

MadFolk News

Vance Gilbert brings it to the WilMar Center Feb 27

by Lou Berryman

A visit to Vance Gilbert's website reveals that a *lot* of people have been blown away by his concerts:

"Gilbert is a formidable vocalist. His voice has the beauty of a choral singer, the strength and control of Broadway's finest, the power of lead rock singers... launches Gilbert beyond an exceptional writer and vocalist to musical visionary extraordinaire." *Sing Out Magazine*

"Powerful and Uncompromising" *The Boston Globe*

"Among the quintessential musical poets" *Dirty Linen*

"Graceful picking, lush voicings and bright syncopations" *Guitar Player*

"Gilbert strikes like lighting" *New Texas Magazine*

"The voice of an angel, the wit of a devil and the guitar of a god. The lyrics alone are better than almost anything else you've heard" *Ft. Worth Star-Telegram*

"Just one listen and it's clear why pickers and singers like Shawn Colvin, Patty Larkin, David Wilcox and Tuck & Patti are just a few of Vance Gilbert's famous fans" *The Gavin Report*

We at MadFolk and Wild Hog in the Woods are counting on you wishing to see for yourself on February 27, when Vance will be making a rare visit to Madison, appearing at the WilMar Center.

Vance Gilbert's evolution into the artist he is today began in the mid-70's when he attended college in Connecticut, and "everybody had an acoustic guitar."

The music he loved in those days was Mo-Town, R & B, and jazz: he admits to wanting to BE Al Jarreau for a long time. As

his focus turned and widened, he included everything from classical to pop, with a great fondness for the smooth and quiet music of contemporary singer-songwriters. James Taylor is noted as a huge influence.

Vance tells us that when asked to advise budding singer-songwriters he suggests immersing themselves in a tradition they love—his own immersion in multiple traditions informs and inspires his own song writing.

He began playing publicly in the Boston area, from open mikes to lounges, honing his skills in the evenings while he worked at his day job teaching in the Boston school system, where he included his own musical skills in the classroom whenever possible.

By the early 90's Vance had decided that he was ready to give full-time performing a shot, and an impressive array of musical experiences and accomplishments confirm that he definitely was.

In time he was invited to open for folk luminaries, and he traveled with the likes of Tom Rush, Tuck & Patty and Shawn Colvin. His education continued, opening for over a hundred performances with George Carlin—when he was "forced to do the hottest 33 minutes of music in folk music".

And thus this wonderful songwriter, skilled guitarist, prodigiously talented vocalist, became a skilled performer, learning to connect his songs with humor and engaging stories.

Vance has 9 albums to his credit. His most recent release is *Up On Rockford*, which has a



unique concept. "All I wanted to do was write as if I was someone else," Vance explains. "I was in no way out to imitate the various songwriters that I allude to in the notes before each song. I was more shooting for a sense or a 'vibe' in the lyrics and music that was reminiscent, to my mind, of these various artists."

We hope you'll join us in welcoming Vance Gilbert to Madison!

The Vance Gilbert concert is cosponsored with Wild Hog in the Woods, and is at 8pm at WilMar Center, 953 Jenifer St. Tickets: \$14 advance/ \$16 day of show from Borders Books East & West, Orange Tree Imports and Spruce Tree Music or online at: www.brownpapertickets.com/event. Call 608-846-9214 for information.

Please also remember to bring an item for the local food pantry.

2009 Midwest Folk Festivals

March 6-8

Stringalong Gathering
East Troy, WI
www.uwm.edu/Dept/Folk

June 13-14

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

July 11

Blackhawk Folk Festival
Mount Morris, WI
www.blackhawkfolk.org

July 17-19

Hiawatha Traditional Music Festival
Marquette, MI
www.hiawathamusic.org

July 19

Woodstock Folk Festival
Woodstock, IL
www.woodstockfolkmusic.com

July 31-Aug 1

Sugar Maple Traditional Music Festival
Lake Farm Co. Park, Madison, WI
www.fourlakesmusic.org

August 7-9

Shawano Folk Music Festival
Shawano, WI
www.shawanofestival.com

August 13-16

Irish Fest
Maier Festival Park, Milwaukee, WI
www.irishfest.com

August 28-30


Great River Folk Festival
La Crosse, WI
www.greatriverfolkfest.org

September 5-7

Fox Valley Folk Music Festival
Geneva, IL
www.foxvalleyfolk.com

October 23-25

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



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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. Learn about concerts, dances, membership, scholarships, and volunteer opportunities at www.madfolk.org. Contact us at madfolk@charter.net.

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Cubans vs. Crickets

In a shabby apartment in London Ontario one evening in 1969, my friend Paul Beard and I fed our experimental 10 minute 8mm silent film into a clanky old projector and let it whirr away. It was about eyeglasses. We had dragged them behind the car; we had burned a pair lying on a piece of bread in the middle of a frozen puddle; we had set up an "O" gauge model train oval outside in the snow and attached a pair of glasses to a coat hanger wire coming out of the top of the stripped down engine, then filmed it going round and round. I did a bit of eyeglasses animation; paul froze a pair in a block of ice and photographed it melting in time-lapse photography. We edited the masterpiece a number of times, and I do believe I still have it somewhere, if it hasn't turned to plastic dust. I should put it on Youtube.

In those days it was a hassle to add sound to a home movie, but we wanted to check the effects of at least putting some music to it. So we pulled out various LPs and sat back and were astonished by the powerful differences the respective selections made in the feeling of the film. But to get the effect, you had to remind your mind that the music being played was a part of the film, and not just background music to the afternoon. In those days, or maybe at that age, music was being played no matter what we did, so it took the throwing of a brain switch to hitch the movie to the music.

With a little practice, I found you could flip back and forth from having the music seem like something outside of the intended film-watching experience, like the whirring noise of the projector, to having it become a true part of the film action. Going further, I found that you could link the whirring projector sound to the film, too, if you wanted. Later I discovered while driving that I could flop back and forth from having

the music on the radio seem unrelated to the scenes filling the windshield to having the music be a soundtrack to what I was seeing.

Maybe everybody switches back and forth like this, and it took me until I was twenty years old to catch on. Sometimes I've taken it to goofy lengths, consciously trying to link the ambient sounds of the moment -- bird singing, dog snoring, clock ticking, dishwasher clinking, me breathing -- into a sort of soundtrack to go with whatever it is I'm looking at or working on. Maybe it was this new hobby of bringing music and other sound into and out of the consciousness or creative focus of the moment that eventually made it so difficult for me to be able to tolerate much in the way of background music; it became too easy to detach the music from the action. It's like when you're watching TV and suddenly realize a lamp is reflected smack dab in the middle of the screen. You hadn't noticed it for the last 45 minutes but now it's all you can see and it drives you nuts and if you weren't so lazy you'd get up and turn it off.

Recently my sister Mary forwarded an interesting article to me about Professor Tadanou Tsunoda of Tokyo, author of "The Japanese Brain." He was in Cuba at a convention, and could barely hear the speakers because of the sounds of insects. He asked Cubans what sort of insects they were, and they responded, "What insects?" Though this could be attributed to their being so familiar with the sound they blotted it out automatically, Professor Tsunoda eventually performed experiments showing that Japanese hear insects and other natural sounds -- wind, ocean waves, etc. -- on the LEFT side of the brain, which is the "language" side. Everywhere else in the world, these sounds are processed on the "music," or right side, of the brain. And that in the Cuban situation, the insect sound was to him like someone talking at the same time as the speakers were speaking. According to the Professor, Japanese hear insects as "insect voices" instead of "insect sounds."

Over the years, there has been much written about the left vs the right side of the brain. In earlier Whither Zithers,

I know I've mentioned going back and forth from the left to the right and back in songwriting, which is one of the more obvious examples of the Language and Music sides of the brain having to work together, or at least to alternate with some measure of coherence. I'm not sure that back with Paul and the projector, I was flipping from the left side to the right and back, but I know I was moving the music around from some one place to some other place in my focus. And I had never done that before, at least consciously.

All this taken together makes me wonder if I overtweaked my brain in this area once upon a time, and now music too quickly detaches from the visuals, moves out of the music side, and insinuates into the language room of my brain, interfering with the dialog. Because the problem I have with background music in TV shows and movies, and elevators and coffee shops, is perfectly described as the feeling that someone is TALKING on the sidelines. It must be the same sensation of conversations in collision that the Professor had with the Cubans and the crickets.

Later, Professor Tsunoda found experimentally that this uniquely Japanese way of hearing insects was not in the DNA but was in the language. If Japanese were brought up with Swedish or even Chinese as their first language, they didn't exhibit this trait; if Norwegians were brought up with Japanese as their first language, they DID exhibit this otherwise Japanese trait. In other words, it's a learned trait, and not innate. So that makes me wonder: Is it possible to unlearn, and to shift input from its customary part of the brain to another and thereby shift its effect on your consciousness? In my one little experience with film, yes, but I wonder how far this can be taken? Can I throw a few switches and relearn to accept background music as such? Are the secrets of digging and grokking and meditation wrapped up in this ability to move sensations intentionally into specific brain areas usually assigned to receiving something else? Is madness this same sort of trick but unintentional? Does anybody still have the manual?



Anne Hills – here 3/21/09

The last time MadFolk brought Anne Hills to Madison it was as part of the trio with Cindy Mangsen and Priscilla Herdman. We are pleased to bring her back again, this time as a solo performer. Since she was last here, she has released a few more CDs, her latest in 2007, called *Ef You Don't Watch Out!* featuring 10 poems by James Whitcomb Riley set to song. There's a lot of frailing banjo, guitar, and piano – simple parlor style appropriate to the era in which Riley wrote – along with some beautiful fiddle work by Sara Milanovich, back-up vocals by Cindy Mangsen and Priscilla Herdman, and bass, mandolin, lead guitar by co-producer Scott Petito.

Anne receives praise from her peers, such as: “Anne Hills is such an exquisite singer that it’s understandable that people might be swept up in the pure beauty of her voice and thereby overlook her writing. That would be a mistake. For me, Anne’s writing, in songs like ‘Follow That Road’ and many others, is as direct, melodic and deep as any work being done today. She is quite simply one of my absolute favorite songwriters.” — Tom Paxton

And she receives praise from the press, such as: “A singer of superb vocal purity ... she gives songs a life of their own. Anne Hills could sing the week’s cable listings and make them sound marvelous.” — Martin Keller, *Minnesota Monthly*

Join us on March 21st @ 8:00 at the WilMar Center (Note: date & location have changed). As always, please remember to bring a food item for the Food Pantry.

Reflections.....

by Darlene Buhler

I sit here the morning after our first concert of 2009 and I wanted to send out a big thank you to all the attendees and volunteers at Garnet Roger’s concert last week. He began his first set with the title cut of his new CD, *Get a Witness*. There is a line in the song, “Can I get a witness to this perfect day,” which is how I feel this morning.

Garnet talked about the folk music community and the communities that define us. I am grateful for this community, which, when called upon during this concern to make an impromptu donation to Porch Light (porchlightinc.org), you rose to the challenge. Thanks to your generosity we collected \$127 to provide people some relief from this crazy cold weather. Thank you also for your food bank donations, and the money donated to our scholarship fund. We have four more concerts this season and I hope to see even more of you to share these truly wonderful nights.

I have the opportunity to see a lot of music and attend a lot of venues, but the Madfolk audience continues to be one of the best out there. I am very proud to be a part of this organization.



Sparky & Rhonda Rucker 3/17



Tracy Grammer 3/9

Madison Folk Music Society

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February 2009

Mad Folk Events



Vance Gilbert

Friday 2/27 -- 8:00pm at the Wil-Mar Center, 953 Jenifer St. -- tickets \$14 advance, \$16 day of show

Anne Hills

Saturday 3/21 -- 8:00pm at the Wil-Mar Center, 953 Jenifer St. -- tickets \$14 advance, \$16 day of show

Venues



701 E. Washington
thebrinklounge.com
608-661-8599

7 W. Main St.
brocach.com
608-255-2015



18 S. Water St.
Ft. Atkinson, WI
cafecarpe.com
920-563-9391



1011 Williamson
motherfools.com
608-259-1301



Wil-Mar Center
953 Jenifer St.
wildhoginthewoods.org
608-233-5687



Alison Brown Quartet w/Joe Craven

- Friday, 2/06 -- 7:30pm -- Thrashers Opera House, 506 Mill Street, Green Lake -- \$25 -- 920-294-4279

Cajun Strangers

- Saturday, 2/21 -- 10:00am -- Overture Center
- Thursday, 2/24 -- 8:30pm -- Essen Haus

Chulrua

- 2/7 -- 7:30pm -- House concert at 205 N. Blackhawk Ave. -- \$15 and dessert potluck -- 238-6932 (Will & Robin)

Jim Schwall

- Thursdays, 2/12, 2/19, 2/26 -- 7:30pm -- Bab's French Quarter, 1353 Williamson Street

On the Air



wpr.org

Simply Folk on Wisconsin Public

Radio w/Tom Martin-Erickson
Sunday 5:00-8:00pm

Concerts recorded in Wisconsin, music and dance of people the world over; the second Sunday of the month is Listener Request Night. For playlists, calendars, station listings, and more, visit www.wpr.org/simplyfolk.



wort-fm.org

WORT 89.9 FM community radio

Sunday -- 3:00-5:00pm

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

Weekdays 9:00am-noon

- Monday -- **World Book of Records** (folk from the world over) w/Tracy Doreen
- Tuesday -- **Pastures of Plenty** (traditional American folk) w/John Fabke
- Wednesday -- **Back to the County** (country music on a theme) w/Bill Malone & Jeff Hickey
- Thursday -- **Diaspora** (folk and international) w/Terry O'
- Friday -- **Mud Acres** (bluegrass and acoustic) w/Chris Powers

Madison Dance

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

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

International Dancing -- Wednesday and Sunday; 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 www.celticmadison.org/dance

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

Madison Contra Dance Cooperative -- Tuesday; 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 -- Wednesday, 7:00pm -- UW Memorial Union, 800 Langdon St. -- 238-9951

Scottish Country Dancing -- Sunday, 7:00pm -- UW Memorial Union, 800 Langdon St. -- 238-1227

Attn: Venue Managers & Gig Players!

The Madison Folk Music Society would be delighted to distribute your folk music concert information to hundreds of *Mad Folk News* subscribers every month at absolutely no cost to you. By the 15th of the month, send the following info to vicky@vickyjones.com: (1) Folk performer or event name, (2) Date, time, venue and its address, (3) Ticket prices, and (4) Contact information.