gaby Curtain Family Room

29-2015 Grand Dr., L.A. • 310-444-7730

Leimert Park

Jewish Workshop

2nd Mondays • 7:00 pm

235-15th Street, at Leimert Park

San Gabriel Valley Storytellers

2nd Mondays • 7:30 pm

Ill of Orange Library

51 S. Etiwanda Ave., Pasadena

San Juan Beach Storytellers

2nd Mondays • 7:30 pm

Los Angeles Unified School District

151 S. Hill, Redondo Beach

Storytelling by the Block...

2nd and 4th Saturdays • 8:00 pm

San Dimas Library

1771 Franklin Blvd. • 310-541-9484

Rescued Songs of the World

Dave Soyers is a guitarist, electric bass player, a singer/songwriter, and a print journalist with over fifteen years experience. His column features happenings on the folk and traditional music scene both locally and internationally, with commentary on recordings, as well as live shows, and occasionally films and books. Please feel free to e-mail him at dave@soyers.com or write him c/o FolkWorks.
THE MUSIC OF ASHLEY MAHER

BY JIM LEE

I
n this melting pot of cultures that is Southern California, it’s not surpris-
ing that an artist so culturally diverse as Ashley Maher would call Los
Angeles home. Her music reflects a strong affinity with African music,
with wonderfully complex rhythms and percussive backing with additional
Latin American, jazz and folk elements.

Her songwriting is biographical in nature, drawing on her personal expe-
riences to relate telling stories both moving and heartfelt. The expressiveness
of her voice is another strong component of Mahers’ music. It’s strong and
supple, reminding one of Joni Mitchell. It lifts and soars, often adding subtle
nuances to her lyrics.

Born in Canada to British parents, Maher’s family moved to Los Angeles
when she was five. She grew up singing jazz, classical, choral and medieval
music, but found her true calling in African music while attending UC
Berkeley in the late 1980s. After graduation, she was off to London, where in
the middle of an African music renaissance, she immersed herself in the local
music scene.

Maher’s talent brought her to the attention of Virgin Records UK, who
released two critically acclaimed recordings, hi in 1990 and Pomegranate in
1991. While commercial fame and fortune was not yet to be, her third record-
ing, the independently released The Blessed Rain showed Maher moving on,
undeterred.

Recorded in both Paris and London using some of the finest African musi-
cians available, The Blessed Rain illustrated how well she fused her lyrics and
melodies with African rhythms. The song And I Believe related the story of
her first visit to her husband’s family in Africa, and other songs like Crowns
for Adorning and Babalu, illustrated the strength of her songwriting.

Seven years on, this recording remains a powerful and moving statement, refreshingly
undated and as valid today as the day it was recorded.

After the release of The Blessed Rain, Maher’s career was slowed as she
returned to Los Angeles to care for her ailing mother and to raise a family.
She’s now actively performing and writing again, and has released her first
new recording in many years, Flying Over Bridges.

It’s the opening track, Lucky that sets the tone and theme for the entire
album. It’s the story of her husband’s visit to his hometown and contrasts the
envy the young men have towards him because he lives in the west (and there-
fore must be rich) with how he longs for the simple pleasures found in his
native home. This subject of contrasts, of transition, of bridges to newer things
(for better or worse) is reflected throughout the recording.

Musically, the opening track bridges the old (the African rhythms from
producer Andre Manga’s bass and guitar work) with the new, the jazz under-
tones from pianist Omaro Ruiz which adds a completely different feel to the
tracks he’s on. It’s a vibrant, refreshing sound that shows Maher isn’t averse
to taking a risk to further her musical vision.

In fact, it is contrasts that make this recording work so well. Contrast the
song Seven with it’s multi-track vocals backed by just the sabar drums of Aziz
Faye, with Distant Sister Moon, a song with a conventional 4/4 beat, smooth
and melodic with a catchy choir that wouldn’t be out of place on commercial
radio (if such a thing existed anymore) to the funky Sundara or the very
rhythmic and up-tempo One. Credit this to how producer Manga lovingly
mixed and matched the backing musicians and arrangements to suit each
song, making each an individual statement.

As a lyricist, Maher shines especially bright on two songs, Lift your Heels
about sledding with her brother in Canada, but with a deeper meaning about
risk taking and having the courage to let oneself go, and the moving closing
track, Gracefully, about her mother’s death and how she faced the prospect
with such dignity and resolve. It’s a fitting ending to a recording by a remark-
able artist.

As enjoyable as Maher’s recorded efforts are, seeing her perform live is an
additional treat. Her live shows take on many different facets. She can per-
form in an acoustic setting, usually with Latin guitarist Roberto Montero, with
a strong focus on the lyrical and melodic nature of her songs. There are also
many different group settings. One features a band with a world jazz influ-
ence. Another larger group with backing vocalists uses more improvisation
from the musicians. But the most exciting and vibrant is the full band with
West African dancers.

During these shows, Maher is joined by a number of other dancers in an
exhibition of color and sound. Dressed in bright costumes, the dancers per-
form both choreographed and solo spots, with audience participation much
encouraged. It’s the ultimate culmination of Maher’s Global musical vision,
and what defines her as a truly original musician and songwriter. It’s not to be
missed.

[Further information about live performance dates and where to purchase
Ashley Maher’s recordings can be found at www.ashleymaher.com.

Jim Lee is a contributing editor, reviewer & photographer for Dirty Linen
Magazine, and has also written for fRoots, the Welsh magazine YDrych and the
Folk Alliance Newsletter.

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THE BAND: THE MOST IMPORTANT ROCK AND ROLL BAND IN FOLK MUSIC

BY DENNIS ROGER REED

By 1968, the American pop music field had endured a tumultuous decade that included and endured Spectator pop, surf music, the British Invasion, folk, Motown, folk rock, and perhaps the oddest genre of the 1960s, psychedelic music. The Byrds had taken folk music and added the backbeat of British pop, and soared to the top of the charts. But their second LP included a number called "8 Miles High," and though they decreed that the song was about a plane flight into London, most radio station programmer's interpretations landed in a different loading zone, and the song was banned from a number of stations. Interest soared. Within the year, almost every major pop artist and group felt compelled to don paisley shirts, wide belts and bellbottoms, and warble ditties based on getting hooked out of one’s skull.

A style based on excess invites greater excess. The Rolling Stones' Their Satanic Majesties Request and The Beatles' Sergeant Pepper and Magical Mystery Tour shared a common perspective, and although many find these recordings among the artist's premier work, others decide do not. Even the British blues revival felt the impact of psychedelica, with Eric Clapton jumping ship from John Mayall's Bluesbreakers to form Cream, a psychedelicized blues band. The bombastic became common place. Songs were often long and loud. Drum solos, something only jazz fans had to endure in the past, now became de rigueur.

But some pop music lovers were tiring of loud, demanding music. In early 1968, Capitol Records quietly released a record called Music From Big Pink from a group called The Band. The members were Rick Danko on bass, fiddle and vocals; Levon Helm on drums, mandolin, and vocals; Garth Hudson on keyboards and brass; Richard Manuel on keyboards, fiddle, and vocals; and Robbie Robertson on guitar and the rare vocal.

They'd backed up Bob Dylan on his first world tour following his conversion to "electric music," and suffered nightly booing and rejection from many of Dylan's folk based fans. The Band was used to adeptly backing other artists, as early in their career they'd served as the band for rockabilly star Ronnie Hawkins. Hawkins had recruited Helm from his native Arkansas, and the others were pulled in one by one to form The Hawks behind Hawkins. Mainly touring in the less competitive and therefore more lucrative Canadian market, they retained that name when he left Hawkins' employ, and switched to Levon and the Hawks soon after.

The whimsical artwork by Bob Dylan that graced the cover of Music From Big Pink carried neither the title of the record nor the name of the artist, and the rear did not have any photos of the group. Purchasers opened the gatefold to find a large picture of several members' families, and a shot of the band without caption that appeared to have been taken by Matthew Brady. Visually, one could hardly get much further away from the bright pinks and greens that adorned most rock and pop album covers that year.

But what one found after popping the album on the turntable was far more shocking than the cover might have lead one to assume. These five musicians had created a world where American folk music, blues, jazz, country and pop cascaded over each other, spilling out in a gorgeous cacophony of tones. There was something inherently timeless in their songs, something compellingly indicative of American culture and history. And something almost diagnostically opposed to psychedelic music.

The first song on Big Pink was called "Rape of the Apple Family", and it succinctly sets the bar for the Band's full career. Written by Richard Manuel and Bob Dylan about the anguish of a father scorned by his daughter, it features Manuel's eerily brilliant vocals, in a song about a father and daughter, from the father's view. In 1968, it would prove quite difficult to find any rock and roll band doing a song centering the focus on the father. The Band showed their apparent reverence for family in their album cover, in a time where the family was being torn asunder, and the "generation gap" covered a myriad of woes.

Music From Big Pink features no guitar solos longer than 14 seconds. There are no drum solos. It is impossible to imagine a liquid based light show on this recording. It is equally impossible to imagine swaying "Grateful Dead" fan style to the music. Although there are traditional rock and roll instruments are the foundation, mandolins, tuck pianos, fiddles and acoustic guitars abound. The vocals are closer in tradition to the Carter Family than Sly and the Family Stone. Melody and harmony parts are intertwined, seamlessly swapped yet left ragged but right. No one could mistake this group for the Hollies. This was different. This sounded like folk music colliding with rock music while being t-boned by the blues.

The impact was immediate... among musicians. The record itself sold marginally well, and one of the songs that had nearly been left off the project, "The Weight," landed in 1969's breakthrough film Easy Rider. But musicians really got it. The Band was quieter, more mature, more important. Eric Clapton took this new sound as another reason to leave Cream behind. George Harrison was already enamored with the Band's former boss Bob Dylan, but Harrison's visit to Woodstock to hang out with Bob led him to The Band and altered his musical course. According to Let It Be, Steve Mattie's book (Continuum 2004) on the making of that recording, The Beatles actually recorded several Band and Dylan songs during those sessions, and Harrison credited the whole Woodstock Dylan/Band vibe for inspiring the songs that led to his All Things Must Pass.

Arguably their masterpiece, their euphoniously titled second album included their most famous song, The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down, and continued their fixation on American culture. The Band seemed so incredibly American that it was difficult to believe that only Helm harkened from the US, with the rest of the group Canadians. The British had recently morphed American soul and pop into something called the Mersey Beat, with the Beatles sounding impossibly American. And the British blues revival had brought the Rolling Stones to America, where they famously demanded that Howlin' Wolf be featured on the Shindig! television show if they were to perform. America was being educated about their own rich
TRUGS AND THE ROYAL FAMILY

BY KATHLEEN HERD MASSER

What Paris Hilton has done for Melvome handbags, Queen Victoria did for Thomas Smith and his Trug (pronounced like hug) baskets. Celebrity patronage, it seems, is hardly a new phenomenon.

The Queen discovered Smith when she visited his stall at London’s Great Exhibition in 1851. Impressed by his craftsmanship, she ordered a bushel of baskets as gifts for members of the royal family.

Smith’s design was inspired by the “trog,” a vessel carved from a single block of timber and used by ancient Anglo Saxons to measure grain, feed, and liquids. But trogs were heavy and unwieldy. Smith’s lighter version, conceived and produced in the East Sussex village of Herstmonceux, used slats of sweet chestnut and cricket bat willow.

Unlike other traditional baskets, Trugs are not woven. A Trug has two frames – one for the rim and one for the handle – made of chestnut. The bark is left on the outside, while the inner surface is smoothed. The frames are steamed, then shaped in a former, and the ends are nailed together to form two ovals.

The boards that make up the bottom and sides of the basket are slender slats of cricket bat willow, smoothed and shaped, then steamed or soaked in water to make them pliable. The willow strips are nailed inside the frame, in a slightly overlapping pattern.

Though Smith was already moderately successful, he understood that having such a high-profile customer could take his enterprise to a whole new level. He crafted the Queen’s baskets himself and, according to legend, loaded them into a handcart and walked the 60 miles to Buckingham Palace to personally deliver the order. His meticulous care paid off. The Queen awarded him the Royal Warrant, allowing him to promote his basket as the Royal Sussex Trug.

With the Queen’s endorsement, Smith’s baskets caught on with royals and commoners alike and were used for gathering eggs and vegetables in modest gardens and on large farms. Today, harvesting is done with machinery, but Trug baskets are still essential in any proper English garden.

Brothers Robin and Peter Tuppen, along with their wives Sue and Angela, took up the Trug business in 1989, though Robin is now retired.

“‘The best,’” he says, “comes from East Sussex and West Kent.”

“When you cut an eight- to 12-year-old chestnut tree,” he explains, “it’s coppiced — cut at a 45-degree angle. From the stump come four or five new trees. They’re self-regenerating.”

The willow comes from materials discarded by cricket bat makers. And for every tree harvested, three are replanted. In Tuppen’s shop, wood that doesn’t go into the baskets feeds the fire that heats the steamer and keeps the basket makers warm in winter.

All fittings are copper or brass, and nailed by hand. “We never,” Tuppen emphasizes, “use rivets, or a nail gun.”

Tuppen has eight employees, including two university students from Poland (one a physics major), a Vietnamese, and a German. Together they produce 9,000 baskets a year.

The principal threat to Trug tradition is the cheap knock-offs that are being imported to the U.S. from China. The difference in workmanship is easily discernable, says Tuppen, and “the bark is stapled to the handle.”

About 40 percent of Tuppen’s business is in exports. The company took part in 12 trade shows this year, seven of them on the Continent. This, too, is tradition. In 1855, Thomas Smith took his first bold steps into the realm of exporting, introducing his wares at the Exposition Universelle Industrie Beaux-arts in Paris. He was rewarded with a silver medal and a Certificate of Merit signed by Napoleon Bonaparte III.

No fickle faddists, the British Royal Family continues to order its baskets from East Sussex. The “Royal Trug” designation has passed to Tuppen, whose craftsmanship has also been honored abroad with the ruban d’or (gold ribbon) from the Courson Gardening Show in France in 1998 and 1999.

Trugs are still used by gardeners to gather flowers and produce, but they can also be seen in many households serving as decorative receptacles for magazines or firewood.

For more information about Trugs, or to order one yourself, visit Tuppen’s website at www.SussexTrugs.com.

Kathleen Masser is a freelance writer and photographer based in Santa Monica.
Lila Downs, featured on the cover of FolkWorks V4N4 (www.FolkWorks.org), returns to Los Angeles in support of her new recording La Cantina (Entre Copa y Copa), which will be released on March 7. With La Cantina, Lila focuses intently on the rich and familiar repertoire of Mexico’s beloved ranchero songs. Rancheros are ballads usually tackling heartbreak, loneliness, love and longing – songs typically sung in local cantinas throughout Mexico.

The Los Angeles Times writes: At a time when Mexico’s rich native styles are being shunned as old-fashioned or irrelevant, Lila Downs offers a fresh, modern document that joyfully reveals the rich well of inspiration.

Downs’ profile was raised recently when she won the Latin Grammy for Best Folk Album with her critically-acclaimed record One Blood (Una Sangre), and it was her stunning performance in the hit film Frida, starring Salma Hayek, that also contributed to her increased visibility.

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Studio Visits & Curator Lecture with Carine Fabius

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Artist Lecture: Charles Dickson
Free: Fee with the cost of Admission

Sunday, March 26, 2006
3:00 PM
FREE SPIRITS: THE ART OF CHARLES DICKSON
& DOMINIQUE MOODY
Artist Lecture: Dominique Moody
Free: Fee with the cost of Admission

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They’ve been ever so busy lately in between regular gigs in San Diego and Ventura. I was able to catch up with all of them at once by extracting them mid-session (which is to say, right about midnight) at our regular Tuesday evening convergence at Finn McCool’s in Santa Monica. We repaired to a cozy wood-enveloped booth for a little chat about why I haven’t seen them all in one place for a while.

BROOKE: You guys have been quite the whirl-winds lately. Nick—you’ve recorded a track for the upcoming Vol. III of the Wooden Flute Obsession collection [put together by Kevin Krull (www.worldread.org)]. haven’t you?

NICK: Yes, and Jimmy and Joey are on that one, too.

JIMMY: We’re playing with him.

JOEY: It’s a flute album, but he wanted us to back him up.

NICK: I’ll be playing a couple of reels. It’ll be out in 2006 at some point, fairly soon. It’s nice to be included on that album.

JOEY: It’s really an honor.

BROOKE: Yes! That’s great for you guys!

NICK: Kira would be on it but she doesn’t play flute.

JOEY: Ah, but Kira was away dancing for [Sligo traditional Irish band] Téada recently.

KIRA: Just last weekend up in Bishop. I danced with [champion Irish step-dancer] John Smith for Téada and three terrific guests artists. It was a Christmas show.

BROOKE: Your turn, Jimmy! What's new with you?

JOEY: He’s been stylin’ his hair…and growing taller.

JIMMY: Been growing taller by stylin’ my hair.

BROOKE: If you can do it the other way…

JIMMY: If you want to get really recent, I’ve been working on a new reel, so watch it!

JOEY: We should probably mention that we opened at the Ford Amphitheater for Gaelic Storm.

NICK: There was a crowd of about 1200. Also, Ciúnas is on the Celtic Arts Center benefit compilation, Celts.

JOEY: It’s an opening track...

BROOKE: So Joey, you provided music for the Celtic Arts Center’s production of A Christmas Carol again this year.

JOEY: Dan Conroy directed it with Michael Sean MacGuinness. I play bodhran and whistle, and a small part—called “Big Head,” if you must know.

BROOKE: It’s my favorite part of the playbill. “Joey Abarta- bodhran, whistle, and Big Head.” What about the Panasonic extravaganza?

KIRA: We did a collaborative [multi-media] thing with a flamenco group recorded- and we got to record a cou-

JOEY: We’re going to do a “live in the studio” kind of thing, only not live because it’ll be recorded to be played later.

JOEY: … but it’s all going to be “on the spot”, nothing’s going to be rehearsed.

BROOKE: So, are you thinking of going to Japan in the near future?

JIMMY: Always thinkin’ and hopin’.

NICK: Ha! A couple of us have been there, played there. We would all like to go back as Ciúnas, the four of us, and do another little tour of Japan. Jimmy and I had been there first at Disney, then at Universal, but we went a third time with [idiot] Melanie [Nolley] and because of all the people we met there and knew, we were able to set up a little tour.

JOEY: There are a lot of Japanese Irish music players.

JIMMY: It’s really a thrilling scene over there.

NICK: It really is. Tokyo’s got over thirty Irish pubs. Thirty-four at last count. But we played in Tokyo, Kyoto, Osaka…Hiroshima, we played there…so we were thinking of trying to go back and do that, but not right away.

JOEY: A year ago we were saying, “Maybe next year,” but a lot of things have been hap-pening. We’re gathering some locomotion here.

BROOKE: Kira, you’re going back to Donegal this winter.

KIRA: I’m leaving the day after Christmas.

BROOKE: …and I’m so jealous! That was just the best time ever [two years ago at Frankie Kennedy Winter School]!

KIRA: I am looking forward to it. Hopefully I’ll come back with a lot more tune fodder for the sessions.

JOEY: We’re doing two shows in January, one in Victorville and one at the Celtic Arts Center…

BROOKE: We would love to do a double-bill with those people sometime.

JOEY: They were really good folks.

BROOKE: Yeah.

JOEY: We’re doing two shows in January, one in Victorville and one at the Coffee Gallery Backstage [in Altadena]...

KIRA: …and we’ll be on [Larry Wines’ KSUN radio show] Tied to the Tracks in January…

NICK: …and tomorrow we’re recording a program for Folkscene [The Lanterns’ radio show on KPFT] which will air later. They’ve been playing our recordings on their show.
CÚNAS continued from page 13

dredge up some awfully good tunes.

KIRA: Whatever happens to be in Nick’s car! That’s a great variety of things, seriously. Fiddlers, pipers, flute players (of course)… I honestly don’t even know what half of the stuff is. A lot of [Vermont based acoustic trio] Nightingale has been played, and Johnny Cash, Woody Guthrie…

JIMMY: I wake up to Woody Guthrie every morning. He’s my alarm clock.

KIRA: One CD that’s been played a lot is The Chieftains in China.

NICK: I’ve been listening to Bob Marley. I like his rebellious spirit that I’m really starting to feel right now. His songs are catchy as hell, too.

BROOKE: Nick, you’ve got this carload of CDs. What’s rattling around in your DVD set mostly?

NICK: I’ve been listening to Lillis Ó Laoire because I’ve been in his [Sean-nós, or “old style singing”] class. He’s got a recording, and some recordings he made for his class. Also, Liam Ó Maonlai.

JOEY: Lillis is an institution.

BROOKE: Joey—what are you listening to?

JOEY: I make them listen to ullean pipes all the time, and Johnny Cash. My three favorite pipers to listen to right now are Mick O’Brien (I just love his stuff), Mikey Smith, and The Man Himself, Séamus Ennis.

JIMMY: Linda Tillery and The Cultural Heritage Choir, if you’re going to ask me. She told me, “Whatever you do, do it 100%”. We learned that up there in Bishop playing at the Millpond Festival. …and The Bills [Vancouver acoustic quartet].

JOEY: As a band, though, we love Dervish and Flöck, Nightingale and Danú…we bought a Danú DVD…

JIMMY: …what makes me so impressed with the whole band is quite fantastic…impressive.

NICK: We listen to a lot of this new, modern Irish music, but we also have a huge respect for old players, a lot of whom are no longer with us, like Séamus Ennis and Mike Russell, John McKenna, people like that…Pádraig O’Keeffe.

JIMMY: Going to the roots of it, like before they were caring about who was in tune, and fancy arrangements. All they were doing was just playing the tunes.

NICK: I want to mention one singer that we all love, and that’s Darach O’ Cathair. He is a Sean-nós singer, and he has “The Trucky How.”

JOEY: He Has “The Trucky How.”

BROOKE: Could you perhaps explain, for the uninitiated, what you mean by “The Trucky How” [from a famous Séamus Ennis quote]?

JIMMY: “The Trucky How” is this: When someone goes into a tune in the middle of a reel set and it socks you in the stomach. “The Trucky How” is when a singer hits that note, and sings those words, and it socks you in the stomach.

NICK: The hair stands up on the back of your neck…

JOEY: …or gives you goosebumps.

JIMMY: Gets you movin’

NICK: Sometimes we call it, “The Dip of the Left Shoulder” (Nick thinks this phrase is from Mick Moloney).

BROOKE: Let’s do influences…

KIRA: You know!

KIRA: Matt Molloy and Ní Mhaoineigh [of Altan], Ciaran O’Maonaigh…

KIRA: Ciaran, especially, who I’ve taken lessons from. Jessie Smith, actually [of Danú], taught me at a lot of the workshops I did with him. Those are people I’ve learned from directly, that I’ve learned the most from.

BROOKE: And for listening, admiring, and being amazed by?

KIRA: Tommy Peoples and Kevin Burke. I love Osian MacDiarmada’s playing.

BROOKE: What about you, Jimmy?

JIMMY: The Edge.

BROOKE: He certainly counts—U2 is the most popular Irish band going!

JIMMY: He was the first influence right there. I would also include… Arty McGlynn, John Doyle. You could include a great variety of guitarists, but in terms of Irish music those three would do the trick.

NICK: My influences? I would have to say that would include Ian Law from San Diego who I got my first flute from…also locally, Paddy O’Neill when he was down here (from Derry, originally), and then more far and wide I should say…Matt Molloy of course, and more recently Damian Stenson [now in Téada]. And then I’d say John McKenna.

BROOKE: How about whistle-wise?

NICK: Paul O’Shea and Mary Bergin. I studied briefly with Mary Bergin…but number one, the guy who originally got me playing the whistle: Sean Potts from The Chieftains. His playing just had so much soul to it.


Cúnas will be performing at a FolkWorks concert at the Craft and Folk Art Museum (across the street from the La Brea Tar Pits on Wilshire Blvd.) March 25th.

Brooke Alberts is a songwriter with a Masters degree in Medieval Studies.
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**FOLK HAPPENINGS AT A GLANCE**

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March-April 2006

FOOL HAPPENINGS AT A GLANCE

Check out details by following the page references:

OGM: On-going Music - page 15
OGD: On-going Dance - page 18
SE: Special Events - page 32
FACES OF OLD-TIME

BY DAVID BRAGGER

As a devotee of old-time music, I make a grand effort to spend time with talented masters of the tradition. There is nothing comparable to hearing the spectral drones of a fiddle and the elder lore of an ancient musician while sitting at their feet. The living experience of visiting a musician often offers a few details that a CD can never quite translate into sound: The well water at a West Virginia trailer, the broken ceramic dog figurines by the Virginia fiddler’s television, the lacquer fumes in an instrument-maker’s dining room, or the sight of the last African American old-time fiddler resurrecting tunes after a recent stroke.

These visits are always magical and they turn into something very precious whenever I return home. The grim realization of mortality often reminds me that they might not be around when I go back. After a recent trip to the homes of several great musicians back east, two have already passed away. One was in his thirties and the other was in his eighties.

For this issue, I present some photographs from travels and visits with extraordinary musicians.

All photos by David Bragger
WHERE ARE THOSE STINKING BADGES?

The only bad thing about contra dancing is that there are so many names to forget. I've danced with some people hundreds of times but their names just don't stick. We do quick introductions, line up, have a fast, engaging dance, then pool? I don't see them again till the next dance and another (usually apologetic) exchange of names.

At every camp or dance festival I study their faces and their badges and swear I'll remember, but I don't.

I know I'm not the only one with this problem, for I've been hailed as "Hey, Contra Dancer!" and "Hey, I know you! You're, um, May Madness, March-April 2006 Clothilde."

"Where are those stinking badges?"

I said, laughing. "I'm LaLa. I told you last month that we go to dance camps and big city dances every winter. You said you'd give me some phone numbers."

Well, that explained the paper napkin in my purse with a phone number followed by "LA LA" which I'd dismissed it as an emphatic reference to Los Angeles.

I apologized (I seem to do that a lot) and wished them a good snowbird season, then took a good look to see why I'd confused them with Elvig and his wife. They were short if not wiry. He had blue eyes and hers were dark. They were good dancers but didn't do the polka at the break.

It may be time for better glasses. It's definitely time to pay better attention. And those stinking badges really aren't so bad.

Valerie Cooley is living in Coos Bay, Oregon. When she's not playing with her beautiful and brilliant young granddaughters, she paddles her kayak on the bay, watches birds, gardens, and contradances once a month.
When I give assemblies of stories and songs in school auditoriums, I have to remember to turn off my microphone immediately. If I forget to do this, I am instantly encouraged by a mob of (usually), fifth graders, and the room is filled with screaming announcements unnecessarily amplified by my live mike.

“Hello everyone! This is the great Reynolds!”

“Ladies and Jellybeans, Give it up for Super Susie who will now sing—

“Hey! All classes are cancelled for the rest of the—

In music class, the shyest children are emboldened by a microphone in their hands, often when it is not even turned on! Just holding a mike transforms them into miniature rock stars, belting forth an endless "Wheels On The Bus, or The More We Get Together in Tagalog! They are joyfully transformed hearing the electronic enhancement of their tiny voices.

Unfortunately, this unselfconsciously period does not last, and the mike loses its magic. Some of these children will grow up, possibly, to be rock stars or, worse, broadcasters, but the majority will become Microphobics.

I grew up with microphones. In Chicago radio, my precocious pals and I carried the ambiguous title Radio Brats. We acted on soaps, kid shows, and we also made educational films and even did modeling. Early on, I knew to carefully drop a finished script page on the floor, how close to the mike to stand for whispering, and how to turn my head for yelling or screaming. Radio was always live in the forties, and we were pros. We also knew all the problems caused by live audiences, the rattling of cellophone wrapped food, coughing, crying babies, and loud audience whispering. (And, years later, nothing has changed. The people with babies, restless kids and chronic bronchitis still rush to sit in the first four rows.)

But let us now return to our subject, Microphobia. At a recent classical event in a cold and cavernous church hall, the pre-concert lecture was given by the first violinist, and it was a total disaster due to her refusal to use the perfectly adequate microphone put there for that purpose. She explained that she hated the sound of her own voice on a mike and could we please use the perfectly adequate microphone put there for that purpose. She explained that she hated the sound of her own voice on a mike and could we please use the perfectly adequate microphone put there for that purpose. She explained that she hated the sound of her own voice on a mike and could we please use the perfectly adequate microphone put there for that purpose. She explained that she hated the sound of her own voice on a mike and could we please use the perfectly adequate microphone put there for that purpose. She explained that she hated the sound of her own voice on a mike and could we please use the perfectly adequate microphone put there for that purpose. She explained that she hated the sound of her own voice on a mike and could we please use the perfectly adequate microphone put there for that purpose. She explained that she hated the sound of her own voice on a mike and could we please use the perfectly adequate microphone put there for that purpose. She explained that she hated the sound of her own voice on a mike and could we please use the perfectly adequate microphone put there for that purpose.

Everyone from the fifth row back, answered “No!” which she totally ignored. We also couldn’t all hear her? The Craft and Folk Art Museum (CAFAM) heralds in a new season with, "Pysanka—Rite of Spring," an exhibition celebrating the ancient Ukrainian tradition of writing the "story of life" on hen’s eggs in the spring. Featured will be dozens of beautifully decorated, traditional and contemporary pysanky representing various regions of Ukraine. Guests will be led on a symbolic trip through the historical development of this rich cultural art form. The exhibition runs through May 7, 2006 and will include two pysanka making workshops open to the public on April 8th and 15th between 1:30 –3:30 pm, registration required. An opening reception for members and guests will be held on April 1st between 6:00 – 8:00 pm. The exhibit runs from January 19 to April 2. We also couldn’t all hear her? The Craft and Folk Art Museum (CAFAM) heralds in a new season with, "Pysanka—Rite of Spring," an exhibition celebrating the ancient Ukrainian tradition of writing the "story of life" on hen’s eggs in the spring. Featured will be dozens of beautifully decorated, traditional and contemporary pysanky representing various regions of Ukraine. Guests will be led on a symbolic trip through the historical development of this rich cultural art form. The exhibition runs through May 7, 2006 and will include two pysanka making workshops open to the public on April 8th and 15th between 1:30 –3:30 pm, registration required. An opening reception for members and guests will be held on April 1st between 6:00 – 8:00 pm. The exhibit runs from January 19 to April 2.

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One last problem and a solution. Have you ever sat through a question and answer period where the question could not be heard by everyone? Somehow, the speaker alone has heard the question, and, without repeating it, immediately begins to answer it, leaving the audience to wonder what on earth is being discussed. The best solution to this problem would be an additional microphone for questions, either a standing mike for the audience, or a portable mike to pass around to questioners. Actually, what every venue really needs is a microphone for presence. What does that mean? It means that a mike says, Look this way, listen up, pay attention! A microphone is an audio-spotlight. A mike also enables the speaker to use all the dynamics of speech. A microphone makes subtlety possible. With a mike, you can whisper, and still be heard.

Let’s consider also, some of the more subtle forms of microphobia. The speaker accepts the mike, but holds it down at his or her side, as though just holding the mike would be enough to amplify the speaker’s voice. Then there are those who accept the mike but are terrified to actually speak into it. They are a foot back, or over to the side, or below the mike, bent over their notes. This is not always the speaker’s fault. Microphone technique usually requires someone knowledgeable to assist the speaker. This seldom occurs, speakers are on their own and often do not know how to really use a mike.

Have you ever been to a concert where, even with your good hearing, you could not make out the singer’s words? There are many reasons for this. Often the instrument mike is way too loud and the lyrics are swallowed up. I have actually heard people say that the lyrics weren’t that important, the music was what counted. This may be true with some songs where the lyrics consist mainly of “baby, baby, baby”, but most songwriters really want their lyrics to be understood. I know I do! But, even with good balance, sometimes it is hard to understand really rapid lyrics, or lyrics sung with regional or foreign accents.

A partial solution to this problem might be providing the audience with lyric sheets, but then you have the problem of rustling paper.

Uncle Ruthie Baell’s Halfway Down the Stairs, a radio program for all ages, plays Saturdays, at 7 AM on Radio Station KPFE, 90.7 FM. Uncle Ruthie also is a special education music teacher available for concerts, and workshops Uncle Ruthie also teaches beginning piano to blind and partially sighted children and adults, and has time in her schedule for a few more students.
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Totems to Turquoise: Native North American Jewelry Arts of the Northwest and Southwest is a traveling exhibition put together by the American Museum of Natural History in New York. With over 500 objects on display (augmented by holdings from the Autry’s permanent collection) from pre-contact works to currently produced items the show focuses on the historical, symbolic and cultural contexts of the jewelry, and how the traditional forms and visual languages have been interiorized and metamorphosed by contemporary jewelry artists of these two distinct regions. It’s coming to the Autry National Center’s Museum of the American West from March 31 through August 20.

It starts with an introductory section to familiarize the visitors with material about each of the groups represented in the show, including videos of Northwestern and Southwestern rituals and interviews with contemporary jewelry artists showing them at work. Works in larger media are combined with the jewelry displays to show how the cosmological and clan-identified imagery migrates to miniature, portable forms. A selection of work from renowned 20th century masters are represented here—Kenneth Begay, known as “The Father of Modern Navajo Jewelry” (1913-1977), Charles Edenshaw, the most influential Northwest Coast artist (1839-1920), Charles Loloma, (Hopi, 1921-1991) who made major departures with his use of nontraditional materials (such as rosewood) and was influenced by Frank Lloyd Wright, Preston Monongye (1927-1987) who also helped introduce modernist style in Southwestern silverwork; Bill Reid, inspired by Edenshaw’s bracelets to combine Haida formline style compositions with Western techniques and influence, Robert Davidson who pushed the boundaries (so to speak) of the formline style. They form a bridge between the previous traditions and the contemporary artists’ work. Some of the contemporary artists represented are Lee Yazzie (Navajo goldsmith and master of inlay designs), Phil Loretto of Jemez Pueblo (known for his intricately detailed jewelry), Christian White (Haida argillite sculptor and pendants), Kevin Cranmer (miniature masks) and advising artist to the exhibition Jesse Monongya, known for his intricate inlay. The exhibition’s other advising artist, Haida carver and jeweler Jim Hart, will be working on an original design Northwest Coast style totem pole during the first week.

AUTRY NATIONAL CENTER’S MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN WEST
4790 Heritage Way (across from the L.A. Zoo)
$7.50 adults-$5.00 seniors and students $3.00 children
Open 10-5 Tues.-Sun. Parking is free
Meanwhile, don’t forget that the UCLA Fowler Museum of Cultural History’s exploration of Carnaval worldwide is still in progress. There will be two programs spotlighting Mardi Gras in New Orleans. One is a screening or the 30-year-old film Always For Pleasure, an insider’s view into the New Orleans Mardi Gras celebration, followed by discussion and Q & A with Les Blank, the film’s director. (March 2, 7:00pm). The other is a World Tribute to New Orleans from 12:00 to 5:00pm April 8, with a parade from 1:00 to 2:30pm, music, food, performances and family art activities.

If you want to take part marching in the procession, the number to call is 310-206-5663. It’s open to all ages.

Brooke is a singer-songwriter with a Masters Degree in Medieval Studies.
As always, please remember that his column is provided for informational purposes only and is not legal advice. If you would like to act on any of the information you read in this column, please seek the advice of qualified counsel. Your comments and suggestions are appreciated and I will do my best to make sure that I respond to each letter in a subsequent column.

I am a performing musician and music teacher. I have an email account with America Online, which I’ve had for many years. Each quarter or so, I send out an email to all of my students, friends and the people on the mailing list I’ve put together from performances over the years. The email tells people where I’m performing next, when I’m teaching a workshop, and other things that I think would be of interest to the people that receive the email. Last week, I sent one of my usual newsletters via AOL. A little while later I tried to log on to AOL, but got a message saying that I had to contact customer service. When I did so, I was told that I had been reported by one of the people on my list as a spammer and had violated AOL email rules. I was also told that it had always been the policy of AOL that an email sent to ten or more recipients was considered “spam” and a violation of email policy. I am definitely not a spammer and want to know what I can do to prevent this sort of thing in the future. Can you help me?

Well, it looks as though you’ve come up upon the flip side of the various spam prevention laws and policies that have been passed recently. As anyone with email knows, “spam” consists of unsolicited email advertisements of anything from stock tips to sexual toys. Spam can be innocuous, such as a simple advertisement, or it can be dangerous to your computer, infecting it with viruses attached to the email. Additionally, spam can be used as a vehicle for the installation of certain software, known as “spyware,” that tracks all of your activity emanating from your computer, both on and offline.

 Needless to say, spam can turn the Internet into a dangerous place for your computer and violate your right to privacy. For this reason, the federal government, as well as several states (California included), has enacted statutes that are designed to require would-be spammers to respect the privacy of individuals on the net. The one many people have heard of is “CAN-SPAM” (Controlling the Assault of Non-Solicited Pornography and Marketing Act). Effective January 1, 2004, the statute covers email whose primary purpose is advertising or promoting a commercial product or service, including content on a Web site. That would seem to include your email to your students and mailing list, making your email subject to the statute. The law requires that commercial spammers be truthful as to who they are and what their email is all about. Further, any spam email must include a notice that the email is an advertisement as well as the physical address of the spammer. Finally, it requires commercial spammers to give recipients of their email an “opt-out,” meaning that the spammer must allow people to elect not to receive future spam email from the commercial spammer. Once someone “opts out,” their name and address cannot be sold or transferred by the commercial spammer to a third party. Each violation of the statute is subject to fines of up to $11,000. Deceptive commercial email also is subject to laws banning false or misleading advertising.

State laws, such as those in California, impose similar stiff penalties on spam. Hence, the reason email providers such as AOL have become much tougher in the enforcement of already existing rules on spam.

To protect yourself in the future, you can do a couple of things. First, try to find out if AOL has a commercial bulk email feature and if so, subscribe to it. After all, these emails are part of your business and the extra cost is a write-off on your taxes. If you send email out yourself this way, make sure to include a link or some other way for the recipients of your emails to “opt out” of future email advertisements. Alternatively, if you have a large mailing list, you may consider using a third party service to send out your emails. I’ve used one, “Constant Contact” (www.constantcontact.com) and have found it useful. These services will take care of the “opt out” process as well as provide you with useful marketing statistics concerning the number of persons who actually opened your email, who threw it in the trash and whether they visited your website. Good luck!

Richard Gee is an attorney specializing in the entertainment industry and is a Celtic and acoustic singer, guitarist, songwriter, arranger and music producer in his spare time. You can reach him at rgee@gee4law.com
I love Indian food. And I have to admit that, while I don’t know much about it, I always enjoy the music that’s playing in the background at my local Indian restaurant, so I asked the owner to enlighten me a bit. As it turns out, much of what I was enjoying was soundtrack music from those quirky “Bollywood” movies where everyone seems to burst into song and dance at the mere mention of dropping a hat. For those who share my fondness for this sort of thing, here are a couple of recommendations: first, rent the movie “Bride and Prejudice,” a sort of “Hollywood-meets-Bollywood” film that was released last year. And then, look for CDs by India’s premier performer of film songs, Asha Bhosle. Though she looks like she’s in her forties, Bhosle has been providing film vocal dubbed for Indian actresses for decades, and she’s still at it. Her latest endeavor is an album with the Kronos Quartet, featuring the songs of her late husband, Bollywood film composer RD Burman.

“Music should never be harmless.” — Robbie Robertson (The Band)

So, as it turns out, it’s not only songbirds and lounge lizards who sing sweet songs to entice the female of the species. Scientists at Washington University in St. Louis have discovered that the squeaks and chirps of male mice actually have a song-like quality. “...these vocalizations were not random twitterings but songs,” said researcher Timothy Holy. “There was a pattern to them. They sounded a lot like bird songs.” If the analysis of sounds, adding that adult bird songs are much more practiced, predictable and refined than those of mice, but even birds don’t start out as great singers. They learn.

“There was joy in this discovery,” Holy said. “We didn’t expect it.”

“Country music is three chords and the truth.” — Hank Howard

The Africa Channel is a new web site that brings 24-hour music and culture to a Western audience. Launched in the US this past September, it features short films and music from all over Africa. Give it a try at www.theafricachannel.com, particularly the music section. www.coffeegallery.com, particularly the music section.

The Concert, which will be held in a pub in Washington, DC, will feature short films and music from all over Africa. Give it a try at www.coffeegallery.com.

April 6th is Tartan Day in the US and several other countries. It commemorates the signing of the Declaration of Arbroath in Scotland in 1320, and is designated as a day for people of Scottish descent all over the world to celebrate their heritage by wearing tartan (plaid). Check your local resources to see if there’s a Tartan Day celebration near you—some are organized public events, but most will take place in pubs or similar venues, and will likely feature Scottish songs and bagpipe music.

Here are anagrams of some famous musicians, plus one actor that was just too good to pass up. Email me at linda@lindadewar.com if you have any to add.

MOANS LYRIC — Carly Simon
NARCOLEPTIC — Eric Clapton
PRESBYTERIANS — Britney Spears
OLD WEST ACTION — Clint Eastwood
GOD, I DO COMPLAIN — Placido Domingo
NO, I DECLINE — Celine Dion
MORMON IDEAS — Marie Osmond
BURSTING PRESENCE — Bruce Springsteen

Benefit for Andy M. Stewart

If you’ve heard the music of Scottish singer-songwriter Andy M. Stewart (www.andymstewart.com), then you know the magic of his easy style and songs. Andy’s career has spanned several decades of traditional music, from his days as lead singer with Silly Wizard to his current solo career. And if you haven’t heard his singing, you’ve probably heard one of his songs covered by another artist—songs like The Queen of All Argyll, Rabbin’ Rover, and Take Her In Your Arms.

Last year, many of Andy’s American fans, including those here in Southern California, were disappointed when he had to cancel his fall tour because of a back injury. At that time, he was awaiting surgery, but didn’t know when it might be scheduled.

Andy has now had the surgery, and is at home recovering, but he’s going to be unable to work for about six months; a long time for a musician who doesn’t have the luxury of sick pay or disability benefits.

A benefit concert has been organized by some great musicians and friends of Andy’s, Seamus Kennedy, Danny Doyle, and Brendan’s Voyage. The concert, which will be held in a pub in Washington, DC, will have taken place by the time you read this, but you can still contribute a donation if you’d like. If you want to help, write a check payable to Andy M. Stewart and send it to Danny Doyle, 10836 Moore Dr., Manassas, VA 20111. And if you’d like to wish Andy well, you can send a card or note to him in care of Danny at that same address.
Aloha Series Alive and Well in Whittier

BY AUDREY COLEMAN

strictly speaking, the Aloha Series concert experience begins in the parking lot. Getting out of your car at the Shannon Center for the Performing Arts, you notice dozens of theater patrons dressed in colorful Aloha shirts or flowing, flowered dresses. They are not being driven but strolling towards the entrance of the Whittier College theater. As you open the door to the lobby, you see a display table holding CD’s with titles like Masters of Ukulele and Learn Hawaiian, bags of kona coffee, license plates – Live Aloha, Hawaiian at Heart – and flyers promoting the Internet radio show Aloha Joe himself, a middle-aged Caucasian gentleman, presides over his wares, greeting acquaintances with cheerful banter and zestful hugs. Continuing your stroll, you pass by the refreshment area, that is, if you can resist the brownies and cappuccino being dispensed to an eager crowd. You pause by the All About package tour and Hawaiian Airlines table to check whether Don Sato has any good island deals. Then the mingled fragrances of plumeria and Micronesian ginger waft your way, luring you to the table, where patrons are studying the deep purple, white, and leaf green leis prepared by Oahu-born Ardell Vandenburg of Simply Exotic Floral. Beyond Ardell’s table is the entrance to the spacious lounge, where a representative from Round Hill Wines is pouring glasses for visitors.

There you spot blonde, curly-haired David Palmer, chatting animatedly with a couple of regulars. In a little while, the Shannon Center theater manager will bounce on to a stage bedecked with Ardell’s tropical flower arrangements. He will deliver an extra-warm welcome to anyone attending an Aloha Series concert for the first time, thank sponsors, thank theater founder and philanthropist Ruth B. Shannon, who just may be in the audience tonight, and make special announcements – such as the upcoming Legends of Aloha concert with Eddie Kamae and The Sons of Hawaii. The host will then kick off tonight’s raffle, in which the lucky ticket stubs will be matched with gifts from the sponsors in the lobby. Now Dave introducing tonight’s featured performer. It’s a few minutes past eight now, but you are not impatient. Any freeway stress you felt en route to Whittier melted out there in the lobby. You are in Aloha Series land.

This is the twelfth year that the Shannon Center has been presenting its Aloha Series. Theatre manager David Palmer discussed the reasons for its success and new directions with writer and series patron Audrey Coleman.

AC: What do you feel makes the Aloha Series concerts different from other concert venues?

DP: It’s mostly a matter of intimacy. Even though it’s 400 seats, it feels like a lot less. People have said to me that it’s almost like having these performers in their living room, that it felt so close and that the energy is just incredibly strong. I attribute that to the size and to the layout of the theater. Plus we try to bring the whole Aloha spirit, that spirit of comfort and well and openess, that warmth.

AC: How did the Aloha Series start?

DP: It all started with Harold Hewitt, who was the Vice-President for Finance and Administration at the College, he wanted to bring the Brothers Cazimero over for a concert. I thought, “Oh, cool! The Flying Karamazov Brothers!” So, Harold taught me what Hawaiian music was all about and we brought the Brothers Cazimero. It was amazing to see 1600 people congregate in our tiny theater in Whittier, California. We had four sold out shows!

AC: What kind of publicity had you done?

DP: We took out numerous ads in the L.A. Times and it cost us an arm and a leg, but it has ultimately paid off for us, because we haven’t had to advertise since then. Of the 1600 tickets sold at that first concert, we captured about 1200 names and those 1200 have been the mainstay and spread the word.

AC: Why do you think the Aloha Series has such a loyal following?

DP: For me it was mainly the artists – learning a lot from Robert and Roland Cazimero, Barry Flanagan, Keola Beamer… And I learned a lot about Hawaiian culture from Moe Keale. From Moe I began to learn about the meaning and spirit of Aloha. It really had a profound effect on me. His definition of Aloha, which he got from poet and philosopher Pilahi Paki, has been a part of my life for a long time. It takes each letter of the word Aloha and creates another word that is a component of Aloha. (See definition boxed below)

AC: Why else would folk music lovers find interesting at Shannon Center?

DP: We’re in the midst of starting a folk series, beginning with a special event that I hope will provide the impetus for more folk type concerts. (Peter Yarrow and his daughter Bethany performed at Whittier in February). Again, it’s the legends and the new faces. We also do small chamber music, learning new artists, cabaret. We hope that everybody will come to the Hawaiian concerts but also try some of the other things, too, because everything we do has an intimacy. It all fits that spirit of Aloha and sharing and connectedness.

A is for AKAHA, meaning kindness, to be expressed with a feeling of ten-derness

L is for LÔKAIH, meaning unity, to be expressed with a feeling of harmo-ny

O is for OLU’OLU, meaning agreeable, to be expressed with a feeling of peasefulness.

H stands for HAA’HA’A, meaning humility, to be expressed with a feeling of modesty.

A stands for AHONUI, meaning patience, to be applied with perseverance.

For information on the Shannon Center’s Aloha Series and other performances, call the box office at 562-907-4203 or find them online at www.shannoncenter.org.

LOWEN AND NAVARRO IN A MUST-SEE SHOW

BY LARRY WINES

Eric Lowen and Dan Navarro are incomparable songwriters, singers, guitarists (Eric also plays mandolin) and they have scored positive impacts on today’s acoustic scene. In recognition, they received life achievement awards at last fall’s Folk Alliance Western Regional (FAR West) conference, and honors at the North American Folk Alliance Conference in Austin in February. A two-part interview with them ran last year in FolkWorks.

The duo are playing the Cerritos Center for the Performing Arts on Wednesday, March 8, at 7:30pm. Go. This is must-see show.

Lowen and Navarro’s intimate and intoxicating live performances and nine acclaimed recordings have put the pair on the top tier of acoustic troubadours. A Lowen & Navarro performance is filled with magical harmonies and gem-like songs about life’s trials and triumphs. The show in Cerritos features a table seating arrangement, tickets are just $20, and it’s their only scheduled LA-area show this year. And, it’s the best large venue for acoustic music in the region, as named in 2005’s Top 10 that I was privileged to write for the December FolkWorks.
Capturing the Spirit
Dyed in the Wool: Fusing Art and Alchemy

BY KATHLEEN HERD MASSER

Irene Taylder unwraps the fragile paper as if it enfold a priceless gem, though it holds not rubies, emeralds nor diamonds. Nestled inside is a cluster of mushrooms — shriveled, brown and, to the untrained eye, utterly unremarkable.

But like a visionary who recognizes the rainbow behind the clouds, Taylder’s eyes see something different: the kaleidoscopic potential that lies beneath the fungi’s drab exterior.

Taylder is a dyer — primarily of wool but also silk, linen and flax. Most of the colors she creates come from mushrooms.

Dyes have long been extracted from plants — roots, leaves, stems, flowers, berries, lichen, bark, and wood. The first written record of organic dyestuffs dates back to 2600 BC, in China. By 715 BC, wool dyeing was an established craft in Rome, and when Alexander conquered Persia 400 years later, he found 190-year-old dyed purple robes in the royal treasury (valued today at $6 million).

Mushroom dyeing, though, is relatively new. The grande dame of the art is Miriam Rice of Mendocino, California, who discovered the magical properties of fungi in the late 1960s while teaching at the Mendocino Art Center. Rice had been experimenting with natural dyes for her block printing and batik work when she accompanied friends on a mushroom hunt. Returning home, she stirred a handful of sulphur-hued mushrooms into a dye pot. The wool turned bright yellow.

Rice began attending mushroom fairs and built a collection of dyed fiber samples. Her 1974 book, Let’s Try Mushrooms for Color, inspired other artists to take up the practice.

Interest in the new fiber artform grew, and in 1985, Rice established the International Mushroom Dye Institute, a non-profit educational organization that promotes the use of mushroom dyes around the world.

Although Rice’s first foray into mushroom dyeing did indeed produce a yellow dye from a yellow fungus, the color of the mushroom, Taylder advises, doesn’t necessarily determine the color of the dye. And other plants offer similar surprises: Pomegranates generate shades of yellow or blonde, and avocado skins turn the wool pink. Lichen produces aubergine, red, and deep rose.

Some dyes require a mordant, a chemical used to fix pigments into fabric. Adding tin, however, will brighten the color, while iron will dull or soften it. Other mordants include tannic acid, chromium, copper, iron, iodine, and potassium.

Taylder has 50 colors on her sample wheel that come from just a dozen mushrooms. “I get different colors from different mordants,” she explains, “and more dye baths.”

Take the Cortinarius Sanguineus, a bell-shaped fungus that grows on the ground below conifer trees during the autumn months. On its own, it will turn wool an orange or rust color. By adding alum, you’ll get red. Add tin, the wool turns scarlet. A pinch of copper will produce a cinnamon shade, and iron begets purple or tan.

The first step in dyeing is to boil and strain the mushrooms. Add the fleece and simmer for 40 minutes or so, depending on the depth of color desired, then rinse in cool water. Taylder spreads the wool on a hodge to dry. If the weather is warm, it will be ready for the spinning wheel in an hour.

Taylder worked at a nearby hospital with special needs children. In keeping with family tradition, Taylder recently taught her 7-year-old granddaughter Jasmine how to knit. Now Jasmine’s learning to spin.

And in keeping with broader tradition, Taylder belongs to the East Sussex Guild of Weavers Spinners and Dyers, which was founded in 1953. (The first wool dyers’ guild was established in Germany in the 10th century; the custom began in London in 1188.)

Rice, Taylder and other aficionados of mushroom dyeing meet every two years at the World Symposium of Fungi Dyers. The next convention is scheduled for 2007 in Slovenia. Smaller, regional meetings regularly take place all over the world, as do workshops and exhibitions. For information on local events, contact the Association of Southern California Hand Weavers at www.aschsite.org.

Heartfelt thanks to my dear friend and artist extraordinaire Gay Biddlecombe (author of captivating books, painter of exquisite silks and crafter of enchanting jewelry), who put me in touch with Irene and the Guild, and also served as my driver through the magnificent English countryside.

Kathleen Masser is a freelance writer and photographer based in Santa Monica.
much I made. In his eyes I could tell, however, that what I was doing was unworthy of a real man. That was a gig from hell.

One step down from that is a very different kind of gig from hell—the kind that every political folk singer has come up against sooner or later—the basic contempt of political activists for artists, or “cultural workers” as we are known among the left.

Well, excuse me, Comrade, but if I am a cultural worker, then don’t you ever seem to set aside enough money in your operating budget to pay me accordingly? Indeed, I often wind up in a variant of the following conversation, transcribed from My Bottom Line, the closing song from my CD, Singer-SongFighter:

I asked for fifty dollars
They offered twenty-five
They said, “We thought you sang for love”
I said, “Love must survive”
They said, “We understood you
To say you’re destitute anyway”
I said, “That’s right, but it costs more
To be destitute these days”

But more dispiriting than the lack of money is the aggravation of being told, “We want you to sing three songs, but the program and you’ll have fifteen minutes,” only to be kept waiting for an hour by long-winded speakers and then to hear from a frantie stage manager, “Gee, we’re sorry, but we have run out of time—could you just sing the chorus of Solidarity Forever?”

There’s no business like show business, wrote Irving Berlin, and he wasn’t kidding. Consider the case of the idealistic (and then young) folk singer who got a call that sounded like a dream booking. The UC Riverside Student Liberation Committee wanted me to open for a rock band to celebrate—what else—Earth Day. As I recounted the telephone conversation in another song, Folksinger Americanus, it went something like this:

They booked me at a college to open for a rock band
They said they needed a folk singer to celebrate Earth Day
I told them I’d sing songs written by Malvina Reynolds
There was a long pause on the telephone and they said, “Who’s she?”
I said, “She wrote Little Boxes, you know, recorded by Pete Seeger.”
They hadn’t heard of him either
He was Woody Guthrie’s old traveling companion
“Woody Guthrie? Is he Arlo Guthrie’s father?”
And I thought, “Why me, Lord, why me?”
But I could tell, I mean I’ve been around long enough I could smell
Another gig from hell—
The students talked through every song
No one came to listen” I was only there to fill the silence
I could see the morning headlines plain

Last Folk Singer Dies Insane—Earth Day Concert Ends In Violence
As I sang Malvina’s What Have They Done
For starters, I forgot my harmonica holder—and was lucky (I thought) to be able to borrow one from the band. Then I discovered—after I had already introduced and heading for the microphone—that, like O.J.’s glove, it didn’t fit. Nothing I could do short of ripping it apart got it over my head—even after I had removed my Greek fisherman’s cap. I tried to vamp by saying that the MC’s generous introduction had swelled my head when the band found a second harmonica holder—this one big enough to get over a ten gallon Stetson hat.

I thought I was good to go, but my troubles were just beginning. My “E” mouth harp plays fine, but those tiny, microscopic, infinitesimally small nails that the manufacturer uses to hold their harps together have long since disappeared, and I depend upon my harmonica holder to hold the metal plates together over the reeds. (Imagine an Oreo cookie, and you’ll get the picture.)

But I didn’t have my harmonica holder—I had one designed by the same company that designed those all but invisible nails. This harmonica rack grabbed my fingers, my hands, swallowed it whole and seemed ready to roll, until I came to my first break. Then, like the whale spitting Jonah out of its belly and onto the sand, I suddenly the harp exploded out of the holder and onto the stage, in three separate pieces. American dancer Miss Josephine Baker never stood more nacked in front of her audience than I felt at that moment, and at least she had a pink flamingo feather on to protect her dignity.

All’s well that ends well, wrote the Poet, and I am happy to report that the gods of folk music had had their sport with me—they permitted me to put the harmonica back in place and finish my Bush-bashing song without further ado. The audience cheered, and at least one member thought that I must have rehearsed that harmonica bit for hours to make it hit the stage when it did.

So if you see my name in the papers for an upcoming show, you never know what you might get in addition to music and storytelling—and all at no extra charge.

Ross Altman may be reached at greygoosemusic@aol.com. He and Len Chandler will be performing at Beyond Baroque, 681 Venice Blvd., Venice, CA, for their second annual “Paul Robeson Birthday Tribute” on Sunday, April 9, at 7:30pm. $7.00. 310-822-8006.
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SPECIAL EVENTS continued from page 32
those with an outsider’s viewpoint. From Alexis de Tocqueville to Raymond Chandler, the American experience can be refreshed by a view from the un-judiced eye. Robertson and the Band could not only stand outside the culture, but also work from within, with a voice so integrated into the culture as to going beyond aping it to “being it.”

In a time where psychedelic music and mass production was the rule, the Band served as a reminder of a not necessarily gentler and kinder time. The music of America wasn’t simple, wasn’t without substance and wasn’t worth being abandoned. A song like The Weight sounded like it could’ve come from the 1930s or the 1880s. Musically, their compositions were anything but simple, and the Band’s approach to arrangement brought a breath of fresh air to the overblown times to which they had arrived.

With today’s recent folk Grammy nominations and awards going to performers such as Lucinda Williams, Steve Earle, or Dave Alvin, one can be comfortable in the assertion that if the Band were to be starting their career today, they would fall into the folk category. Not that they would agree: “None of us were about folk music.” Robertson told MOJO magazine’s Sid Griffin in the January 2006 issue. “Folk was played in coffeehouses; where The Hawks played nobody was sipping capuccino.” What they provided Dylan was an ideal backing band for his new sound, one they had already captured and refined from their years on the road behind Hawkins. And Dylan helped introduce the Band to folk music.

What they provided for folk music was in some ways public relations, in that a certain number of rock/pop music fans became enamored of the Band, and found that certain elements of their music harkened back to American folk and blues. Some of these fans then began that journey to learn more about those influences. The Band also gave a number of wonderful songs into the canon of folk, either writing or interpreting The Weight. I shall Be Released, Long Black Veil, The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down, Up on Cripple Creek, and It Makes No Difference.

Robertson still performs and does solo recordings. He left the group with their 1976 Last Waltz and would not participate in their “reunion version.” Manual committed suicide while on tour with the re-formed group in 1986, and Danko succumbed to a variety of ailments in 1999. The Robertson-less version released three recordings in the 1990s; 1993’s Jericho, 1996’s High on the Hog and 1998’s Jubilation. The Band: A Musical History omits the second incarnation of the group entirely, and the project is less for it. All three of the 1990s recordings featured excellent songs and performances. No doubt this exclusion has to do with Robertson’s involvement in The Band: A Musical History, as his relationship with the other surviving members appears to remain strained.

Helm has suffered a bout with cancer, but has regained his vocal abilities after several years of near silence, and plays with his band The Barnburners and continues to run a recording studio in Woodstock. He also has had a successful acting career. Hudson plays in neo-country rock band the Burrito Deluxe as well as doing solo recordings and performances and recordings with his wife.

With its attention to detail and scope, The Band: A History is far too extensive and expensive of a starting point for the uninstructed, but for a true fan of the group or the history of that musical era, this is a fine product to own and enjoy.
SPECIAL EVENTS

FRIDAY, MARCH 10

7:30pm Facebook Live Concert

8:00pm TED HILTON & DJM [www.tedhilton.com]

9:30pm KIRK NICHOLS & DOUG TAYLOR [www.kirknichols.com]

FRIDAY, MARCH 17

7:30pm THE BLACK IRISH BAND [www.blackirish.com]

8:00pm BOCCATANGO [www.boccatango.com/]

9:00pm DJANGOFEST LA [www.djangofest.com/la]

TICKETS:

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3210 Calle de Luna, San Diego
858-278-7575 • www.boulevardmusic.com

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5814 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles
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