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# Mad Folk NEWS

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Newsletter of the Madison Folk Music Society

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## FOCUS ON FOLK

### A Look at songwriting with Doug Hamilton

I began writing songs shortly after starting to play the guitar in my early teens. There's something about the way strumming sequences of chords on a guitar suggests melodies, which naturally leads to experimenting with songwriting. But songwriting isn't something I learned or taught myself to do. It's just something I've always done, that I somehow knew how to do. Most of the songs I've written have taken shape fairly easily. I've written well over 150 songs. Depends on whether you count just the good ones.

For me, songwriting comes in cycles. I can go for months without writing anything, then write several songs in the space of a week. When I'm in a non-creative phase, it's pretty useless trying to write—the songs usually don't turn out well, and writing them is a real struggle.

Even though the musical idea and words usually come pretty fast, what I've learned as I've matured is the even very good songs can really benefit from careful polishing. These days I work each line until it's as strong as I can make it. I've also gone back to some of the songs I thought were done years ago, fixed the weak points, and ended up with much better songs. That's actually a pretty good way to keep writing during less-inspired periods. You can usually craft or improve a few lines or add a bridge even when you're not inspired enough to come up with a strong new idea.

I write both on guitar and piano, usually starting with an idea and a hook in mind. The phrases I start with suggest a rhythm and feel, and the song just sort of starts to emerge.

## Bryan Bowers kicks off 2007

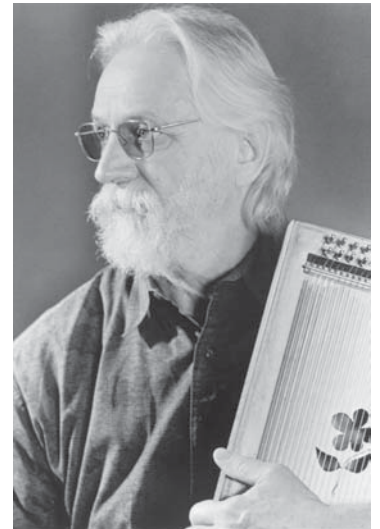
Bryan Bowers will be making one of his very rare stops in Madison on January 20, 2007.

Bryan, of Seattle, Washington, has been a major presence on the North American folk music scene since the mid-1960s. He is a powerful singer and a gifted performer but is best known as one of the world's masters of the autoharp.

"He plays the autoharp and when he picks up the instrument, the entire room changes...a very magical world, a music never heard before," according to *The Chicago Sun Times*.

Over the past three decades, Bryan has redefined the autoharp as a solo instrument, establishing himself as a singer-songwriter in the process and winning honors like induction into *Frets* magazine's First Gallery of the Greats and a place in the Autoharp Hall of Fame. Whether playing a rousing instrumental with such dexterity that he sounds like a four-piece string band, telling a moving story from his eventful life, or singing one of his heartfelt ballads, this native Virginian enralls and delights audiences with his virtuosity and genuine warmth. In 2000, Bryan released his fifth album, *Friend for Life* (Rounder).

Join us in welcoming Bryan Bowers back to Madison! The concert will start at 8 p.m. at the Wil-Mar Center, 954 Jenifer St. Tickets are available at Borders Bookshops East & West, B-Side Records, Spruce Tree Music, Orange Tree Imports, Steep & Brew (Odana Rd.), and are \$14 advance and \$16 the day of the show at the door.



Bryan Bowers

## Festival, scholarships are meeting topics

The annual membership meeting of the Madison Folk Music Society was held at 6 p.m. on Sunday, October 22, at the First Unitarian Society. President Darlene Buhler introduced the members of the board and reported on upcoming concerts for the Concert Committee. Bill Fiore spoke about the possibility of a folksinging festival, modeled after one in Lansing, MI, and urged anyone interested in making it happen to volunteer for the committee. He also spoke of preliminary plans for scholarships to encourage budding folk musicians with lessons or workshop attendance, and he encouraged anyone with expertise on drawing up guidelines to assist the committee. Treasurer Tracy Jane Comer presented

a final balance sheet for FY 2005–06.

A handsome cake, celebrating Mad Folk's 30th anniversary, was enjoyed by all who attended the meeting and those who arrived for the Ellis Paul concert that followed.

Tracy opened for Ellis, who engaged the intimate audience with unplugged strolls down the aisle of the Frank Lloyd Wright-designed meeting house.



# Dave Hull, Kari Larson in holiday house concert

Dave Hull and his good friend Kari Larson will appear in a house concert at the home of Jim and Nancy Nikora on Saturday, December 9. The street address for the 7:30 p.m. show is 41 Rtough Lee Ct., Madison.

The duo has produced a Christmas CD, so the show should provide a boost to your holiday spirits. Please make reservations (233-0150) as far in advance as possible. It's a \$15 requested donation until Dec 6, and \$18 after that until day of show (advance reservations & payment requested).



The hosts will provide coffee, cider, soft drinks, and refreshments, but

if you prefer beer or wine, please feel free to bring what you like. Bring your instruments, too, as it is likely a jam will break out after the show.

## Mad Folk Board of Directors

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**Concert:** Darlene Buhler, 846-9214

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## Madison Folk Music Society

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Membership Form: **Madison Folk Music Society**

c/o Tracy Comer, P.O. Box 930446, Verona, WI 53593-0446

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### Membership Categories

Student	\$10 _____
Senior	\$8 _____
Regular	\$12 _____
Family	\$15 _____
Friend	\$25 _____
Contributing	\$50 _____
Life	\$500 _____

**Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_**

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I would like to help with:

- Newsletter
- Concerts
- Festival
- Housing performers
- Publicity
- Membership
- Transportation

*Make checks payable to MFMS. Your contribution is tax-deductible and helps us defray the cost of event expenses. You may designate its use. Thank you.*

Time to renew? Don't want to cut up your newsletter? Just be sure your name is on your check and mail it to the address shown. Enclose a note if there are changes needed to your information. Or, you can print a form from the Mad Folk web site: www.madfolk.org.

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