

MadFolk News

Summer Sing-Alongs at Blue Mounds

by Meg Skinner

Madisonian banjo picking, guitar-strumming, silver-voiced Mac Robertson will again lead Summer Folk Sing-alongs in Blue Mounds State Park on the third Friday of June, July, and August. The singing begins at 8 p.m., time to sneak a peak at the sun setting in the west from the highest point in southern Wisconsin. This is a family oriented event, and the audience is invited not only to sing along, but bring and play any instruments they can strum, shake, rattle or blow.

The first of the Summer Sing-alongs, June 18th at 8 p.m., will be held in the Amphitheatre, to the east (left) of the circular drive at the top of the Blue Mound, as others will be using the main shelter to set up for the next day's Horribly Hilly Hundred Bike Race. The July 16th and August 20th summer Sing-alongs will be held at the main shelter.

Mac Robertson, whose day job is teaching computer science at Madison College, has developed a loyal multi-generational following in the past four years of leading the summer sing-alongs. Families camping at the park, and from the area join Madison Folk Music Society members amid the mists that often settle into the park after sundown. Rise Up Singing books will be available for those who need the words, but Mac is sensitive to his audience, and usually chooses well-loved favorites suggested by young and old.


Blue Mound State Park is just north of the Village of Blue Mounds, about 25 miles west of Madison via US Highway 18/151. From Highway 18/151, go north on County Highway F and turn left on County Highway ID into Blue Mounds. Go west on Highway ID about a half mile to Mounds Road. Turn right (north) and follow Mounds Road north through

town. (Mounds Road becomes Mounds Park Road once you leave the village.) The park entrance is one mile north of the intersection of Highway ID and Mounds Road. You will need a state park sticker to drive into the park, but once there, the sing-alongs are free!

By foot or bicycle, you can reach the park by way of the Military Ridge State Trail. The park access trail is about .7 mile west of Mounds Park Road on the Military Ridge Trail.

The fun begins June 18, continues July 16, and the last of the summer sing-alongs (until next year!) will be August 20.

MadFolk Concert Tickets

When you see this symbol –  – you'll know that you're reading about a Mad Folk sponsored event. Advance tickets for Mad Folk shows are available online at www.madfolk.org and at these outlets:

- Borders Books East, 2173 Zeier Road
- Borders Books West, 3416 University Ave.
- Orange Tree Imports, 1721 Monroe Street
- Spruce Tree Music, 851 East Johnson

You can also purchase advance tickets by mail. Send a stamped self-addressed envelope with your check payable to Mad Folk, PO Box 665, Madison, WI 53701. If all else fails, call 608-846-9214 for information.

“Folk in the Rotunda” to Replace

“Folk on State”

by Ron Dennis

This summer, the dedicated volunteers of MadFolk and Wild Hog in the Woods decided to take a break. Instead of the Folk on State series and Friday nights at the Wil-Mar Center, both folk music organizations have joined for a special summer series during June, July and August.

We're excited to announce that The Rotunda, in Madison's Overture Center, will be the site of free concerts in June and August. On Friday, July 23rd, Wild Hog in the Woods will present their annual Woody Guthrie Night at the Wil-Mar Center. Additional folk music will also be heard on State Street during Maxwell Street Days, July 16-18, in a collaboration of MadFolk and the Madison Songwriters Guild.

The first “Folk in the Rotunda” will be Saturday, June 19, 11:00am-1:00pm and will feature Boo Bradley and Tracy Jane Comer. The second of this series will be on August 14, 11:00am-1:00pm and will feature Annie & Rod Capps and Small Potatoes.

In the fall, regular schedules will be resumed. Both organizations would like some new volunteers to help keep folk music alive in Madison. There's not a lot of time commitment required and you'll hear lots of great music. Please check our web sites for further information.

Madison Folk Music Society: www.madfolk.org

Wild Hog in the Woods: www.wildhoginthewoods.org

This series is supported in part by The Overture Center for the Arts and WORT Community Radio 89.9 FM.

THE LIST

ROSEANNE CASH ~ 2009 MANHATTAN RECORDS

Review by Kiki Schueler

In the liner notes to her most recent release, *The List*, Roseanne Cash tells the story of how one afternoon her very famous father wrote down the one hundred songs that he felt his teenage daughter absolutely needed to know. He titled the list "100 Essential Country Songs," but as she points out, "100 Essential American Songs" might have been a more complete descriptor given that it wasn't limited to country but also included blues, folk, gospel and protest songs. Some of the songs are instantly familiar (unsurprising given the source of the inventory), others less so. Some are inextricably linked to Johnny, others to his contemporaries like Merle Haggard, Loretta Lynn and Hank Snow. Despite that, for the most part she makes them her own, and the collection is well chosen for her voice and style. While this CD covers only one-tenth of that list, she sets up the sequel(s) by dedicating the record to her five children, calling it the first installment of their list.



Of all the tracks, "Long Black Veil" has probably been covered more than the rest (by everyone from The Band to Social Distortion's Mike Ness), but Johnny's is arguably the definitive version. First recorded

in 1959 by Lefty Frizzell, the instant classic feels much older than that. Cash's version features surprisingly understated backing vocals from Wilco's Jeff Tweedy. So restrained is his contribution that Rick Depofi's subtle bass clarinet upstages him. Tweedy is only one of several impressive guests to lend their voices to this project. Bruce Springsteen does a vaguely Elvis impersonation on "Sea of Heartbreak," which Johnny included on his classic *Unchained* recording in 1996. Rufus Wainwright's ethereal voice pairs well with Merle Haggard's classic "leaving on a jet plane" heartbreak ballad "Silver Wings." Even so, Elvis Costello shines as the best of her vocal partners. His voice meshes beautifully with Cash's on their unexpectedly bright version of "Heartache by the Numbers," the highlight of the disc.

The disc was expertly produced, arranged, recorded and mixed by Cash's husband of 15 years, John Leventhal. He also played most of the instruments on the record, and I am guessing he had a significant hand in song selection. Cash's voice is always the focus, and the music complements it beautifully. Opening track "Miss the Mississippi and You" has a jazzy vibe, a brushed snare and simple guitar line guiding the song. The best-known version of the traditional "Motherless Children" is probably Eric Clapton's riff-filled version, but hers is simpler and perhaps even more powerful. Leventhal's mandolin and Larry Campbell's fiddle are a lovely accompaniment. The folk classic "500 Miles" owes its appointment

to folk history to Peter, Paul and Mary, but Cash's version is truly a family affair, with Leventhal playing all the instruments and daughter Chelsea Crowell on backing vocals. And no one will argue that Cash has

a better voice than "Girl from the North Country" author Bob Dylan. In fact, the only song that doesn't top or at least equal the best-known version is "She's Got You." Cash just can't muster the loneliness and ache of Patsy Cline or Loretta Lynn.

What makes this record different from other late-career all-cover records, like Rod Stewart's recent string of cheesy releases, is that this is a record with a purpose. As with her father's list, she seeks to educate her children, and ultimately us, about those songs that are so quintessentially American that we should all know them. *The List* is an excellent start.

Mad Folk News is published monthly by the Madison Folk Music Society, a non-profit, volunteer-led society dedicated to fostering folk music in the Madison area. Contact us at madfolk@charter.net. Learn about concerts, membership, scholarships, and volunteer opportunities at www.madfolk.org.

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The Mad Folk Refrigerator Cover

May 2010

Mad Folk Events



Summer Sing-along w/ Mac Robertson

Fri, 6/18, 7/16, & 8/20 -- 8 p.m. Blue Mounds State Park Amphitheater

Boo Bradley, Tracy Jane Comer

Sat, 6/19 -- 11:00am at the Rotunda in the Overture Center

Woody Guthrie Night

Fri, 7/23 -- 7:00pm at the Wilmar Center, 953 Jenifer Street

Annie & Rod Capps, Small Potatoes

Fri, 8/14 -- 11:00am at the Rotunda in the Overture Center

On the Air



wpr.org

Simply Folk on Wisconsin Public Radio w/Tom Martin-Erickson

Sun 5:00-8:00pm

Concerts recorded in Wisconsin, music and dance of people the world over. For playlists, calendars, station listings, and more, visit www.wpr.org/simplyfolk.



wort-fm.org

WORT 89.9 FM community radio

Sun -- 3:00-5:00pm

• **On the Horizon** (world music) w/Ford Blackwell, Paul Novak & Dan Talmo

Weekdays 9:00am-noon

• Sun -- **World Book of Records** (folk from the world over) w/Tracy Doreen

• Tue -- **Pastures of Plenty** (traditional American folk) w/John Fabke

• Wed -- **Back to the County** (country music on a theme) w/Bill Malone

• Thur -- **Diaspora** (folk and international) w/Terry O'

• Fri -- **Mud Acres** (bluegrass and acoustic) w/Chris Powers



Venues

Folklore Village

July 1-4 -- Midsummer Festival

This family friendly festival features summer celebratory traditions from Scandinavia and around the world. Workshops in Scandinavian dance and music, various crafts and a complete children's program! Other activities include evening dance parties, a traditional Majstång and bonfire. Full and Part Time options. Visit www.folklorevillage.org or call (608) 924-4000 for more information. Pre-registration is required.

Folklore Village
3210 Cty Hwy BB
Dodgeville, WI
folklorevillage.org
608-924-4000

Jigs

Lou & Peter Berryman

- Sun, 6/20 -- **Harmony Bar & Grill** -- 7:00 -- 2201 Atwood Ave. -- 608-249-4333

Jim Schwall

- Sunday June 6 through Saturday June 11. Steel Bridge Songfest, Sturgeon Bay WI -- details TBA.
- Sun, 6/13, Yahara Waterfront Festival, Madison, 1:00 PM -- Jim with Josh Harty & Blake Thomas Band.
- Mon, 6/14, Crystal Corner, Madison, 9:30 -- SoDangYang, no cover.
- Sat, 6/19, Cottage Grove WI, 1:00 PM and Sun Prairie WI, 5:00 PM -- Jim with Jimmy Chuck and the Drunken Sailors.
- Mon, 6/28, Crystal Corner, 9:30 PM -- Jim solo, no cover.
- Wed, 6/30 Oshkosh Sawdust Days, 6:00 PM -- Cajun Strangers.

Tom Kastle

- June 5-6 Port Pirate Festival, Waterfront, Port Washington
- 6/9 Rib Lake Public Library, 645 Pearl St. Rib Lake
- 6/11 Crossroads Coffeehouse, 2020 Main St., Cross Plains 7:00 pm
- 6/13 Galesville Public Library, 16787 S. Main, Galesville. 1:30 pm
- 6/14 Columbus Public Library, 223 W. James St. Columbus 3:30 pm
- 6/15 Oak Creek Public Library, 8620 S. Howell Ave., Oak Creek 2:00 pm
- 6/16 Spring Green Community Library, 230 E. Monroe St., Spring Green 2:00 pm
- 6/21 Haas Public Library, N64W23820 Main St., Sussex 1:00 pm
- 6/21 Pewaukee Public Library, 210 Main St., Pewaukee 7:00 pm
- 6/22 Caerstecker Public Library, 518 Hill Street, Green Lake 6:00 pm
- 6/23 Ethel Everhard Memorial Library, Westfield 2:00 pm
- 6/24 Coloma Public Library, 155 Front St., Coloma 1:00 pm
- 6/29 Sauk City Public Library, 515 Water St. 1:00 pm
- 6/29 Waunakee Publiuc Library, 710 South St., Waunakee 3:00 pm
- 6/30 Karl Junginger Memorial Library 625 N. Monroe St., Waterloo 2:00 pm

Madison Dance

African/African-American Dance classes with live drumming -- Sun, 7:00-9:00pm -- Metro Dance, 3009 University Ave. -- 255-3677 / 251-4311

English Country Dance taught -- 1st and 3rd Mon, 7:30-9:30pm -- Wil-Mar Center, 953 Jenifer St. -- 238-9951 or 238-9951

Cajun Dance taught -- Sun 5/09 -- instruction at 6:15pm, dance 7:00-10:00pm -- Harmony Bar & Grill, 2201 Atwood Ave -- 249-4333

International Dancing -- Wed and Sun; classes 7:30-8:30pm, request dancing 8:30-11:00pm -- The Crossing, 1127 University Ave. -- 241-3655

Irish Dancing -- Monthly Ceili and set dance events are posted at celticmadison.org/dance

Italian Dancing -- Tue, 7:00-9:00pm, no experience or partner necessary -- Wil-Mar Center, 953 Jenifer St. -- 838-9403 (Philana)

Madison Contra Dance Cooperative -- Tue; 7:30 jam band practice, intermediate level dancing 7:45-9:40pm -- \$5 for non-members -- Gates of Heaven, 302 E. Gorham -- 238-3394 (Steve)

Morris Dancing -- Wed, 7:00pm -- call for location -- 238-9951

Scottish Country Dancing -- Sun, 7:00pm -- Wil-Mar Center, 953 Jenifer St. -- 835-0914

Misc

Madison Ukulele Club -- Singalongs 1st and 3rd Weds 7:00-9:00pm -- call for location -- 246-8205 (Andrew)

2010 MIDWEST FOLK MUSIC FESTIVALS

June 11-13 **Nor-East'r Music & Art Festival** -- Mio, MI -- www.noreastr.net

Cancelled Gebhard Woods Dulcimer Festival -- Morris, IL -- www.gwdf.org

July 10 **Blackhawk Folk Festival** -- Mount Morris, WI -- www.blackhawkfolk.org

July 16-18 **Hiawatha Traditional Music Festival** -- Marquette, MI -- www.hiawathamusic.org

July 18 **Woodstock Folk Festival** -- Woodstock, IL -- www.woodstockfolkmusic.com

Aug 6-7 **Sugar Maple Traditional Music Festival** -- Madison, WI -- www.fourlakesmusic.org

August 13-15 **Shawano Folk Music Festival** -- Shawano, WI -- www.shawanofestival.com

August 19-22 **Irish Fest** -- Milwaukee, WI -- www.irishfest.com

August 21 **Gandy Dancer Festival** -- Mazomanie, WI

August 27-29 **Great River Folk Festival** -- La Crosse, WI -- www.greatriverfolkfest.org

September 5-6 **Fox Valley Folk Music Festival** -- Geneva, IL -- www.foxvalleyfolk.com

Unknown Stringalong Weekend -- Olympia Resort, WI -- www.uwm.edu/Dept/Folk



Commie Zithers

Because of the name of this column, I receive countless unsolicited zither news tidbits. I'm a lucky man.

A few days ago the amazing Joel Mabus of Michigan (www.joelmabus.com) sent me an "automatic translation" of a German article about the Zither. If you've had the dubious pleasure of reading certain earlier Whither Zithers, you know how I love these strange translations. This one is titled: "The zither -- from firewood to the world hit," and explains, "The name zither comes from the Greek cultural area and is derived from the Kithara, to one since the 7th century v. Chr. covered, the lyra similar stringed instrument. The demarcation to other instruments is liquidly." Joel repeated that last line so I wouldn't miss it.

In another unexplained reference to the unexplained title of the piece, it says, "However, the current concert zither developed itself from the medieval firewood." A later sentence, referring to an empress named Sissi from Austria, says, "To her unidentified for their game in an alpine pasture economy of a farmer given guilders she fulfilled as an only self deserving money with pride."

Pure poetry. Then came this e-mail from my dear pal Paul Suino in Riverside CA: "And the world loses another harpist-zitherist. Thought of you as I read the LA Times obit of Susan Reed, a woman who favored Irish ballads and clung to her old battered zither. I especially liked the part where it mentioned that she was blacklisted in the 1950s for having 'the temerity...to actually believe in something'. HA. You go, girl."

And how. Anyway, I had never heard of Susan Reed I am ashamed to say, and was doubly ashamed that my boyhood home of Appleton's native red-baiter, Tailgunner Joe McCarthy, might have played a part in my ignorance of her. So I Googled.

As with almost everybody who is any-

body and most of the rest of us too, you can find out quite a bit about Susan Reed online. Her obituary in the May 1, 2010 New York Times, written by Dennis Hevesi, explained that Susan was born in South Carolina in 1927, the same year Carl Sandburg's big folk song volume, *The American Songbag*, was published. As it happens, Susan Reed's father, the entertainer, screenwriter, director, and actor Daniel Reed, due to his artistic career became close friends with Sandburg as well as Leadbelly and many other musicians and entertainers who used to drop by the house. Well, to make a long story short, impressed by these influences Susan took up the zither, the autoharp, the lute, and the Irish harp in her teens. She happened to have a beautiful voice and an expressive and charming singing style, as can be heard on YouTube (search for Susan Reed). The Reed family moved to New York where Susan, still in her teens, began performing at "at private parties and fund-raisers for wounded World War II soldiers recovering in Manhattan hospitals. Barney Josephson, the owner of the Cafe Society nightclub, spotted her in 1944 when she was (16) and gave her her big break."

She appeared in a musical about Billy the Kid on Broadway at age 19, and two years later was featured in the movie "Glamour Girl" with drummer Gene Krupa. During this time she had also become very popular in Manhattan clubs and was soon playing dozens of concerts around the country.

McCarthyism put an end to all that. She was blacklisted, according to her son, the interestingly named Reed Karen (she was married for a time to the actor James Karen), because her father had been a communist at some point and she was interested in civil rights. "She was pretty much relegated to whistle-stop engagements in Podunk towns," he explained.

While I should say from experience that such a career isn't the worst fate in the world, it is a heartbreaking shame to be yanked down from loftier heights to this level by the fear-mongering of the likes of McCarthy and J. Edgar Hoover. In her obit, she is quoted as saying, in a 1971 New York Times interview, "I was singing at the Palmer House in Chicago when I thought, 'This is a rotten busi-

ness.' And I just turned off."

I'm assuming that this quote had a lot to do with her being blacklisted -- though why was she at the Palmer House if so is puzzling-- and how that could indeed make the entertainment business "rotten." It's odd how the entertainment sector was focused upon by the McCarthyites, with such strange results as Marilyn Monroe -- married for a while to playwright Arthur Miller, another blacklisted artist -- being a major contributor to Wisconsin's Progressive magazine.

Joe McCarthy was born on the outskirts of Appleton, now the world headquarters of the ultraconservative John Birch Society. Ironically, Appleton is also where I saw Pete Seeger in concert for the first time in the mid 60s. I've always wondered how he felt about playing in the teeth of McCarthyland, where, up until 2001, a bust of McCarthy was still on prominent display in the county courthouse.

Anyway, an article about Susan Reed by John S. Wilson in the May 24, 1971 NY Times, reported that since she was 16 she has started her concerts with the simple declaration, "This is a zither." Try saying THAT three times in a row. Online I found a recording of an interview and short performance by Susan, and I have to admit I downloaded it and copied out the sound bite of her saying, "This is a zither." It's charming. I used to have a Donald Barthelme quote stuck up on my wall, "Fragments are the only forms I trust." It's a bit of a stilted way to say it, but I like the idea. And "This is a zither" is a wonderful little fragment. Sound bite, I guess they are called now. I'll play it to myself every now and then and tip my hat to Susan Reed whose music I may have known sooner had it not been for Tailgunner Joe.

Two more fragments:

"One of the things I'm most proud of about my country is the fact that we did lick McCarthyism back in the fifties."

-- Pete Seeger

"Is this your sister's sixth zither, sir?"

--traded tongue twister