



New Mexico Folk Music & Dance Society

FolkMADS Calendar and Notes



November-December 2008 P.O. Box 40421, Albuquerque, New Mexico 87196-0421 Volume 11, Issue 6

The FolkMADS Calendar and Notes are published bimonthly by the New Mexico Folk Music and Dance Society, a nonprofit organization.

FolkMADS sponsors Albuquerque, Santa Fe, and Taos contra dances, concerts, camps, and other special events. "Contra" dances include contras, squares, mixers, and couple dances. Unless noted on the calendar, admission is \$7 for members, \$8 for nonmembers. Students with ID receive half price admission and children up to 12 years of age are free. You need not come with a partner. Free instruction for beginners half an hour before the dance starts. Dances are smoke-free and alcohol-free. Children and teens are encouraged to participate if supervised by an adult.

Albuquerque Dances 1st and 3rd Saturday, contra dances, 7:30-10.30 p.m., 2nd Sunday English & Contra Dance, 7:00-9:30 p.m. Heights Community Center, 823 Buena Vista SE (south of Lead/Coal).

Santa Fe Dances 2nd and 4th Saturday contra dances and some 5th Saturday English Country dances, 7:30-10.30 p.m., Odd Fellows Hall, 1125 Cerrillos Road (south of Cordova Dr. on the west side of Cerrillos).

Taos Dances 3rd Saturdays, 7:30-10:00 p.m., San Geronimo Lodge, 1101 Witt Road, in Taos. call for details, 776-1580.

Albuquerque Megaband practice is held the Tuesday before the 3rd Saturday dance. Bruce Thomson, 268-6003. All musicians welcome. Check www.folkmads.org for location.

Santa Fe Jam Sessions: Santa Fe Community Band practice at the Odd Fellows Hall on (1st and 3rd) Wednesdays at 7:00 p.m. (contact Gary Papenhagen, 242-1104, gpap@cybermesa.com).

Handy Information

Membership

Volunteer: 243-2225 or
Rob Campbell robanded@yahoo.com

Newsletter:

Jane Phillips 898-2565;
web version heyjane@yahoo.com

Board members: folkmadsboard@yahoogroups.com



History Lesson

Part II of II

[Taken from the first issue of FOLKwords, a FolkMADS publication in late 1993 by Dean Brodkey.]

As I remember it... The Folk Music and Dance Society really came from a group called "The Southwest Pickers." My first exposure to them was either the summer of 1978 or '79 at the Banjo and Fiddle Contest up in Santa Fe. I joined Southwest Pickers because they



were dedicated to acoustic music, mostly bluegrass, (in fact exclusively bluegrass), which I was sort into at the time. The first time I ever played on stage was there. Gary Papenhagen and I played and he won first prize in the fiddle contest: Old Time Fiddle. I backed him up.

(Was that the start of FolkMADS?)

I think the organization began about the summer of 1982, at a Hawks and Eagles concert. Hawks and Eagles were good friends of Ken (Keppeler) and Jeanie (McLerie). It was at David Strip's house. We were sitting around waiting for the concert to start. Me, Ken Keppeler, Peter White and David Strip talked about starting our own folk music society – something that was more geared toward traditional music and other acoustic music besides bluegrass. And I'm not sure that anything was done for another year. I think the Folk Music Society started about 1983, mostly on the strength of David Strip.

(What did he play?)

He didn't play anything. He had moved from Ithaca, New York, where they had a very strong tradition music, old-time music and specifically contra dancing. As I remember, he didn't play any music, but he was very interested in bringing concert groups to New Mexico, to Albuquerque.

(Was Peter White playing at that time?)

Peter was mostly building fiddles and not playing. I don't think Peter played until five or six years ago. Ken and Jeanie were going strong. They've been around for quite a while. In fact, the first place I met them was that same year at the Banjo and Fiddle Contest. They were strolling around selling records and tapes...As I remember, the first Folk Music Society was at an elementary school at Broadway or Edith and Central – Longfellow School.

(Did they call themselves FolkMADS at that time?)

No, it was the New Mexico Folk Music Society – no Dance. They had monthly meetings... There was pretty good attendance at that meetings. It seemed as if there were seven or eight officers there every time. But there was not dance association then. The dances were separate. They were being put on by Mimi Stewart and Pam McKeever. They had nothing to do with the Folk Music Society.

The sole purpose of the Folk Music Society at that time was to promote concerts. We had Rosalie Sorrels and Utah Phillips. Occasionally we'd do a local person like Wayne Shrubbsail. He would do a lecture and concert series on banjo. I remember Mike Seeger came and did a dance concert. Wild Asparagus was one of the groups that came at that time. The dances that there were, were in combination with the concerts.

(Would you have a concert every month?)

I would say three or four a year was more like it. It was the focus, but the problem was still getting people to work on the concerts. It takes a lot of work to put on a concert.

Then, about 1985, David Strip moved back to Ithaca. At that time, we had to make a decision whether the Folk Music Society would continue or not because David had done almost all the work. We had a meeting at his house. I remember us sitting around this round table. I think Ken and Jeanie were there. Peter White was there and four or five of the Board of Directors at that time. David was saying "I'm leaving and I don't know if this is going to continue. What can you do?"

(Did you adopt the dances then?)

At the same time, Pam McKeever had left for New York and we decided to make the dances sponsored by the Folk Music Society. We wanted to have some organization responsible for these dances. Mimi wanted the advantage of not doing the dances by herself. So, at the same time that Ken and Jeanie became co-presidents of the Folk Music Society, we adopted the dances. Richard Wilson became the main caller and the megaband became the main band.

(What happened to the old band?)

The old band was content not to play. Actually, there was a tiff between Pam and Mimi, and Mimi would use the old band and Pam would use me and Chris Romaine and any guitar player they could find to sit in with us. Chris Romaine was a fantastic fiddler back East. He probably taught me most of the tunes that I know today. Sometimes, Al and Al's wife of the McLain family (of Bluegrass Overdrive) would play. So we actually had

quite a good band. There were dances in those times when the band was very hot and there were maybe ten dancers out there! At times it came down to almost zero. Then the Megaband started. We would actually have set practices once a week. If you wanted to be in the Megaband you had to come to the practices. That's about the time Steve O'Neill and Jim Mullany moved to town. Patsy and Chilton (Gregory) were pretty active in the Megaband. Steve Huestis got interested in it and Linda (Askew) and I played.

We still did concerts. The McKennas came. Dewey Balfa came. Dewey Balfa was probably the most successful concert that FolkMADS has ever sponsored. He's on the great, old Cajun fiddlers. Dewey [played with] his daughter and Robert Jardell [was] the accordion player. It was a wonderful concert. FolkMADS made lots of money. It was in the old stone church on Second and Lead.

At first, the Megaband was terrible. We had a hard time picking tunes that everyone knew and a hard time coordination tunes with the dances. People would get up and leaving in the middle of something. It was unorganized. I guess I was more or less in charge of the music, and I threatened to quit many times.

(Did you have other groups play for the dances?)

"Mr. Spray and the Tune Junkies" was a really good dance band, but it was a closed band that played square dances and contra dances, and it wasn't open to anyone. It was a step above the Megaband. They were me and Linda, Tom Christensen, and Jim (Mullany) and Steve (O'Neill). Two fiddlers, banjo, mandolin, and guitar; it was a good band. "Mr. Spray" was a famous graffiti artist in Chicago in the Thirties. So in 1985 or '86, Ken and Jeanie, the new concerts, the megaband and Richard Wilson, all happened at once. That was really the start of the strength of the Folk Music Society. Richard and Mimi were the only callers at that time and Doc (Litchman). In addition to Mr. Spray and the Tune Junkies, Bayou Seco would play with us.

(How long has Doc been in this?)

He's been in this since the Sixties. He's a pretty important part of this all, and he kind of gets looked over because he's so different. I mean, he's part of this, but he's not.

(Linda) His interest is in dance, period, and in the whole Lloyd Shaw aspect, and their Leadership camps. So he's always been on the periphery of our dances because he

taught Pam. But he was never a FolkMADS officer or involved in the organization. He is a member, but he has always invested his energy in the Western squares and the direction that Lloyd Shaw was into. Mimi learned most of her stuff from him. She knew from Boston what the dancing was like.

(How did all the bands start?)

Mr. Spring and the Tune Junkies broke up because of different musical interests. That group broke up into several smaller groups, and now many groups. It was a closed band, but when we decided to dissolve that band we started a lot of others. Goatheads is really the Tune Junkies without Steve. Earwig is a band whose mission is more or less to play Northeastern contra dance music, jigs and reels. Virginia Creepers is of course a beginner's band on the way to becoming a good old-time string band, but they don't play any Northeast music at all, or any waltzes or any jigs. Specific interest bands are now playing for the dances.

(Linda) I want to give Scott credit for something I think also changed the dances a lot. When they became the Megaband, there was a long-term goal that people in this community were not going to change until they started playing music. Unless the people who are interested have a place to pursue music, that is the only way we are going to grow musically. So that was like a long-term vision. (There were problems.) We put up with the Megaband for while, but it was really difficult. There were people who didn't want to come – saying "it's too hard, or I don't want to play like that; if I play that one more time I'm going to choke," you know all that stuff. Scott really fought for continuation... to get people who did play and who wanted to come, so that everybody could play. The outgrowth of that have been all these different dance bands.

(Scott) I knew that we had to improve the quality of the music to keep the dancers.

(Linda) And now the dances have grown because there was a period in which there were only twelve dances there, and that was it. The dances were really big, and then they really went down. And I think that major change of broadening and widening within the community ultimately did bring more dancers as well as musicians in.

(Scott) Now we need to see all those musicians dance! That's really the next mission: to get the musicians move involved in the dancing, so we can play in the style of appropriateness that goes with the dance!

Tune of the Month: Fiddle Making

Bruce Thomson (LibTNov1@aol.com)

One of my aunts recently gave me an interesting little book, "The Violin Maker" by John Marchese. It's more or less about the lore of the violin told in the context of following a contemporary violin maker, Sam Zygmuntowicz, as he works to build a new violin to replace the Stradivari violin owned by one of the members of the Emerson string quartet. The underlying question throughout the tale is whether the old violins of the masters of the 17th and 18th centuries are better than those produced by modern craftsman. And if they are, what were the old guys' secrets that made them better? Marchese is a musician but not a violinist, so the book is a little light on the details of the instrument, its fabrication and intricacies, but it's a good book and I recommend it.

Everything I know of fiddle making (which is darned little) I learned from a 30 year friendship and affiliation with Peter White. Peter is an English and American Studies prof at UNM, and founding member of the Virginia Creepers. Shortly after he moved to NM he got interested in violin making and began studying under Sid Flemming, then John Honeycutt, a retired Air Force General. In 1980 Peter won a Fulbright fellowship to teach in Poland so he took his wife and 3 little boys behind the Iron Curtain to Eastern Europe for a year.

1980 was a very tumultuous year in Poland with formation of non-communist trade unions that ultimately resulted in the Gdansk shipyard strikes lead by Lech Walesa. This was one of the first prominent anti-government uprisings that is often credited with leading to the collapse of communism in that part of the world ten years later. During this time many of the universities were closed due to student strikes, so Peter had few teaching responsibilities. Instead he spent his time studying violin making with two Polish masters, so that by the time he came back to the U.S. he was making darn good fiddles.

When people evaluate good violins, they inevitably compare them to instruments made by the Italian masters of the 17th and 18th centuries, Amati, Guarneri and of course Stradivari. The corollary questions include: are those violins better than new instruments, do violins get better with time, and most importantly, did the old guys have some secrets that have never been revealed that made their violins better?

Regarding the last question, Peter says that every serious violin maker agrees that the old guys didn't have any special secrets; their instruments are of such high quality because they had good materials and superb craftsmanship. Much has been written about the varnish. Stradivari used oil-based varnish instead of alcohol varnish. Peter believes that an oil varnish is preferable because it is not as brittle and wears better. The trick, he says, is to get a colorful clear oil varnish and still have it be sufficiently thin that it doesn't deaden the vibrations of

the top and back. Marchese notes that the old strads have been handled so much and polished so many times that they have almost no remaining varnish, which substantiates the theory that the sound is not due to some magic formulation. According to Peter, the current focus of most makers these days is on matching the craftsmanship of the old masters rather than trying to discover lost secrets.

One of the most difficult questions to resolve is whether the sound of instruments improves with age. Peter is certain that the sound improves over the first 3 to 5 years due to drying of the wood, relief of internal stresses and curing of the varnish. Whether this continues over subsequent decades is hard to establish. He feels that the enormous purchase prices for the old guys' violins is due in large part to the age and historic value of the instruments, not necessarily their sound quality. Marchese cites blind sound tests in which violin virtuosos will play a passage on an old instrument, then on a new instrument. Even professional critics and musicians cannot reliably tell the difference.

This fall Peter returned from a sabbatical leave and has created a new program at UNM, the New Mexico Musical Heritage Project, in which students are studying the music and its role in the cultural evolution of New Mexico and the southwest. One of the core components of the program is instrument making and all students will build a violin before completing the course. Peter hopes that this program will evolve into a formal violin making program. If so it will be one of only three or four in the country.

Peter builds three or four fiddles a year and they are absolutely gorgeous. Albuquerque's got a semi-homeless character named Fiddle Bill who hangs around the university playing fiddle for spare change. Fiddle Bill has built a couple of fiddles himself and, as you might expect, they are quite rustic. One day, at Bill's insistence I tried his newest fiddle, a dark purple instrument that he had stained with prickly pear cactus juice. Holy Guacamole, it sounded terrific. I just had to gloat, so I called Peter and said "Peter eat your heart out," which subsequently became the name of one of the best fiddle tunes I ever wrote. I apologize for this month's bit of self indulgence in publishing one of my own tunes, but this tune is now part of my relationship with fiddle making and Peter lore.



ABC Notation

X:4

T:Peter Eat Your Heart Out

M:c

L:1/8

C:Bruce Thomson

N:Published with permission of Bruce Thomson

K:Am

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(3EFG|:"Am"A2A2c3B|ABAG EDEG|A2A2cAc|
"Em"e6eg|agea gedc|"G"efed cBAB|"Em"cbAG EDEG|"Am"A3AA4:|
"Am"a2z2"G"g2z2|"Am"a2z2"G"g2z2|"Am"a2g2edc2|"Em"e3ee2eg|"Am"agea gedc|
"G"efed cBAB|"Em"cbAG EDEG|"Am"A3AA4:|
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Peter Eat Your Heart Out*Bruce Thomson*

**New Mexico Folk Music and Dance Society
(FolkMADS)**

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Adult 1	<input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>		
Adult 2	<input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>		
Children's Names	<input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>		
Address	<input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>		
City	<input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>	ST	<input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>
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