Francis Awe: Talking the Gospel of the Drum

BY AUDREY COLEMAN

And one and go!!!” Immediately the four men standing in a semi-circle begin playing the hourglass-shaped drum each has slung over his shoulder. Using “J”-shaped wooden sticks, they each beat out a different rhythmic pattern against the two-headed dundun. Seated in the center, powerfully striking the large djembe in front of him is Nigerian master drummer Francis Awe. He closes his eyes for a moment, listening to the polyrhythmic effect, and then brings his sparkling gaze to each dundun in turn. Close-cropped black and silver hair crowns his head and his white, long-sleeved tee-shirt stretches at the seams over his paunch as if the energy inside him is pushing to get out. “I want to see the bouncing!” he sings out. “Yeah! Yeah!”

So opens the dundun class Francis Awe holds for a small group of adults at Holy Name of Jesus School in Central Los Angeles every Sunday afternoon. It is an intense two hours of ensemble and individual playing, punctuated by the master’s words on drumming technique, Yoruba culture, learning, and life.

Leader of the Nigerian Talking Drum Ensemble since 1985, Francis Awe has performed extensively around the United States as well as Mexico, Germany, India, and, of course, Africa. In its Los Angeles home base, the Ensemble has appeared at such venues as the J. Paul Getty Museum, the Los Angeles Theatre Center, the John Anson Ford Amphitheatre, the Los Angeles Music Center and major cultural festivals. Awe has recorded sessions with such notables as Michael Jackson and Stevie Wonder. The 55-year old musician from Nigeria plays all manner...
Dear Readers

Los Angeles is not known nationally as a hotbed of either Folk or Roots/World music – and yet, as Larry Winjes will tell you, there are actually many places to hear “folk” music and more than you would think to hear Roots/World music.

In this issue, we turn you on to a new venue, Club Tropical where Molly White (who is occasionally on KPJK) presents a series of World Music on Friday nights... Balkan, Klezmer, African and more. Other clubs, while not making it their mainstay, are finding the “different sound” people are looking for, in this city's ethnic communities. Tangers, Temple Bar, Little Pedros, Knitting Factory and even The Echo sometimes present folk or “roots” music. So maybe L.A., in its search for the new and different, is turning to its ethnic “roots” and turning on a new generation to the soulful diversity in our midst. The music, dancing, food and crafts of our city is as diverse as it is magnificent and new young musicians are swinging into action – taking their traditions and mixing them up! Middle Eastern music becomes “new age” with Azam Ali, VOJO sings songs based in the old-time Appalachian tradition, then powers up with an original Sacred Harp holler. Ashley Maher does the singer-songwriter thing, but swings it up into African with dancers and Sengalese drummers. But sometimes it is the soul of simple tradition that makes us surprise if the future pages will contain more things to do presents us with young children. We've been meaning to do this for This time of year also offers the best in free concerts with young children. We've been meaning to do this for some of the best festivals are local or relatively close by such at the Topanga Banjo Fiddle Contest and Folk Music Festival, the Summer Solstice Folk Music, Dance and Storytelling Festival brought to you by the California Traditional Music Society (CTMs) as well as the Cajon, Creole Music Festival in Simi Valley and the Long Beach Bayou Festival.

This year the Long Beach Bayou Festival brings you “The French Quarter and N'Orleans at Night,” presenting some fine talent. They are offering a couple free passes to the first to email to Mad@FolkWorks.org on May 15th, and again on June 1st. So mark that on your calendar for two free passes. Only one set person. Finally, a bit further afield (but a relatively short plane ride) is the ever-wonderful Northwest Folklife Festival. If you haven't had the pleasure, check out their website and book your tickets now. This is the time when we will figure out how to get our city to sponsor something similar – we can only hope you'll be involved in this.

We would be amiss not to mention a significant change that has entered our lives. We are now grandparents to two baby girls, Yap twins. This has already changed our lives and we anticipate this will continue. So keep looking at FolkWorks and don't be surprised if the future pages will contain more things to do with your young children. We've been meaning to do this for years but we now have personal motivation. We hope this all motivates you to get out and experience that wonderful folk, traditional (and maybe not so traditional) music and dance that will be coming our way soon. See you out and about.

By Leda & Steve Shapiro

Notes from Possum Pie Inn

IN THIS ISSUE

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Dear Readers

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By Leda & Steve Shapiro

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IN THIS ISSUE
GOING MODAL WITH THE APPALACHIAN Dulcimer

Question: what musical instruments can claim the USA as their country of origin? The usual answer (or guess) is that the 5-string banjo is the only instrument that has this pedigree. Well, that’s incorrect because there is one other instrument on that short list—the Appalachian dulcimer (Figure 1). The Appalachian dulcimer is a three-stringed instrument with one middle string (usually the bottom one) and two drone strings. It is related to the psaltery and the zither and may stem from the German “scheitholt,” a boxy instrument with both fretted and unfretted strings. It first appeared in Pennsylvania in the 1830s. Like the banjo that owes its heritage to the African gourd instruments brought here with the advent of Southern slavery, the Appalachian dulcimer became a particularly American artifact. Because the dulcimer found a home in the Southern mountains it came to be known as the mountain dulcimer. It is also known as a lap dulcimer since it is played while resting on the player’s lap.

The dulcimer is a fretted diatonic, not chromatic, instrument. This means that the scale consists of seven notes to the octave (five whole-steps and two half-steps) while a chromatic scale has twelve notes to the octave (five whole-steps and seven half-steps). The most familiar example of a chromatic instrument, where each fret represents a half-step, is the guitar. If you compare a dulcimer fingerboard to that of the guitar, it appears as if some frets are missing from the dulcimer (Figure 2). This layout is evidence of a diatonic instrument and is both good news and bad news. The good news is that, unlike the guitar, you can play a scale without having to remember which frets to skip since they are already missing. The bad news is that if you change keys (start on a different note) you also change modes.

So what’s a mode and why does it matter? The answers to this question were discussed at length in the last issue (see the Archives at www.FolkWorks.org). It should be mentioned that the tables presented in that column fell out of alignment when they went to press so I cleverly incorporated the corrected versions of Table 1 and Table 2 here since they are once again germane to this topic. Using the most common tuning for the dulcimer (DAD) and looking at the fret board (Figure 2) you can see that a scale starting on the open D string, and omitting the 6+ fret, will be “D-E-F♯-G-A-B-C-D” or more generally “1-2-3-4-5-6-7-1.” Table 2 shows that when the half-steps fall between 3 & 4 & 6 & 7 this arrangement is the Mixolydian mode and this tuning is often referred to as the Mixolydian tuning for the dulcimer.

Most of the time, however, other musicians will be in the Ionian mode because it is the same as our present-day Major scale (see Table 2, Mode 1). Just like the Major scale, the half-steps in the Ionian scale fall between frets 3 & 4 and 7 & 1. This arrangement is facilitated on modern dulcimers because they have an extra 6+ fret. To play a D-Major scale (Ionian mode), start on the open D string and play the 6+ fret instead of the 6th.

To play a Major scale (Ionian mode) on an older dulcimer without the 6+ fret requires the player to start on the 3rd fret of the D string. There’s more good news and bad news about this. The good news is that besides getting to play in Ionian mode, you can now reach melody notes below the tonic since you are no longer starting on an open string. But the bad news is that since you are now in a different key (G in this case), the other two open drone strings (which should be the tonic and the fifth) are not necessarily the correct notes.

There are a couple of things to do about this situation:

- Retune the D melody string to A. For a D Ionian mode scale, start on the 3rd fret while keeping the properly tuned drone strings. This DAA tuning is often called Ionian tuning.
- Have the two drone strings also sound from the third fret. Believe it or not, this can be accomplished without tying up all of your fingers. Behold the wonders of the dulcimer capo (Figure 3)! Starting from the DAD Mixolydian tuning and capoing on the 3rd fret puts you right into G Ionian with the correct drones of G and D.

As a review, there are several ways to get different modes on the Appalachian dulcimer (this information is also summarized in Table 3). You can choose a different mode by selecting a different starting fret on the melody string and/or by choosing to use the 6 or 6+ fret.

You can change the starting note (key) leaving the drones unchanged by retuning the melody string.

You can change the modes, the keys, and the drones by using a dulcimer capo.

The Appalachian dulcimer is not too difficult to learn and fun to play, especially when accompanying singing. But don’t be fooled by this seemingly simple-looking instrument—more advanced players can crank out amazingly complex tunes. I hope that you found this article to be interesting and perhaps even useful. So, until next time, remember to stay tuned.

Roger Goodman is a musician, mathematician, punster, reader of esoteric books and sometime writer, none of which pays the mortgage. For that, he is a computer network guy for a law firm. He has been part of the Los Angeles old-time & contra-dance community for over thirty years. While not a dancer, he does play fiddle, guitar, harmonica, mandolin, banjo & spoons. 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.
THE ROYAL TREATMENT, THRON AND ALL

When Captain Cook visited Tonga in 1773 he dubbed this kingdom "The Friendly Islands." He didn’t know that the Tongans were arguing about who would have the honor of killing him. Evidently, he sailed away before they could decide. On board was a young navigator named William Bligh. In 1783, six years before the mutiny on his ship "The Bounty," he collected breadfruit trees in Tahiti to grow in the West Indies. His zealously earned the mild moniker of "Breadfruit Bligh.

Almost two hundred years later a Sierra Club group visited two South Pacific island nations: Samoa and Tonga. Sixteen of us were going to stay with a traditional family in Western Samoa, and in woven huts on the Tongan king’s own tiny island. It was a lush, peaceful place across from the main island, complete with our own cook. We washed our hands and faces in a giant clam shell and ate in the communal dining room.

One rainy night on the island some of us felt like we had just chewed on pins and needles. Our mouths prickled and burned. We attacked taro leaves and burned. We noticed the taro plant must be well cooked to break down the crystals before eating any part of it. Other than that, the food was delicious.

On the main island we viewed some of the native plants. Vanilla beans grew on vines in flat green pods the size of a hand. At a processing plant we saw heaps of coconuts being husked. The coconut meat when dried was called "copra" and coconut oil was extracted from it. The oil is still a major export of Tonga and used in a variety of products such as margarine and shampoo. The papaya tree was a surprise, a Dr. Seuss-like creature with a skinny trunk, a tuft of leaves on top, and a few papayas clustered below.

One evening we went to a cave for a Tongan feast and show. A colorful buffet was set with fish, pork, octopus, taro roots and leaves, and fruit was served by young women to our amazement, a young boy was also helping. He dressed like the women, and talked in a soft voice. Traditionally, boys are sometimes raised to do girls’ chores if there aren’t enough girls in the family. Only in the capital of Nuku'alofa do they actually dress and act like girls. These boys, who were called “fakafefine,” are chosen when they are young, and most of them are not allowed to speak any English. Another small structure was the chief’s home. Attached to the front was a large oval porch covered with mats, similar to the traditional fales. The rest of the group slept here, and we used the porch for all our meals and other gatherings.

The traditional Samoan house is known as a “fale,” with a raised floor, several posts and a thatched roof. The sides are open, but can be covered with woven mats when needed. Our family had a one-room wooden house for the women and children, and the four single women of our group, including myself, slept here. A cloth curtain separated us from the others. Four generations lived here, including the chief’s frail grandmother and his taciturn mother, several sisters and a few children. Most of them did not speak any English. Another small structure was the chief’s home. Attached to the front was a large oval porch covered with mats, similar to the traditional fales. The rest of the group slept here, and we used the porch for all our meals and other gatherings.

We were initiated into the traditional Samoan way of life by the chief’s wife. She showed us how to wear a “lavalava,” the traditional clothing of Samoa, which is a piece of cloth wrapped around the waist. The women wore blouses or tee shirts with them. We were also introduced to the “pisacola” which is the othena. This is the Samoan pronunciation of “Peace Corps,” so-called because the Peace Corps volunteers built the mat and wood covered structure and installed the “royal throne.” A bucket of water sat inside for flushing.

The family cooked all of our meals. One special breakfast was cocoa with fish, pork from the recently slaughtered pig, and fresh fruit. One of the tastiest dishes was some Samoan style chop suey made with beef, noodles, soy sauce, garlic, ginger, and onions. My chief, not speaking any English, would poke me and point to the food. When I indicated that I was through eating, he put it aside to take home, a Samoan style doggy bag. The men, women, and children took turns dancing, and then asked us to perform. The three most outgoing people in our group did a good old fashioned American dance, the hora. At the end of the fiafia we exchanged gifts. We were given beads, a mat fringed with colored yarn, a woven ula, and a purse. I was surprised to get a necklace of shells in exchange for a package of needles I had given the women. Every kindness seemed to be remembered and reciprocated.

As we said goodbye to our Samoan family, the chief’s mother cried. We had all been deeply touched by our short four-day stay together. Captain Cook was right after all. The people of the South Pacific were friendly indeed, and we were treated like royalty. Their hospitality will never be forgotten.

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.

PAUL ARNOLDI will pick and sing in MAY!

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3316 Sepulveda Blvd, Culver City, Ca.
paularnoldi.com paul@paularnoldi.com cdbaby.com/parnoldi
IN PRAISE OF LOCAL VENUES

I last issue, we goaded you and prodded you with the words, “Whatever your favorite genre, support live music.” The places you can do that are far more numerous than you might imagine. In between and finding and counting all those performance venues revealed some genuine surprises. There are, believe it or not, well over 200 venues in and around town offering music, let’s put it that in perspective. Survey the L.A. Times Calendar section (where a de facto ban on acoustic在一个词组中，粗体和斜体的存在可以强调某些部分，或者提供额外的上下文信息。在这样的场景下，这些元素可能用来表示强调，或者提供相关背景，有助于理解整个段落的上下文。
A TASTE OF GUELAGUETZA

BY AUDREY COLEMAN

I t was our craving for tamales con mole negro that led us to attempt to locate the unique dance spectacle known as Guelaguetza (which you can see on May 21), and to the restaurant that bears its name.

My husband Michael and I had visited Oaxaca for two weeks during Christmas season 2004. Located in the south of Mexico, east of Chiapas State, with a varied geography including valleys, the Sierra range and 360 miles of Pacific coastline, Oaxaca stole our hearts with its strong indigenous heritage and traditional music, dance, costumes, and cuisine. One balmy December day, our personal guide had driven us to the village of Santo Tomas Jaleza, located in the wide valley region of the state. When we had thoroughly explored the colorful textiles woven on huge old looms by the women of the town, our guide pointed to a group of elderly ladies who were cooking outdoors and selling to an eager crowd of locals. “You have to try their tamales,” he told us. “They are the best you will ever taste.”

We should know, seeing as this was hyperbole. I bought a chicken-filled tamale and Michael tried pork. One mouthful and oh, my... god... Those moist tamales, cradled in banana leaves, their filling steeped and smothered in a sauce of chocolate, ground almonds, and cinnamon known as mole negro, were a taste of heaven.

Flash forward to January, 2005 in Manhattan Beach, California. Suffering from post-vacation Oaxaca withdrawal, Michael and I surfed the web, on a quest for a restaurant that served Oaxacan food. “Aquí está!” A restaurant, called Guelaguetza, named for the traditional dance festival that takes place in the state capital of Oaxaca City each July.

Not long after, we were feasting on tamales con mole negro that were almost as wonderful as the tamales we ate in Santo Tomas Jaleza. The cheerful, spacious restaurant, located in the Olympic-Normandy area, has a loyal following from the thousands-strong Oaxacan immigrant community as well as other Mexicanos plus Americans who crave dishes from the “land of seven colors.”

Yes, at Guelaguetza you not only have your choice of mole negro with tamales or chicken breast but platos tipicos featuring other mole sauces such as the bold-flavored rojo (made from nuts seeds, spices, and oaxacan chocolate) and the milder coloradito. Other typical Oaxacan fare includes the thick hand-made corn tortilla called memela, and cluyada con asiento, a large, thin corn tortilla spread with special pork fat-flavored bean puree and Oaxacan cheese. To accompany the feast, the small stage at Guelaguetza features live folkloric music Wednesday through Sunday, the Trio Mexicante and the six-man ensemble Marimba Tikal.

Another discovery at Guelaguetza Restaurant was El Oaxaqueno, a free twice-monthly publication bringing news from Oaxaca, Mexico and the Los Angeles Oaxacan community. In April, 2005, we found an article describing the annual Guelaguetza festival taking place at the Los Angeles Sports Arena in May. We read about the original festival held in Oaxaca, Mexico in July. The Zapotec word guelaguetza means “to help one another” or “to offer,” and the festival celebrates nature’s bounty and honors the indigenous goddess of corn, Diosa Centeotl with dances from the seven geographical regions of Oaxaca. Since the 1930s, the Mexican government has encouraged a patriotic dimension, constructing in 1974 an 11,000-seat amphitheater on the hill outside Oaxaca City where the dances traditionally took place.

“The Guelaguetza is an expression of the soul of the Oaxacan people,” said Fernando Lopez, coordinator of the Los Angeles-based Guelaguetza festival. He also happens to own the restaurant, Guelaguetza, and serves as Presidente Ejecutivo of El Oaxaqueno newspaper. “We want our children to be aware of and appreciate the culture of their family – the dances, the history, their costumes, the unique foods. There are other Guelaguetzas in California – in San Diego and San Marcos, for example – but ours is the largest outside of Mexico.”

The festival has grown since Oaxacan emigrants instituted the L.A. tradition 17 years ago. Five years ago, the event moved from Normandy Park to the larger Los Angeles Sports Arena. Graciela Molina, Secretary of Culture for the L.A.-based Federacion Oaxaquena de Comunidades y Organizaciones Indigenas de California said, “Now we are reaching out to the non-Mexican community in order to share the beauty of our culture. We gather support for the festival by holding fundraisers throughout the year. We also get some financial help from the Mexican government. Then there are ticket sales and the work of hundreds of volunteers.”

For the second year, the Los Angeles-based Guelaguetza will feature a young lady chosen to embody the Diosa Centeotl as is done in Mexico. Contestants must dress in traditional costumes and be chosen from the panel of six judges. The girls explain in detail the elements of their costumes and the history and local dances of the town from which their family originates. A year ago 17-year old Sandra Chagoya, now a senior at Venice High School, competed with seven other girls for the Diosa title. Her family helped her research the traditions of their town, Santa Ana del Valle (near Oaxaca City). “I was wearing a full wraparound skirt made out of wool tinted red with natural dye from a plant, a white shirt that has a design around the neck. I had a black rebozo on my head, a kind of rolled scarf.”

Traditionally, the Guelaguetza begins with a dignified procession around the perimeter of the stage in which the Diosa Centeotl is presented to the people. Then she takes her place of honor beside the leaders of the community to watch the dances. Last May, Sandra was seated by a representative from the State of Oaxaca, Councilman Ed Reyes, and (no surprise) Senor Fernando Lopez. The pride of her family and a dancer in a Oaxacan folkloric group here in L.A., Sandra said, “It’s very important for you to get involved and know about their culture and let everyone else know. We must never let it die.”

On Sunday, May 21, six local dance groups will perform 14 regional dances that contain elements of the 16 ethnic indigenous groups that live in the state as well as Oaxaca’s Hispanic heritage. “For example, the dances from the coastal region are energetic and happy,” said Fernando Lopez, “whereas the dances from the interior valley are more slow and dignified.”

Sixteen local Oaxaqueno musical groups will accompany the dances and play selections on their own as well. In all, over 500 performers will take part in the upcoming Los Angeles Guelaguetza.

The festival will also feature Oaxacan cuisine, courtesy of several L.A. restaurants, Senor Lopez’s Guelaguetza among them. In addition to the platos tipicos, you will encounter the exotic ice cream flavors that Michael and I first discovered at an outdoor níveresia (ice cream parlor) in Oaxaca, flavors such as leche quemada (burnt milk – fantastico!), tuna (that’s cactus fruit, not fish), and mescal (no translation needed, I hope). Along with food vendors will be vendors of Oaxacan crafts and clothing.

A ten dollar entry fee gets you into the world of Guelaguetza from 9:00a.m. to 6:00p.m. It will be a Sunday to stimulate the senses and introduce you to the Oaxacan soul. If, after attending this event, you yearn to taste more of Oaxaca in L.A., check out Guelaguetza, the restaurant. You won’t find the ice creams (sigh), but the mole and the music are well worth the visit.

The Guelaguetza Festival takes place on Sunday, May 21 at the Los Angeles Sports Arena, 3939 South Figueroa. The original Guelaguetza Restaurant is located at 3337 1/2 Eighth Street, Los Angeles 90005. Its sister restaurant is at 914 West Olympic Blvd., Los Angeles 90015.

Audrey Coleman is a writer, audio producer, educator, and passionate explorer of world music and culture.
We are definitely living in the computer age. I have close friends whose age is not quite so old (who, if they are at all interested in hearing a particular artist, will go line and download an MP3). In other words, at least some people old enough to remember when vinyl and cassettes were overwhelmingly the main media have no interest pursuing collections of songs conceived as a unit any more. Individual songs have, by necessity, become self-contained bits of art, completely divorced from any other performances including ones conceived or recorded at the same time, or even any information about the artist other than name.

You might be asking yourself what this has to do with the mission of this paper. Aren’t Folkworks readers more likely than most to purchase CDs, read liner notes, actually look at cover art? Well, yes, but we’re apparently a fairly small minority compared to the world at large. Will we continue to be a marketing segment that needs to be catered to? Or will even folk and world musicians eventually be forced to release songs individually on a format that compresses them all to hell, both visually and musically? Worldwide, a high percentage of music is still community-based, but the question is how to continue to discover new music that maintains that sense of community in the computer age.

There are worthwhile websites where this can be done, many of which, such as www.rootsworld.com and www.smithsonianfolkways.com, have been featured in these pages before. Some diverse music websites have attempted some sense of “world” bent as well, these are generally less successful. The www.pandora.com website is a nice concept-you enter artists that you like, and it finds similar ones-but it’s really suited better for rock music. It doesn’t recognize much in the way of traditional music from anywhere. I haven’t heard much of and one is a “concept album”-how’s that for a dying breed?-that unlike anything the artist has attempted previously.

Mick Moloney’s McNally’s Row of Flats [Compass Records] (!!), is a tribute to 1920s vaudeville songwriters Ed Harrigan and David Braham. Moloney might be best known as a top Irish traditional tenor banjo player, but his voice has the charm to project the theatricality inherent in these songs. Harrigan and Braham meant them to entertain theater goers of the time, but with a decidedly Irish character (both were sons of immigrants) they are imbued with a feeling of the lower east side of Manhattan circa 1880. Check these great lyrics from the title track: “Danny by my Side” {song was composed in sydromes-then he wrote it for the actress was an immigrant playing a sydromes-doesn’t recognize much in the way of traditional music from anywhere. I haven’t heard much of and one is a “concept album”-how’s that for a dying breed?-that unlike anything the artist has attempted previously.

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The dance floor is packed as the song builds to a final climax, finishing with a repeated chorus of "este es nuevo son jarocho" (this is the sound of the new son jarocho). The audience shouts its approval as the song comes to an end, and the band is called back for one last encore.

It was a spirited performance and one that successfully links both the old and new, proving that Conjunto Jardin truly is "the sound of the new son jarocho".

[Further information on son jarocho, the recordings of Sabia, Word of Mouth and Conjunto Jardin as well as upcoming performances, (including a Folkworks concert on May 13) can be found at www.conjuntojardin.com, information about Huayucaltia can be found at www.huayucaltia.com]


MUSIC AND MUSIC CULTURE

Chances are that you read FolkWorks because you think music and music culture are important. However, there are people who enjoy listening to music but have no curiosity or desire to learn more about music’s history or the artists that perform that type of music. This may even be the vast majority of consumers of current popular music. Thankfully, we’re all much deeper thinkers than that.

Let’s look at some of the aspects of music culture by choosing one genre that often falls under the “folk umbrella,” bluegrass music. It’s by nature an acoustic music, populated with guitars, banjos, mandolins, basses, fiddles and occasionally resonophonic guitars. Bluegrass music has blues, folk and old time country music as the original influences, and later some swing and modern pop influences as well. Most people credit Bill Monroe of Rosine, Kentucky, with being the inventor of bluegrass. That’s a nice myth, and over simplistic, but it works for those “most people.”

Open your bluegrass recordings through retail brick and mortar establishments, and larger chains have a pretty good variety of bluegrass to choose from. There’s ample internet retail outlets to purchase CDs or download recordings. There are still a few retail outlets that publish catalogs and do mail order via something called the postal system, which is like the internet only even slower than dial-up. Consuming live bluegrass music may be more of a challenge, depending on one’s place of residence. In the greater Los Angeles area, there are several organizations (like BASC, the Bluegrass Association of Southern California) that host concerts, open mikes and jams. San Diego County boasts two bluegrass organizations that also provide the same services. Finally, a host of bluegrass festivals now run nearly year round, with several taking place within a reasonable drive of the L.A. area.

Does bluegrass have a music culture? Most emphatically, and attending those jams and concerts will start to allow you to note this culture, but attending a bluegrass festival is a far deeper and more immediate education. Bluegrass was born in Kentucky, and the American South has held the deepest bluegrass roots, especially in the Southern mountains. So the overall culture of the American South is a cornerstone. Bluegrass is a rural, agrarian style of music, so the culture of the American farming community also enters in. Clothing is an important part of any culture, and bluegrass music has its own style. Bill Monroe and His Bluegrass Boys experimented with the band uniform, for a time performing in what appeared to be English equestrian uniforms. Cowboy hats and boots are often de rigueur. Far more important is the maker of the musical instruments. Bluegrass guitars need to be dreadnaughts, and although manufacturers other than C. F. Martin are tolerated, one best be playing a dreadnaught guitar that has “Martin-ness.” The five string banjo doesn’t have to be a Gibson, but it better have “Gibsoneness.” Mandolins also should have a Gibson pedigree, and only the “F” or “A” style can be used in bluegrass without major eye-brow raising. Now, although there is undoubtedly some solid sonic rationale behind these limitations of choice, it still has much to do with the rich, lengthy history of this music that has survived for over 50 years. This is the same kind of rich, lengthy history (begin to note sarcasm now) that Steve Martin refers to in the movie L.A. Story where he defends Los Angeles’ architectural history by saying “Some of these buildings are over TWENTY years old!” (Confirm sarcasm now.) In other words, Bill played a Gibson mandolin. His guitarists used Martin dreadnoughts, etc. God help the talented group of bluegrass musicians that take the stage with instruments that fall well beyond this “list.” It doesn’t mean that they will fail by their instrument choice alone, but they will have a difficult if not impossible task of winning over the conservative fan (or “bluegrass police”) that expect things to be done the “way Bill done it.”

So is it easier to like bluegrass music if you own a Martin dreadnought, wear a Stetson hat and cowboy boots, like Southern cooking and are prone to holler “yee haw” with little provocation? Perhaps, however, you can still enjoy bluegrass and live in the North, wear wingtips and disdain fried okra. You can also like bluegrass without knowing who Bill Monroe was, or whether Flatt and Scruggs really brought more to the bluegrass music than Bill, or whether Jimmy Martin really tried to punch out Ricky Skaggs back-stage at the Opry. You’ll just have less to argue about around the campfire if you do attend a festival.

Bluegrass music has a “culture” that impacts how one dresses, what one owns as a musical instrument, and how some knowledge of the history of bluegrass arguably helps define just what the bluegrass experience is. This is, of course, just one example of a type of folk music and how it is framed by its culture. A very similar situation exists with other types of folk music such as Cajun, Celtic, cowboy or even several other types that don’t begin with the letter “c.” So for many, music culture is as important as the music that gave this culture its birth.
First things first: In 1911, the Fin Fiz Flyer was the first airplane to cross North America fully by air. Publisher William Randolph Hearst offered $50,000 to the first flyer to make it coast to coast. You could fly either direction, but the trip had to be less than 30 days from start to finish. Calbreath Perry Rodgers, grandson of naval hero Oliver Hazard Perry, was the first private citizen to buy a Wright Brothers airplane. Rodgers convinced Ogden B. Armour, the famous meatpacker, to sponsor the trip and in return named his plane after Armour’s new grape soft drink, Fin Fiz. Rodgers made the harrowing trip across the U.S., but it took him too long to gather up the Hearst dough.

Now, Fin Fiz Flyer (VFF) is a Southern California based bluegrass band, although we’ll chat more about that later. Formed three years ago, VFF is comprised of Kent Besocke on banjo, guitar, mandolin and vocals; Donn Cunningham on guitar and vocals; Paul Dorn on bass and vocals; Donnie Johnson on Dobro and vocals; and Skip on fiddle and harmony vocals. Of the eleven songs on the Fin Fiz Flyer CD, two are traditional tunes arranged by the band, and the remaining come from the pen of Besocke or Wilke or both.

If VFF is a bluegrass band, the definition of bluegrass has to be stretched a bit, or at least a good deal further than the usual “bluegrass police” classification. To most ears, these well done tunes may evoke the New Riders of the West, with the band, and the remaining come from the pen of Besocke or Wilke or both.

The cover tracks include Bill Monroe’s Tallahassee, and Workin’ Man (Nowhere To Go) by Jimmie Fadden plus Hazel Dickens’ Workin’ Girl Blues (Is there a theme here?). No One to Sing for Me by Charlie Louvin, Ira Louvin and Eddie Hill, and He Goes To Church by Karen Rochelle and Eddie Hill are also included. The guest musicians include Ricky Skaggs on mandolin, Ben Isaacs on harmony vocals and Jeff Taylor on tin whistle and accordion, and they are first rate. The only minor criticism I have with the CD is with the size of the print in the liner notes, but maybe that’s just my advancing age.

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**Artist:** DOUGIE MacLEAN
**Title:** INSIDE THE THUNDER
**Label:** DUNKELD RECORDS
**BY LINDA DEWAR**

Doug MacLean is one of those artists whose voice and guitar styling are so individual that you can tell it’s him after hearing the first few notes of a new song. Even so, his music evolves with each album, offering something new and fresh while still staying within the comfortable confines of that “Dougie sound.”

Inside the Thunder, his latest recording, follows that pattern with the increased involvement of MacLean’s son Jamie, who produced the album as well as providing the engineering and mastering and playing on most of the tracks. Together, father and son have created a brilliantly crafted album. Thunder has a fuller, more expansive sound than Dougie’s earlier recordings, thanks to the addition of Jamie and others on an assortment of instruments, but it still retains that distinctively earthy, folkly quality that is a hallmark of his personal style.

As much a poet as a musician, MacLean pens lyrics that are rooted in his own experiences; his rural upbringing, his life on tour, his friends and family, and even his hobbies. A collector of antique tractors, he’s even included the sound of his beloved 1947 Ferguson tractor in the song Strathmores which tells the story of a farm job he once held.

Like so many Scottish musicians, MacLean has written a song for his friend the late fiddler Johnny Cunningham. His Song for Johnny, from which the album title is taken, is the best I’ve heard so far. Running a close second for the best lyrics on Inside the Thunder is the final song, called Beside You. It’s a simple but arresting recognition of the people who are there when you need them.

Musically, these new tunes are as intriguing as any of Dougie MacLean’s melodies. Music producer Jamie added more instruments than on previous albums, including percussion and a bit of electric guitar, but he seems to have an excellent sense of what can be included without going overboard.

The package design is attractive and included the lyrics all the songs on the album. My only complaint is that I wish there were a few notes from Dougie on each song, as well. Having heard him playing these songs in a live concert, I would have liked hearing what he had to say about them and can’t help but think that the same information would enhance the experience of listening to the CD.
Edessa opens with the Serbian Rom song, Opa Cupa in an arrangement that might lead us to believe that maniacal swing orchestra playing local dance repertoire had once been popular in the western Carpathians. On Opa Cupa, Edessa are joined by vocalist Brenna MacCrimmon whose disarrangingly soulful voice slices through the instrumental ensemble in this polka-esque, full-throttle Serbian kolo. Edessa follows with the Pontic Greek Yetiere featuring fiddler player Ari imitating the heavy doublestop typical of the Pontic Kemenche (upright Black Sea fiddle). Next, a beautiful Macedonian Rom leso to in 7/8 featuring guest singer and UCLA undergrad Eva Salina Primack is followed by an industrious Turkish Rom dance medley featuring Dan and Paul and guest percussionist Tobson Roberson in a rhythmically intricate arrangement reminiscent of the recent trends in the Turkish recording industry ending with a particularly hot Zurna solo section. Edessa continues to take us on a journey with the eastern Anatolian Cilveley, featuring Brenna who has lived in Turkey on and off for years recording several CDs on the premier Turkish Kikan label. Following is the lush Albanian dance Devolche and the very well executed classical Ottoman court piece Mahur Sah Samaisi.

A particular standout is the 13-minute long Parakalamos/Halasha Mou, a medley from northern Greece. Ari and Lise open by trading skaros (un-metered improvisations) on violin and santouri transitioning into Parakalamos, a lovely slow dance from Epirus featuring George on clarinet. From Parakalamos, they are joined by Greek Macedonian virtuoso Christos Goyetas singing Halasha Mou ending with a deeply personal amane (vocal improvisation) which, in my opinion, is the single most beautiful piece of male vocal music that I have ever heard in any genre. Bereket closes with an extraordinary northern Greek mirola, an improvised lament associated with mountain shepherds, featuring George and Ari on clarinet and violin respectively, complete with ambient pastoral sheep bells and a gusty Pindus Mountain wind thrown in for good measure.

The San Francisco Bay area based Edessa are comprised of seasoned Balkan music veterans George Chittenden on tenor and Turkish G clarinets, Eva Salina Primack is followed by a particularly hot Zurna solo section. Edessa also teach at numerous music and dance festivals including the East Coast Kamele on tapan (large barrel drum) and defi (frame drum) along with Ari Langer on violin and Paul Brown on bass. Collectively the individual band members have traveled and lived throughout the Balkans, studying extensively with traditional musicians particularly in Greece and Turkey. In addition to being very sought after as a dance band, both locally and internationally, members of Edessa also teach at numerous music and dance festivals including the East European Folkfestival (www.ece.org) Balkan Music and Dance camp held annually each June in Mendocino. For more about Edessa and to purchase Bereket; visit their website at www.edessamusic.com or send a check for $17 prepaid, payable to Edessa or Lise Liepman 1108 Neilson St. Albany, CA 94706.
JULIE LEE LETS US WALK ON THE STILLHOUSE ROAD

HOUSE ON THE HILL CONCERT- MARCH 4, 2006

BY JOEL OKIDA

She has been compared to such diverse singers as Nanci Griffith, Gillian Welch, Iris DeMent, Joan Baez, and even her friend and champion, Alison Krauss. However, Julie Lee is none of them, although the quality of her songs may reveal themselves as well as any written or sung by each of those mentioned. In truth, her voice, at least in person, carries a tremulous lift that trills sweetly in the upper register and is a warm quaver in the mid-tones. This night she was still recovering from a bout of bronchitis which took away some stamina and range, but her heartfelt stage presence and a cup of hot tea allowed her to prevail through her set with a brief break for recuperation. The concert was totally unplugged, meaning no vocal mike, but what she lacked in volume, she made up for in the sincerity of her voice and the richness of her songs.

Under the glow of a single floor lamp, visiting singer-songwriter, Lee told the tales behind the songs she sang. In the intimate confines of the Mt. Washington residence that serves as the home of House on the Hill concerts, she filled the evening with stories rooted in many a past experience. Having a rich family history in addition to her own travels and travails lends a great range, but her heartfelt stage presence and a cup of hot tea allowed her to prevail through her set with a brief break for recuperation. The concert was totally unplugged, meaning no vocal mike, but what she lacked in volume, she made up for in the sincerity of her voice and the richness of her songs.

Her accompanist was local musician, John O’Kennedy, who, she revealed, participated in one rehearsal prior to the show. However, armed with a couple of guitars, a mandolin, and a magical dobro, he provided many a tasteful bridge and wove in his own solos throughout the set. O’Kennedy’s multi-instrumental prowess took the place of the many ace session players who give the recorded versions of her songs a fuller sound, but not necessarily a better one. Lee’s live reading of her songs emphasized the lyric quality which often can be lost in studio production. With O’Kennedy’s lead lines drifting in between Lee’s rhythm guitar chords, accentuating a phrase here, hauntingly following Lee’s voice on other occasions, the stories came to life. Although having released a few self-produced CDs in the past, her first studio 2004 release on Compadre Records, Stillhouse Road, has been getting many a pleasant review. Although categorized as a bluegrass recording, the songs stretch across that boundary into blues, gospel, folk ballad, and even what might be called a torch song. On this night, the majority of her selections were from this album, although she tried out a couple of songs that were tentatively scheduled for the next release. The title track harkens back to her birth roots in central Pennsylvania and refers to her great grandfather’s possible dabbling in the moonshine trade outside a farming town; a place she would later visit and hear of the stories of yore.

Another song, Made from Scratch, originally written with fond memories of her mother and grandmother cooking up aromatic dishes in the kitchen, was dedicated to the folks who provided chicken, macaroni and cheese, vegetables, and corn bread for the concert house. One of the benefits of House on the Hill shows is the spread of food and drink included, and this night the meal was served within the Southern theme of Lee’s Nashville home base.

Two topical songs that strike different notes are Sojourner Truth and James. The first song initially appears to tell a simple tale of catching a train perhaps to a faraway destination or even preparing for the final voyage in life. In fact, it describes the fleeing of the slaves via the Underground Railroad and specifically inspired by the life of the ironically named former slave, Sojourner Truth. Here, Lee, lets loose with a gospel-tinged chorus which befits the spiritual calling for freedom for the oppressed peoples. More current but no less historically significant is the musical eulogy, James, which captures the horrible 1998 murder of James Byrd, dragged behind a car along a Texas road until he died. The song merges the context into the biblical tale of Cain and Abel, and questions the seeds of hate which lead to murder. These two songs along with the declaratory, He’s My Man and Many Waters, a musical recitation of a biblical verse, reveal Lee’s strong faith and how it enables much of her music and lights her way.

On this cool night in the confines of Jeff and Paddi Thomas’ home/concert space, Julie Lee gave a warm and personal reading of her very musical journal. On her next visit, hopefully with healthy vocal cords, we’ll get to hear some more of her history and how much farther down that Stillhouse Road she’s gone.

Joel Okida is a struggling artist, struggling writer, and struggling musician. It occurs to him that life is all about the struggle. Fortunately, he did not take up acting. However he’s not half-bad as a zydeco dancer and the ability to make a mean gumbo and lovely walnut tortes has gotten him by.

Capturing the Spirit

folk photography by Judy Nahman-Stuuffer

www.geomities.com/hupadoodle

Chris Stuart

freelance writer/editor

Email: chris@stuartfreelance.com
Phone: (858) 335-3322
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Native American Indian Intertribal Powwow
Redbird’s 2006 Children Of Many Colors
June 16, 17 and 18, 2006
Moorpark College, 7075 Campus Road, Moorpark California 93021

What is a Powwow? In the simplest terms, a powwow is a Native American gathering to which the public is welcome to attend. Powwows are a relatively new development in the history of indigenous people. They are a cultural adaptation to the confinement of reservations and the migration of Indians to urban areas.

Today the powwow is an integral part of the lives of many native people. It is part ceremony and part social gathering, an Indian marketplace, and for many, much like a big family reunion. Outside the dance arena are vendors selling a vast array of items, from jewelry and clothing to books, pottery, beads, leather, drums, flutes, hand crafted works of art, and many varieties of food.

For more information contact:
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CD REVIEW

Artist: WILLSON AND MCKEE
Title: THIS THIN PLACE
Label: RIMSONG MUSIC
BY RON YOUNG

Ken Willson and Kim McKee are a Colorado-based duo of considerable musical ability and depth. While most of the material is heavily influenced by Scottish and Irish themes, their repertoire includes a wide range of styles.

Their latest CD is called This Thin Place, which refers to powerful localities in the Celtic lands where the supernatural seems to align with our sometimes superficial modern lives. Willson’s fine tenor voice and excellent guitar and bouzouki styling are a perfect compliment to McKee’s powerful and soulful singing. A national champion on both the hammered dulcimer and the mountain dulcimer, Kim McKee also plays guitar, harp, accordion and bodhran.

The album contains fourteen tracks, including several examples of McKee’s award-winning songwriting skills. Among them are the haunting Aphadice, The Silkworm’s Flight, The Beautiful Man and When Next We Meet, all songs that make you realize that there is so much more to this life than what casually meets the twenty-first century eye.

The traditional offerings include Scottish ballads such as Mormond Braes, Bogie’s Bonnie Belle, and The Wells of Wearie. There is also a first-rate version of The King’s Shilling (a song that I have always loved), which refers to the 18th century English Government’s practice of raising regiments of soldiers from among the ranks of the defeated Jacobites. In what would be deemed as a slick move today, they managed to provide a force of the best fighting men available and also to remove these men from their homes so they could not be involved in any localized uprisings.

The guest musicians are first rate, and the liner notes are extensive, providing excellent references to the history of the music. Ken Willson has done a fine job in engineering, mixing and mastering the whole package. A very listenable and satisfying album, This Thin Place is well worth getting your hands on.. For further information on Willson & McKee, look on their website at www.jigheads.com, or purchase them at CD Baby.

MAY 13th –SATURDAY – 8pm
Garden Courtyard
Conjunto Jardin
Vocals ride atop hard-charging jaranas, driving cajon-and-bass for jarocho music that is at once faithfully traditional, yet at the same time possessed of a rock-influenced drive and accessible edge. Conjunto Jardin was nominated for Best Latin/Salsa Artist in the 2003 L.A. Weekly Music Awards.

Tickets $15/$12 FolkWorks-CAFAM Members

JUNE 17th – SATURDAY, 8pm
Garden Courtyard
Dennis Roger Reed Band
The Dennis Roger Reed Band plays “California Cracker” music, roaming freely among country, folk, bluegrass, swing, rock and the blues, touching on heartfelt originals and inventive covers.

Tickets $15/$12 FolkWorks-CAFAM Members

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**FOLK HAPPENINGS AT A GLANCE**

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- **OGD**: On-going Dance - page 18
- **SE**: Special Events - page 32
FOLK 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

FOLK HAPPENINGS AT A GLANCE - Page 17 - May-June 2006

SUNDAY

1900 - 2100
Cafe Zucca (OGD)

2100 - 2300
A SONGWRITERS RETREAT (SE)

MONDAY

1900 - 2100
SOUTHERN HIGHWAY (SE)

2100 - 2300
RICHARD SOUTHERN (SE)

TUESDAY

1900 - 2100
A SONGWRITERS RETREAT (SE)

2100 - 2300
THE KENNEDYS (SE)

WEDNESDAY

1900 - 2100
A SONGWRITERS RETREAT (SE)

2100 - 2300
SOUTHERN HIGHWAY (SE)

THURSDAY

1900 - 2100
A SONGWRITERS RETREAT (SE)

2100 - 2300
THE KENNEDYS (SE)

FRIDAY

1900 - 2100
A SONGWRITERS RETREAT (SE)

2100 - 2300
THE KENNEDYS (SE)

SATURDAY

1900 - 2100
A SONGWRITERS RETREAT (SE)

2100 - 2300
THE KENNEDYS (SE)
SALTY DOGS AND RED HOT BANANAS

OLD-TIME & COUNTRY BLUES GUITAR RECORDINGS

Here it is old-timers: Classic recordings from the old-time country and blues songsters of yesteryear. From Blind Blake and Giechie Wiley to Riley Puckett and Sam McGee, here’s a gaggle of inspiring old-time recordings featuring the horribly underrated six-string guitar!

COMPILATIONS
1927-30 Ragtime Blues Guitar – Various Artists, Document
1928-31 Mississippi Girls – Various Artists, Document
Before The Blues Vol. 1-3 – Various Artists, Yazoo

The Best There Ever Was The Legendary Early Blues Performers Classic Recordings From the 1920s & 30s – Various Artists, Yazoo

Legends of Country Blues – Various Artists, JSP Records

Hitter in Hawaii – Various Artists, JSP Records

Mountain Blues: Ballads & String Bands (1927-38) – Various Artists, JSP Records

OLD-TIME MOUNTAIN GUITAR – Various Artists, County

ARTISTS
Chocolate To The Bone – Barbecue Bob, Yazoo

Mamlish Blues – Ed Bell, Document

Tough Luck – Christopher Berry, Long Beach Recordings

The Best Of Blind Blake - Blind Blake, Yazoo

Complete Recorded Works Vol. 1-4 - Blind Blake, Document

In Chronological Order Vol. 1-2 – Big Bill Broonzy, Document

Anchored In Love: Their Complete Victor Recordings 1927-1928 - Carter Family, Rounder

Banana In Your Fruit Basket: Red Hot Blues (1931-1936) - Bo Carter, Yazoo

Bo Carter (1931-1940) - Bo Carter, Yazoo

Darby & Tarlton Box Set – Darby & Tarlton, JSP Records


The Ultimate Collection – Rev. Gary Davis, Shanachie

I Ain’t Gonna Be Worried No More (1929-1941) – Sleepy John Estes, Yazoo

The Best Of John Fahey (1959-1977) – John Fahey, Takoma

Blind Boy Fuller Vol. 1 - Blind Boy Fuller, Document

Trackin’ My Blues Away - Blind Boy Fuller, Yazoo

The High Lonesome Sound - Roscoe Holcomb, Folkways

Master of the Hawaiian Guitar Vol. 1 & 2 - Sol Hoopi, Rounder Select

Complete Recordings In Chronological Order Vol. 1 & 2 - Peg Leg Howell, Document

Complete Recorded Works (1926-1929) - Frank Hutchinson, Document

1928 Sessions – Mississippi John Hurt, Yazoo

The Complete Early Recordings 1930 - Skip James, Yazoo

American Primitive – Steve James, Antone’s Records

Fast Texas – Steve James, Burnside Records

The Best of Blind Lemon Jefferson: Classic Recordings of the 1920s - Blind Lemon Jefferson, Yazoo

Praise God I’m Satisfied - Blind Willie Johnson, Yazoo

Sweeter As The Years Go By - Blind Willie Johnson, Yazoo

Complete Recordings (Box Set) - Robert Johnson, Sony

Complete Recorded Works Vol. 1 - Charlie Jordan, Document

In His Prime 1927-1928 - Frurry Lewis, Yazoo

Texas Songster - Mance Lipscomb, Arhoolie Records

The First Recordings – Fred McDowell, Rounder Select

Granddaddy of the Country Guitar Players – Sam McGee, Arhoolie

1926-1934 – Sam McGee, Document

The Classic Years 1927-1940 - Blind Willie McTell, JSP

The Best of Charlie Patton Classic Recordings From the 1920s & 30s - Charlie Patton, Yazoo

Primeval Blues, Rags, and Gospel Songs - Charlie Patton, Yazoo

The California Traditional Music Society Invites you to the 24th ANNUAL SUMMER SOLSTICE FOLK MUSIC, DANCE AND STORYTELLING FESTIVAL.

JUNE 23-25, 2006

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List of All Performers: Complete Schedules are available on our web site.

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In the Children’s area: Dan Crow, Leola & Elsie Grace, Bill Dumpybump, Bumpy Bob & Friends

Ryan &Cal McKisson

Larry Unger & Edie MacAdam Sonett

The Warner Center Marriott (71800 Oxard, Woodland Hills, CA 91367) is the official festival Hotel. Reservations: (818) 887-4600 Ask for the California Traditional Music Society’s Festival Rate of $165 plus tax per room per night (reserve by June 1, 2006)
**FOLKWORKS**

**May-June 2006**

For an ex-Angeleno accustomed to well-lighted freeways, the ten-mile trip to our Barn Dance in the winter feels like an adventure in another century. The highway winds closely alongside a river and it’s pitch black — no houses, no streetlights, no moon or stars. When I turn off the highway, it’s even darker. There’s a fork marked by handmade arrows but the only one that points in a clear direction says “Fish Hatchery,” so I go that way and soon see the cheerful lights of the Greenacres Grange Hall.

I supposed that all this batting around in the dark was what kept our attendance low, but the dance board scoffed at the notion. It was lack of advertising, they said, so, last Fall, we started putting out more flyers. We got more radio spots and asked the local newspaper to consider covering our contradance. They ignored us. Even so, we got one or two new dancers each month and some came back. On good nights we had twenty-five dancers and on bad nights we borrowed from the band.

I knew the January dance was different when I found the parking lot full at 7:10. Inside, 42 people were lined up to dance. I saw fifteen familiar faces and the rest were strangers. That’s strangers as in first-timers which means, in contradance-ese, that they haven’t learned to dance yet, a fact that was just seeping into the caller’s brain.

Karen, one of the sweetest callers I know (meaning someone this shouldn’t happen to), was wide-eyed. Fifteen people were following her instructions and 25 more were stumbling around, good-naturedly expecting it all to clear up soon.

As usual, the first timers had paired up with each other. Karen got them to line up, take hands four and cross over. The ladies’ chain and the buzz of panic I expected, but pleasant amazement — “How interesting thing happen?”

I’ve seen other callers surprised by hordes of newcomers. Some just some panic briefly, then revert to their first easy dances. Some get annoyed and rigid, and switch smoothly from complex to simple, some get annoyed and rigid, and some panic briefly, then revert to their first easy dances.

I’ve never seen one like Karen. She studied the lines, finding every variation, as many people at 10 as there had been at 7. And some of the people were young; a joy to aging dancers afraid that contra will disappear when our collective knees go. I was curious what brought them.

A teenager who brought his girlfriend and parents had seen it in the newspaper’s calendar. Youngsters came with grandparents who’d heard radio spots. Two twenty-somethings heard about it in their Aikido class. Some people had considered coming for years and some had just heard of it. Some were enticed by flyers and some by friends. Why all of a sudden they came to the January dance, we don’t know. Maybe after the holidays everyone just wanted to go somewhere without having to dress up, buy a gift, or make a potluck.

The big question was “What will happen in February?” Will the newcomers return? Will the newspaper article draw more newcomers? And shouldn’t someone warn the out-of-town caller?

So, what will happen at the next dance? Come and see! Or, go to your local dance and get to know contradancers in your community.

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.

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**THE BARN DANCE**

...that reminds me...

**by Valerie Cooley**

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Tangled Roots with Pat Baker, Sun 4 - 7 pm
Down Home with Chuck Taggart, Thurs 7 - 9 pm

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MOTHERLAND MUSIC

BY LISA FORSTEIN

Have you ever entered a place of transcendence? A physical space with a warmth so subtle yet strong that you know you are, for the time being, away from the pressures of the corporate and western fast-paced world? Welcoming and worldly spaces like this, though few and far between, exist in our communities. L.A.’s African drum store, Motherland Music is one of them.

With an open-minded and great care, Dan Rice, founder and owner of Motherland Music started this business 15 years ago. As a carpenter he took an interest in building folk instruments. Dan’s additional passion for travel took him to countries around the world where he met and formed friendships with African travelers. This experience combined with his attendance at an African dance performance introduced him to African rhythms and piqued Dan’s interest in the drum. He felt a continual need “to get outside of the box, to see another culture, something different.” It was clear to him that he must go to Africa and buy some drums.

Dan soon became a pioneer in buying and selling djembes (West African drums) since he started this business before African drums became available through the Internet. The Africans he met and worked with along the way were extremely hospitable and helpful. The warmth and openness Dan experienced in Africa directly translates to that which visitors feel at Motherland Music.

A visit to Motherland encompasses African beats softly playing in the background while shoppers and visitors pick up drums and play. In the back a worker strings a djembe or puts new skins on congas, both fascinating and intriguig folks who see the two large pieces of regularly scheduled drumming classes and drum circles with instruction provided by master drummers and music professionals specializing in African and Afro-Cuban rhythms and music from Nigeria, Senegal, Guinea and South America. Each class is finely tuned for players of different levels, and rather than reading textbooks and learning music theory on paper, one learns simply by drumming.

“This kind of place brings certain people together,” Dan says. A combination of master drummers, drum enthusiasts, children and open-minded, intrigued folks who see the two large Kpanlogo drums (as tall as some adults) outside the shop cannot help but enter.

While Motherland Music is a business, it provides the workers, shoppers and visitors with a sense of serenity. Dan states that he created the store with the “African sensibility of not being mass-produced.” Each drum and item in Motherland Music is handmade and unique, as is each individual who walks in, sits down, takes a djembe and plays something traditional or something heartfelt. The point of Motherland Music, after all, is a communal open space where people are able to be themselves through the age-old traditions of the drum.

Visit Motherland Music at: 2921 La Cienega Blvd., Culver City, CA 90232
Or on the web at: www.motherlandmusic.com

“Anticipate the good so that you may enjoy it.” (African Proverb)

Lisa Forstein, creator of the new world music band, Yeh Dede, is a singer, world percussionist and composer based in Santa Monica. She is also the Managing Editor of the Iranian Jewish Chronicle.
first heard about the Friday world music night at Club Tropical when Veseleje, was asked to perform there. As the accordionist in the band, and feeling jaded about the overall L.A. music scene, I was skeptical about the gig. But after learning that our performance was part of an ongoing world music series, I became interested in Club Tropical’s musical mission.

CryptoNoche is the name of the world music series. Started in October 2005, the concept was conceived by Jeff Gauthier, president of Cryptogramophone Records and Carlos Rodriguez, owner of the restaurant Con Sabor, which transforms into Club Tropical at night. KPFK’s Molly White serves as the booking agent for world music acts at the club and hosts the weekly show.

Recently I had the pleasure of meeting with Jeff, Carlos, and Molly over a delicious lunch of Salvadoran pupusas and una ensalada, a refreshing fruity drink. We talked about what we were doing musically and the purpose of Club Tropical.

Con Sabor opened in 1997. Jeff, who is also a concert promoter and jazz violinist, suggested the idea of live jazz music in the restaurant around 2003. Carlos, who has always appreciated music even while living in El Salvador, agreed to the idea and discovered live music helped his restaurant. Club Tropical was born and CryptoNight became the name of the weekly experimental jazz night.

Eventually other nights of live music were added, including tango on Wednesdays, flamenco on Sundays, and then the CryptoNoche series. Asked about how crucial it is to have live music in the club, Carlos said music has always been important to his life. To him supporting musicians and their art is good for the community, good for his business, and a vehicle to bring culture to more people. He described CryptoNoche as “globalization [that] came to Club Tropical.” Jeff quickly stressed that we were talking about “the good aspects” of globalization and Molly stated that by having the CryptoNoche series, more people could be exposed to great music from all over the world that they may otherwise not have a chance to experience.

Club Tropical has been attracting musicians from around the globe. While we were dining, Carlos pulled out a musician’s demo package he received from the Czech Republic. Various traditions have been representat ed at the club, but according to Molly, one of the most popular bands to perform for CryptoNoche was the Masanga Marinha Ensemble. Under the direction of Dr. Ric Alviso, professor of world music at CSU Northridge, the ensemble performs traditional and popular music from Zimbabwe and has performed several times to packed crowds at Club Tropical. I asked Ric about his experience at Club Tropical and his thoughts about the need for world music venues in L.A. He replied that having someone like Molly to specifically book world music artists has been long overdue and that in the 1980s there were clubs like the Music Machine that specialized in world music. Regarding a diverse city like L.A., Ric added “there has not been a regular world music club in L.A in a long time … there is a need for venues that will support and reflect the diversity of our world today.”

Other musicians who have performed at Club Tropical have similar sentiments. Trudy Israel, member of the Eastern European musical group Veselje, was asked to perform there. She was happy that the club was willing to accommodate the twelve vocalists and four orchestra musicians. She said, “I think we are so lucky to have a world music venue in L.A. like Club Tropical. Molly White has done a great thing for our community.”

Roberto Catalano, one of the musicians of the Italian duo Musicantica, said he believed the club was presently achieving success and that he hoped it would increase over time. Musicantica was the first band of the series and Roberto described that first evening as “rather low key, with few customers.” Fortunately, the number of audience members grew as the evening progressed. I remembered that owner Carlos told me patience and persistence would be needed to eventually yield great returns for the business, the musicians, and the customers. Molly told me she would love to have Musicantica perform again — and since the series is building momentum, the club would have a more energizing atmosphere since that first night.

Indeed the CryptoNoche concept at Club Tropical is growing. African music influenced vocalist Ashley Maher said she first heard about the club through Internet listservs. Ashley mentioned that “world music artists, like myself, have to build our fan bases. To have a world-music-friendly venue like Club Tropical in Culver City helps to keep things growing.” She also added that L.A. has but only a limited number of clubs dedicated to world music.

Likewise, Chilean singer-songwriter Patricio Zamorano believes there is a crisis regarding venues for artists such as himself. Performing his political music known as canto social several times at the club, Patricio said there was a “nice vibe” and the mixed Anglo and Latino audience was appreciative. He feels that people are searching for cultural experiences and that Club Tropical had energy to attract such people.

As a musician of world music myself, I do believe there should be more clubs that welcome various world music artists. Club Tropical is one of a handful of venues that is supportive of musicians and the live music cause. I commend Jeff, Molly, and Carlos — their efforts are greatly appreciated. It’s also great to know that a restaurant business owner like Carlos understands the stands of the music industry and the importance of patience as well as marketing to make a series like CryptoNoche a success. As a local bassist and a regular performer at the club Pablo Motta said succinctly: “they’ve been cool to us and very supportive.” Words we all like to hear!

Con Sabor/Club Tropical is located at 8841 Washington Boulevard in Culver City. Telephone 310-559-1127
Website: www.consaborclubtropical.com
For more information about CryptoNoche and CryptoNight: www.cryptonight.com.

Gigi “Gee” Rabe has an M.A. in Ethnomusicology from UCLA and is currently a lecturer in music at CSU Northridge. She is also an accordionist and steel drum player.
MANIPULATE ME!

Every so often I just get really excited about something (all right, every other day or so) - I'm an impressionable creature replete with youthful enthusiasms and a rabid addiction to Beginner Mind...but enough about me!), and the upcoming 3rd Annual Celebration of Puppetry outdoors at the McGroarty Arts Center in Sunland-Tujunga has grasped my imagination. There are some really exciting groups coming to teach and perform. It's a free-of-charge family-oriented festival with food, booths, workshops and performances from 4:00pm to 10:00pm on Saturday, May 27th. There will be puppet-making workshops on the two Saturdays preceding the festival (May 13th and 20th from 3:00 to 5:00 pm - children ages 6-12 must be accompanied by an adult).

The resident artists come from a variety of puppetry perspectives. They span the spectrum of ways and methods by which puppetry brings humanity into focus through humor, drama, artistic subtlety and in-your-face confrontation. “Gumplestiltskin” is a colorful and imaginative company headed by Christine and Michael Gump who are “committed to releasing crazy energy into the planet” through the media of wild and strange art cars (which they call “wacky vehiculars”), stilts-walking, giant puppets, and child-sized marionettes manipulated by stilts-walkers. They also seem to be affiliated with The Trash Band, a wacky recycling musical and visual extravaganza.

Buddy Big Mountain is a well-known lifelong entertainer and Native American master ventriloquist, magician, singer and marionette artist who is known for his audience participation (unusual with marionette performances) and comedy. He’ll be bringing a “cast” of exquisitely sculpted Native American marionettes.

When evening falls the festival audience will be treated to a Balinese Wayang Kulit shadow play performed by the Bali and Beyond ensemble. It will most likely be The Royal Coronation, a portion of The Mahabarata in which King Yutisetera, one of the five Pandawa brothers, becomes the King of Kings. These productions are multi-media events including the mesmerizing music of Indonesian Gamelan, lacy leather shadow characters manipulated from behind a screen, the scent of incense, and a selection of items from Bali (umbrellas, weavings and cloth) to decorate the stage. Bring along a cushion to sit on under the stars (and maybe a blanket, too).

Maria Bodmann of Bali and Beyond got her BFA and MFA at CalArts in Multidisciplinary Arts and Music. She got a Fulbright to study in Indonesia, so she studied Gamelan at the Indonesia Academy of Dance and the Arts, and the art of shadow theater in the village of Sukawati, Bali. She said shadow theatre suits her temperament perfectly as it’s a “multitasking extravaganza.” Bodmann is also teaching a free 12-session workshop on The Art and Craft of Shadow Theater from April 14th through June 13th (see below for details), which, I am informed, may occur sporadically (so it’s not too late!). The culmination event will be held on June 20th at 7:30 pm. Students will write a group story, design, carve and paint characters, work out dialogue and choreograph action sequences, rehearse as an ensemble, and then present the story at the culmination for friends, family, and whoever else can make it to the show.

The McGroarty Arts Center is lodged in a house built in 1923 from stone gathered in the Tujunga Wash. It was once the home of Congressman, journalist and California Poet Laureate John Steven McGroarty (1862-1944) and his wife, Ida. McGroarty also wrote The Mission Play Pageant, a three-hour, cast-of-hundreds extravaganza that ran for 20 years in San Gabriel to an astounding two million paid admissions.

It’s the epic story of the California Missions told from their founding through their heyday and ending with the crumbling walls of Mission San Juan Capistrano in 1817. (For a plot synopsis and further biographical information, see the John Steven McGroarty webpage, if you’re intrigued.) They called it Rancho Chupa Rosa, and it stands nestled in the Verdugo Hills under oaks and pine trees. It was declared a Historic Cultural Monument by the city of Los Angeles in the 1970s. Currently it is run as an arts center with classes in a variety of subjects (ceramics, drama, violin, collage, hip-hop among other things, for youth, and adult Tai Chi Ch’uan, oil painting and poetry writing...) It is also home to the Shouting Coyote Poetry Festival.

MC GROARTY ARTS CENTER
7570 McGroarty Terrace, Tujunga, CA 91042 • 818 352-5285
Celebrate Puppetry Festival (Free)
Saturday May 27th, 4:00-10:00 pm
Pre-festival workshops:
Saturday May 13th and Saturday May 20th, 3:00-5:00 pm
The Art and Craft of Shadow Theater workshops:
12 Tuesday evenings from April 4th through June 13th, 6:30 to 8:30 pm
For more information, contact Maria Bodmann 818-837-9485 or maria@balibeyond.com
Culmination event: June 20th, 7:30pm –
WeSpark, 13520 Ventura Blvd., Sherman Oaks
(2 blocks east of Woodward Ave.)
Further info can be found at:
www.buddybigmountain.com • www.balibeyond.com •
www.trashband.net
(and click on the pink banana peel which, when highlighted, is labeled “Puppet Food”)

Brooke Alberts is a songwriter and has a Masters degree in Medieval Studies.

ARMEANIAN ART AT CAFAM

Hagop Hayayan's artworks can be found in some of the most prominent public and private art collections in Armenia, Russia, Europe and the United States. His artistic contributions have brought him various official recognitions including the honorary title of People’s Artist of Armenia and the State Prize of Armenia.

This US premier museum exhibition opens on Sunday, April 30th at the Craft and Folk Art Museum and runs through July 2, 2006. Shahan Roudanian, retired director of the National Gallery of Armenia and author of several books about Armenian art will be in Los Angeles to introduce this historical exhibition.
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 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 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

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GRACENOTES by LINDA DEWAR

GRACENOTES page 26

U2’s The Edge and MusiCares have announced the unveiling of a new hurricane relief effort called Music Rising. The campaign’s goal is to put devastated the Gulf Coast region. Gibson and Guitar Center spearheaded the instruments and accessories to musicians affected by the hurricanes that destroyed the Gulf Coast region. Gibson and Guitar Center spearheaded the effort initially by collaborating on the design, manufacturing and sale of an exclusive Gibson guitar with all proceeds going directly to the Music Rising program. The guitar will be available through Guitar Center and a very limited quantity will be produced. All proceeds will benefit Music Rising.

You can also contribute in a smaller way by purchasing a Music Rising t-shirt for $30 either at Amazon.com, and also at most large bookstores. You have the option to increase the amount of your purchase by whatever amount you’d like, and they’ll automatically donate the difference. Amoeba also holds a weekly auction of music-related items including concert tickets, with the proceeds going to the relief effort.

“Music was my refuge. I could crawl into the space between the notes and curl my back to loneliness.” Maya Angelou

* * * * * * *

San Diego Folk Heritage, our neighbors to the south, have announced that they will not be holding their annual San Simeon Folk Festival this year. As is the case with so many events lately, their attendance has not kept pace with the cost of producing the festival. The group will be looking at various options for the future of the event, and as of the time I’m writing this I’ve been told that it’s not gone for good, just having a rest and a re-think.

Meanwhile, check out their web site at www.sdfolkheritage.org, or take note of their listings in the calendar section of this issue of FolkWorks. They have a topnotch series of concerts that are well worth the drive.

* * * * * * *

Speaking of hurricane relief, did you know that you didn’t think about. You can find out where to mail to: mail@FolkWorks.org or call 818-785-3539. Current and back issues and available on the web at AcrobaPDF for mate. e-mail them to your friends & family.

Musicians have released an independently produced album known how hard it can be to get the word out. And it’s particularly difficult for those whose music falls into categories like folk or other “non-mainstream” genres.

If you’re one of those musicians, and you haven’t discovered it already, get a copy of The Indie Bible, The All-In-One Resource for Recording Artists. In it, you’ll find listings of radio stations that will play your music, publications that will review it, and other similar resources. There’s also a large section with articles on subjects like marketing and promotion, getting gigs, getting reviewed, etc., written by professionals. Each section is broken out by genre, and it’s amazing what you’ll find that you didn’t think about. You can find The Indie Bible online at Amazon.com, and also at many large bookstores.

“If you practice, tune, make a sound check, & sit down to play it’s folk music otherwise it’ll be格拉斯的。”Anonymous

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of African drums, not to mention congás (which have West African roots), but his favorite is the dundun. "When a teacher is playing, the student is the drum. (pronounced doon-doon) with the accent on the second syllable). With its expressive tonal range, the instrument can simulate the tonal Yoruba language. To vary the tone and make the drum "speak," the player adjusts the tension on the ropes that hold the two goat-skin drum heads on each end of the wooden body of the drum. During a Drum Festival held at the Japan America Theatre in 2004, I saw Awe make the drum "speak" simple sentences in Yoruba, which he then translated into English.

Early in the Sunday class, he has each student play his part alone. "Very good!" he nods at Michael, a middle-aged white man who has played other types of African drum ensembles with Francis, and who is aware of his awakening rhythm and general musicianship. Then Awe trains his laser-beam gaze on Kareem, a quiet young man with short dreadlocks. You can see the intense concentration in Kareem's face as his chin moves forward and back with the rhythm he is beating out. After watching him for a couple of minutes, Awe stops him and demonstrates hitting the flat part of the stick at the center of the drum. "If you don't hit this way, you are going to have pain. Your wrist must be like this (he demonstrates a flexible wrist) - no bones, no ligaments, nothing."

After giving each student feedback, Francis tells the group in powerful, deliberate tones, "A good student doesn't just mimic his teacher. A good student surprises his teacher." His voice jumps an octave. "Is that clear?"

In his twenty some years as an educator and performer in Southern California, Francis Awe has taught students from many ethnic and racial backgrounds in venues ranging from Pasadena City College to inner-city elemen taries to Music Center, where he gives seminars for public school teachers through its Education Division. He does much of his teaching in public school programs with his wife Onowale, who specializes in Nigerian dance traditions.

On Wednesday nights, Francis and several of his drum students play for the dancers during Onowale's dance class at Lula Washington Dance Theater. Onowale leads her students through the vigorous dance patterns in dialogue with her husband's lead drumming. It is an important teaching opportunity for Francis's students. "When we are learning, we only play drum even though I tell them that singing, dancing, and drumming go together," he says. "They know their part, but when I bring in the dancers, they don't know how to play it (anymore). And I tell them to look at the steps of the dancer. The dancer is playing what we are playing, using his body as an instrument. So their step is in the music we are playing. If they (the drumming students) get lost, they (can) rectify themselves by looking at the steps of the dancers."

To convey the spirit in which the dundun should be played, he schools his students in the cultural context of music in a Yoruba village. Musical pieces are tied to specific functions such as work duties, festivals, funerals, and religious rituals in which details of performance have critical meaning. "When you play music that is ritual, you have to be careful," Francis tells the Sunday class. "If the drummer makes a mistake, the song goes off, then the dancers go... and then will not be satisfied that the god does not accept the sacrifice."

On his approach to teaching African drumming to Westerners, he says, "One of the toughest challenges is the rhythm. For example, our downbeat is their upbeat. So you have to almost erase that in their mind, lock it out and have them just see themselves as a drummer, not a beginner."

In some ways Awe finds it easier to teach Westerners who have no musical background than to teach trained musicians. "When you are a master pianist, a master guitarist, a master drum set player, you see yourself as a boss. (But) when you come as a student, you can empathize and you can learn anything. Some of my students are good pianists and those are the very difficult ones to teach. I tell them, 'The only thing I want you to do is to make sure you learn the part, learn it right and play it at the right time.'"

"Music is an attitude of cooperation and support necessary in an African musical ensemble. "It does not matter how good the lead drummer is," declares Francis. "[The success] depends on the SUPPORTERS. It is necessary to carry on the musical tradition."

Francis Awe himself did not initially have his father's support to become a musician. Born a Yoruba prince, Francis was from a privileged family that considered the career of a drummer beneath their station. But even as a baby, Francis showed such an affinity for the sound of the drum, that his grand mother concluded this was his destiny. His father hoped he would forget the drum and pursue an academic career. This was the course Francis was expected to follow as a Yoruba prince. "To carry on the musical tradition, it is necessary to carry on the musical tradition."

"It is just past four o'clock and the Sunday dundun class at Holy Name of Jesus School is drawing to a close. Francis Awe wraps it up with a lively adoration. "Whatever we do here must be carried on... beyond the drum. All right? And like two snappy beats on the drum, he shouts, "That's it!"

Audrey Coleman is a writer, audio producer, educator, and passionate explorer of world music and culture.

GRACENOTES continued from page 25

Internet Radio: There are so many great internet radio sites where you can listen to music that you'd rarely find on AM, FM, or even Satellite radio. I'm going to try and include something about one or two of them in each column for a few issues, just to give you a taste of what's out there. The first of these is Mountainfolk.com, which bills itself as "the show for people who enjoy bluegrass, folk, old-time, acoustic, outdoor and mountain music." Located at www.mountainfolk.com, they play a nice mix of those genres, with a bit of a preference for bluegrass and old-time.

One of my favorites is Cape Breton Live Radio, which broadcasts from Nova Scotia. Here you'll find a selection of the best music the Cape Breton area has to offer, along with archived shows, articles, and news. Find them on the web at www.capebretonlive.com.
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California Cracker Music
A TASTY BLEND OF AMERICAN ROOTS

The Dennis Roger Reed Band plays “California Cracker music,” which is an appealing conglomeration of almost all varieties of American roots music rolled into a tasty blend, then marinated in Southern California culture for a few years, and finally baked in a pre-heated oven at about 300 degrees. Touching on elements of bluegrass, folk, country, pop, rock, swing and blues, the Dennis Reed Band features: Jennie Cummyn, guitar and vocals; Dan Fuller, percussion; Kevin Gore, banjo and vocals; Greg Lewis, bass and vocals; Dennis Reed, guitar and vocals; and Lance Wulf, harmonica. Together they meld high powered bluegrass with funky blues, toss in a dollop of sweet folk harmony, then fold in some western swing, a pinch of folk-rock and a ballad or two for spice.

Reed’s original songs play a big part in the overall taste. Reed’s compositions have been published in the Nashville market, and his work has been “covered” by several national recording artists. Chris Powers of WORT-FM from Madison Wisconsin says: “Reed’s songwriting has an immediate appeal, inventive and catchy, its message clear and plain-spoken. It’s California with Nebraska sensitivity.” Check out Reed’s two CDs, Little King of Dreams and Cowboy Blues. Both are filled with nutritional goodness. Cowboy Blues was released last year and has garnered radio play throughout the world, particularly in Australia and Canada. Cowboy Blues features many stellar Southern California musicians, and special guests include Grammy winning swing and blues guitarist Mike Dowling and folk rock legend Chris Darrow.

Reed’s acerbic style of stage patter coupled with the whole Dennis Roger Reed Band’s affinity for roots music make for good music made by musicians having fun. Whether stepping up a sprightly bluegrass instrumental, a loping western swing tune or a heaping portion of twelve bar blues, The Dennis Roger Reed Band delivers a satisfying good time, and won’t leave you filled with empty calories.
GENE HUBERT
1954-2006

BY SUSAN MICHAELS

Gene Hubert, dance writer and caller extraordinaire died March 6, 2006 in Durham, North Carolina after a brief illness. He was 51.

After hearing the sad and sudden news of Gene Hubert’s passing, I realized that in the last 20 years hardly a week has gone by that I haven’t thought about Gene, learned something from him, called one of his dances (usually more), or been in some way moved by his creative spirit. As the author of 3 volumes of contra dances he called Dizzy Dances, Gene Hubert enriched the dance world with what I will always think of as the Hubert Touch…exquisite dances, incredibly smooth, with beautiful and inventive transitions. It’s no wonder, he was known within the contra dance tribe as the King of Flow. For me, and I dare say many, many callers and dancers around the world, “levitating” through Gene’s dances is and always will be the essence of contra dance.

Gene Hubert wrote hundreds of contra, squares, and circle dances…many of which are now classics: Halilburst, The Reunion, Zombies of Sugar Hill, The Diagonal Dilemma (aka the Velvet Catapillar), Fun in the Doorway (a contra dance to a slip jig, no less!), Rotary Circulator, Song in the Night, Permeation, Renewal, Swing Around. These are dances I have called over and over, the ones I go to when I need a sure-fire winner to get dancers into their groove – all written by Gene Hubert.

Yes, Gene was and will continue to be a very important friend to me. I carry him around with me (or at least his words). He was an important part of my life. And yet, Gene Hubert and I never met.

So it was with a mixture of sadness and delight that I read Gene’s obituary in his hometown newspaper and found out that my friend was so much more than just an amazing choreographer and caller. Gene was a self taught computer programmer. He had a Master’s degree in Chemical Engineering. He worked at Duke Medical Center. He taught himself to play a dulcimer that he built from a kit won in a public radio raffle, and he also taught banjo, guitar, mandolin, and of course ukulele.

He was married to Jenny Gray Hubert whom he met swing dancing. She was blessed with a gentle spirit, a pure tenor voice and a deep love of music. He will be missed very much. I’m sad to think that the music that he loved last Sunday and she was constantly surrounded by her church family as well as members of her earthly family, who were singing and praying with her till the end.

Many of us knew Nancy from contradancing and as fellow musicians and dancers. She was one of the founding members of the well-known contradance band, Ruby’s Dream, as well as a band with Michael Mendelson, named Key Ingredients.

But there was a side to her that many of us did not know. She grew up in New York and in her 49 years worked in Florence, Alexandria, China, Mongolia, and Japan before coming to Pasadena. Her passion for the languages of her journeys led her to study Arabic, Japanese, Hebrew, Dutch, Chinese, and the universal language of music.

She taught disabled students to speak in Pasadena and Covina Valley. Nancy was a religious person and often smiled in prayer and song while mentoring others to express their faith in song, dance, and language. This same year, she built an Urban Village with her church community as a support network.

Her final hours were at home. They were very peaceful and filled with songs, scripture, family, friends, and shared memories.

NANCY MACMILLAN
1957 – 2006

On April 13, 2006, at 5:30 a.m., Nancy MacMillan lost her battle with ovarian cancer. Her band mates from Ruby’s Dream played her some of the music that she loved last Sunday and she was constantly surrounded by her church family as well as members of her earthly family, who were singing and praying with her till the end.

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JOHN ZEHNDER
1939-2006

John Zehnder passed away on March 5th. He was a true institution at McCabe’s, the director of the music school and the founder and fearless leader of the “McCabe’s Salvation Army Blast Band” (AKA “The Prisoners of Zehnder”). He also taught banjo, guitar, mandolin, and of course ukulele.

He repaired banjos, ukes, mandolins, guitars, mando-basses, banjo-ukes, tremelos, ukelins and other antiquarian instruments.

In addition to his work at McCabe’s, he was a Presbyterian minister and a licensed marriage and family counselor.

He also was a judge for several decades at the Topanga Banjo & Fiddle Contest.

And from the Jim Beloff’s Flea Market Music website [www.fleamarketmusic.co] re. John’s passing

The Los Angeles uke community mourns the passing of John Zehnder—a great friend of the ukulele. John was the resident uke guru of McCabe Guitar Shop in Santa Monica. He taught ukulele, repaired ukes (and all fretted instruments) and co-taught the McCabes uke workshops with me and Travis Harrelson. He also was a UKEtopia regular. At the UKEtopia show we did last September, John (with sons Tim and Tom) brought down the house with beautiful tight-harmony arrangements of classic Sons Of The Pioneers songs. He was blessed with a gentle spirit, a pure tenor voice and a deep love of music. He will be missed.
B

ack wards, charity wards, 9th wards—these are the places folk singers go to die—because they can't afford health care. Like millions of other working poor in America, I don't have health insurance—but then neither did Woody. Woody—the most celebrated folk singer—who died on December 6, 1949. His indelible music is available on Library of Congress recordings, his Stella 12-string guitar is displayed in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland, and when he died his picture was on the front page of the New York Times, above the fold. But when his once powerful physique that inspired his nickname became frail and wracked by this fatal illness, he was his own—a charity case on the back ward.

Joe Stella's foot infection was so bad that my sister was better off with no care than with the minimum of medical intervention.

For one thing, until I was actually confronted with the daunting challenge of seeking adequate health care for my dependent sister, who like Woody had no health insurance and could not afford to join an HMO, I have since learned some hard-won truths about our nation's health care system, and have decided to share them with your readers.

Hard-won truth number one is that you have to ask for help, help does not ask for you. When I took my sister for her emergency room visit, I sensed that my sister's foot infection last October an ER doctor noticed she had an abnormal fever to her abdomen and suggested she might have a tumor. They also told me a "Constitutional work-up" would be prohibitively expensive, but they were going to at least do a cat scan to determine if there were any cancer. I told them she didn't have any money or insurance and they said nonetheless they had to at least do an x-ray to see if she had a tumor.

It turned out she did have a tumor, but that any further medical procedures there would not be covered under "emergency room care," which they are required by law to provide, so they recommended I take my sister to a county hospital, where she could be treated regardless of her ability to pay.

Hard-won truth number two was the realization that I had been deeply ingrained prejudice against the idea of taking my sister to a "county hospital." I had seen Paddy Chayevsky's early masterpiece The Hospital, with George C. Scott, and read too many scary stories in the L.A. Times about King Mohammed Kildare then explained to me how a level of care for our follow-up appointment—and they refused to release her back into my care, with a discharge plan for follow-up treatment as an outpatient. This would not be good for the Jews.

Or so I thought. For it was also the bad news. Because it was (apparently) non-malignant they could not describe her condition as an emergency situation, which would have mandated that they get her into surgery and remove it. It was rather an "urgent" situation, which meant that they had to release her back to my care, with a discharge plan for follow-up treatment as an outpatient. This could not be good for the Jews.

For my sister I had to beg to get an x-ray. That's when faced有了在的，out of the blue, this long journey towards the operating room really began. My sister's foot wasn't getting any better, so I took her back to the ER, and casually happened to mention to the attending physician that in addition to seeing my sister's foot infection her stomach seemed a little distended.

Somehow I looked up and there was, not the niggling paper-pushing corner-cutting by-the-book MD of the previous month, but Dr. Kildare as I remembered him, just as handsome as Richard Chamberlain. He set the wheels in motion to have my sister admitted to the hospital overnight for further tests. And guess who? To my amazement, the same UCLA doctors who had treated my sister at the same hospital. Like Dickens A Tale of Two Cities, for senior citizens like my mother with social security and a viable pension plan, it was the best of systems, whereas for uninsured middle-aged adults like my sister, it was the worst.

When my mother was first hospitalized for a lung condition four years ago they couldn't prevent an "urgent" situation, which would have mandated that they get her into surgery and remove it. It was rather an "urgent" situation, which meant that they had to release her back to my care, with a discharge plan for follow-up treatment as an outpatient. This could not be good for the Jews.

Or so I thought. My worst fears seemed to be born out when we heard the diagnosis of Meig's Syndrome, and their biopsy came back negative for cancer. Wow! That was good news.

But for my sister I had to beg to get an x-ray. That's when faced with the scenes, but Dr. Mohammed Kildare was breaking down my walls of prejudice toward Muslims, the virtually all-female Ob-Gyn team was actually hard at work diagnosing my sister. Finally one of them called me and gave me the diagnosis—that my sister had a large pelvic tumor, or possibly a rare form of that called Meig's Syndrome, and their biopsy came back negative for cancer. Wow! That was good news.

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Or so I thought. My worst fears seemed to be born out when we heard the diagnosis of Meig's Syndrome, and their biopsy came back negative for cancer. Wow! That was good news.

Hard-won truth number five—don't believe everything you are told. It turned out that in fact they only accept Medi-Cal for family planning (the natural preoccupation of a student Ob-Gyn clinic), but not for surgery.

We were back to square one—it was the county hospital or Tijuana. I bit the bullet, gritted my teeth, chose the county hospital as far away as possible from King-Drew, sang Phil Ochs' Love Me I'm a Liberal, and drove my sister fifty miles north to the Olive View-UCLA Medical Center in Sylmar. And guess what? To my amazement, the same UCLA doctors who had treated my sister at my alma mater were on staff at Olive View, including a first-rate surgeon. They cleared my sister financially, scheduled her for surgery, and last week removed a grapefruit-size tumor attached to her right ovary.

They would have treated Ledbetter too.

Ross Altman has a Ph.D. in English. Before becoming a full-time folk singer he taught college English and English as a second language. He now sings a bluegrass set for libraries, unions, schools, political groups and folk festivals. You can reach Ross at Greysoosemusic@aol.com.
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*A night of vibrant music and dance: The Tamburitans of Duquesne University are coming!*

**When:** Saturday, May 26, 2006

**Time:** 152 W. La Palma Ave, Anaheim, CA 92801

**Tickets:** 7:00PM

**Summary:**

Get more info: 714-852-7479, or 1-800-636-6566

**Notes:**

*Music and dance of the Balkan and Eastern Europe."

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FRIDAY MAY 5

9:30am * PARKFIELD BLUEGRASS FESTIVAL
7:00pm SUNLAND STRING BAND
8:00pm CONTRADANCE with JACQUELINE SCHWAB
7:30pm & 9:30pm THE ALLEY CATS

FRIDAY MAY 12

11:30am MARY LEE FORD [www.marylieford.com]
3:00pm TOSHA BLACKBURN [www.toshablackburn.com]
5:00pm UNEARTHED [www.unearthedband.com]

SATURDAY MAY 13

7:00pm THE BALKAN MUSIC ENSEMBLE
9:00pm KAEDMON [www.kaedmon.com]

SATURDAY MAY 20

11:00am THE OHMIES [www.theohmies.com]
8:00pm CIUNAS [www.ciunas.net]

SUNDAY MAY 21

11:30am ANGELA RUSSELL [www.angelarussell.com]
4:00pm ANGELA RUSSELL [www.angelarussell.com]
9:00pm ANGELA RUSSELL [www.angelarussell.com]