

Mad Folk News



Rhonda & Sparky Rucker / www.sparkyandrhonda.com

Mad Folk Ticket Outlets

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 Avenue
- 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.

Correction: March's feature story on Anne Hills was written by Margaret Thayer, not Lou Berryman. Your editor regrets the error.

Sparky and Rhonda Rucker bring music, stories, history

by Margaret Thayer

🎵 Prepare for an enriching evening steeped in traditional American folk music, history, storytelling, and tall tales when Mad Folk hosts the husband-and-wife duo of Sparky and Rhonda Rucker in Madison on Friday, April 17.

Sparky and Rhonda lead audiences on an educational and emotional journey, weaving music into captivating stories not told in the history books on topics such as slavery, African-American history, the Underground Railroad, and the Civil War. Their music covers old-time blues, spirituals, ballads, Appalachian music, slave songs, cowboy music, work songs and railroad songs, plus original compositions.

Sparky has been performing for over 40 years. He is known not only as a musician, but also as a folklorist, historian, storyteller, and author. Raised in a large family of Tennessee storytellers, he is a natural storyteller. He began playing guitar at age 11. After graduating from the University of Tennessee, Sparky taught school in Chattanooga. He was active in the civil rights movement, playing freedom songs at rallies, marches, and sit-ins alongside other folksingers such as Guy Carawan and Pete Seeger. His songs feature fingerstyle picking and bottleneck blues guitar, banjo, and spoons. He is a popular teacher at folk music camps and schools.

Sparky has appeared at many storytelling festivals and has contributed to anthologies that included the nation's best professional storytellers. He was presented with the Life Membership Award by the National Association of Black Storytellers.

Sparky has appeared on numerous radio programs, including National Public Radio's *Morning Edition*, *A Prairie Home Companion*, and *Mountain Stage*. He also performed in two videos produced by the Public Broadcasting System.

Sparky has served on the boards of *Sing Out!* magazine, the John Henry Memorial Foundation, and the Southern Folk Cultural Revival Project (SFCRP). He also toured

throughout the South with the SFCRP for several years with such luminaries as Johnny Shines, Olabelle Reed, Nimrod Workman, Hedy West, Mike Seeger, and Bessie Jones & the Georgia Sea Island Singers.

Pete Seeger said, "Sparky Rucker is unique! He'll make you glad to be alive and struggling."

Rhonda grew up as a piano player and organist in Louisville, learning many old hymns and gospel songs from the Methodist Church. She completed a medical degree and residency at the University of Kentucky, then practiced medicine for five years before becoming a full-time musician. In 1989 Rhonda taught herself how to play blues harmonica, first studying the techniques of renowned blues harp player Sonny Terry, then branching out. She began playing harmonica on stage with Sparky, and later added clawhammer banjo and rhythmic bones to her repertoire. Rhonda also adds vocal harmonies to the duo's songs.

Sparky and Rhonda perform for audiences of all ages throughout the United States, Canada, and Europe at festivals, schools, libraries, and historical sites. Their historical program entitled "The Blue & Gray in Black & White" relates personal stories from the Civil War in music and narrative and focuses on the war's impact on different regions of the country. Sparky & Rhonda performed their program of songs and stories, "Heroes and Hard Times: A Black Folk Odyssey," at the Kennedy Center for Performing Arts in February 2005. They were featured on the National Public Radio program *On Point* in November 2007.

Sparky and Rhonda have been tellers-in-residence at the International Storytelling Center in Jonesborough, Tennessee. Both also contributed articles for the *Encyclopedia of Appalachia*, which was published by the University of Tennessee Press.

Sparky and Rhonda Rucker will play on April 17th at Immanuel Lutheran Church at 8:00pm. Tickets are \$14 in advance and \$16 day of show. Please bring an item for donation to the local food pantry too! 🎵

2009 Midwest Folk Festivals

May 14-17

Ashland Folk Festival -- Ashland, WI
http://www.heartistry.com/folk_fest.html

June 12-14

No-East'r Music & Art Festival -- Mio, MI
www.noreastr.net

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 Music Festival -- Marquette, MI
www.hiawathamusic.org

July 17-19

RiverSong Festival -- Hutchinson, MN
<http://www.riversongfestival.org>

July 19

Woodstock Folk Festival -- Woodstock, IL
www.woodstockfolkmusic.com

July 31-Aug 1

Sugar Maple Trad'l 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 -- Milwaukee, WI
www.irishfest.com

August 15

Gandy Dancer Festival -- Mazomanie, WI
www.midcontinent.org

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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Attn: Article writers! *Mad Folk News* welcomes your music/show reviews and stories about upcoming performers. If you have a story for next month's newsletter, email it to mail@vickyjones.com by the 15th, and we'll see if we can fit it in.

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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Total \$ _____

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



Karen Savoca & Pete Heitzman presented by MadFolk and Mad Toast Live! on 5/5

♪ Singer/songwriter Karen Savoca, first of all, is not a chick with a guitar. Voice is her first instrument. The other is conga. The daughter of a big band vocalist, she has a love for the old standards of her parents and grandparents, the rhythm and blues of the sixties, and the singer-songwriters of the seventies and eighties. Karen spent her childhood harmonizing with her family around an old upright piano, and she draws you into her world like she's inviting you to the table for supper. Whether set in a garden or on a city street, funny or poignant, her songs are full of lasting images, melodies and characters.

Pete Heitzman has had a guitar on his lap since he was ten, and was playing in bars by the time he was in eighth grade. A versatile and improvisational player, he has created a style that is all his own, innovative and refreshing. Pete bends, plucks, and wrings captivating

textures and soundscapes from the guitar or six-string bass, and has been aptly described as "the aurora borealis of guitar players".

On May 5, Mad Folk joins *Mad Toast Live!* in bringing you an evening of music with this talented duo. The show will be at The Brink Lounge at 7:00pm. Tickets are \$14 in advance and \$16 day of show. Please bring a non-perishable food item to donate to the local food pantry.

Mad Toast Live! is a music and talk show recorded for podcast in front of a live audience every week at The Brink Lounge, 701 E. Washington Ave, in Madison. Local music veterans Chris Wagoner and Mary Gaines host the show and join the guests in music and conversation. After about a 20 minute behind the music with the *Mad Toast Live!* Karen & Pete will perform a full concert. ♪



Tracy Grammer's Mad Folk debut final concert of the season 5/9 at Wil-Mar Center

♪ Formerly half of a duo with the late Dave Carter, Tracy Grammer now tours internationally with songwriter and multi-instrumentalist Jim Henry (Deb Talan, Mark Erelli, The Burns Sisters). With acoustic and electric guitars, beautifully matched voices, dobro, mandolin and violin, this duo shares original songs, instrumentals, and pays homage to Carter and other stellar writers while charting a brand new course for themselves in the musical landscape. Grammer says, "I'll keep on singing, and I'll keep on telling my story, however that evolves. Working with Dave Carter was the first step on what I hope is going to be a long and fruitful road for me: the endless quest for authenticity through music."

Grammer's much anticipated solo debut album, *Flower of Avalon* (Signature Sounds 2005), showed up on "Best of" lists and listener polls

around the country, and was the #1 most-played album on folk radio across the United States for 2005. She has released three titles since, the latest being a Christmas album in 2007.

Come out for our final concert for this season as Tracy makes her debut appearance on the Mad Folk stage. You can join us on May 9, 2009 at 8:00 at the Wil-Mar Center. Tickets are \$14 in advance and \$16 day of show.

"Tracy Grammer is a brilliant artist and unique individual. Her voice is distinctive, as is her mastery over the instruments she plays." -Joan Baez

"Tracy Grammer has that elusive quality of being able to speak directly to another person's heart - instantly bypassing all of the usual infrastructure - the moment she starts singing. She's great." - Richard Shindell ♪



Bluegrass workshops and concert with Bill Evans and Megan Lynch 4/25

The Southern Bluegrass Music Association presents banjo player Bill Evans and fiddler Megan Lynch in a day of workshops and an evening concert on April 25. San Francisco Bay Area musician Bill Evans, author of *Banjo for Dummies*, occupies a unique niche in the banjo world: celebrated worldwide for his traditional and progressive bluegrass banjo styles as well as his innovative original compositions, he also enjoys a reputation as an outstanding instructor as well as being an expert player of 19th century minstrel and classic/parlor banjo styles. His touring partner Megan Lynch is a six-time national champion fiddler, often considered the hotbed of fiddle music west of the Rockies. Bill and Megan will each give a 3-hour workshop on banjo and fiddle, respectively; a 2-hour jam workshop for all bluegrass instruments; and an evening concert. The event will be held at the Wil-Mar Neighborhood Center on the east side of Madison and emceed by country music historian Bill C. Malone, host of *Back to the Country* on WORT FM 89.9.

A VISUAL VERSION of



Lyrics by Thom. P., Music by Fran. H.

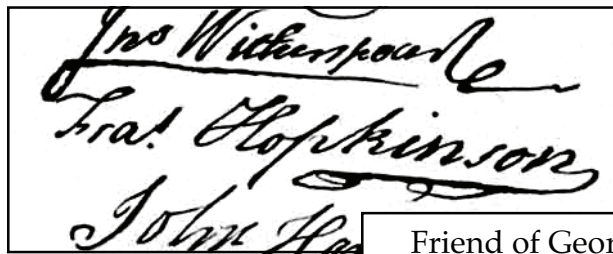
In the style of the few remaining newspapers, I thought I'd try a more visual Whither Zither. This one's about a 1759 song that some call the "Earliest surviving American secular composition," **My Days Have Been So Wondrous Free.** Many sites attribute the whole works to Francis Hopkinson (1737-1791) but it seems he really only wrote the melody. The lyrics were written years earlier by Thomas Parnell (1679-1718) who I don't believe ever set foot in America.

My Days Have Been So Wondrous Free

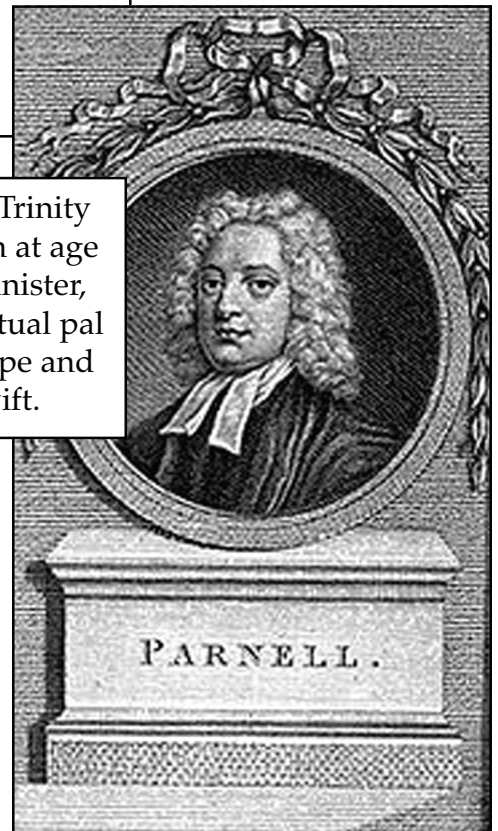
*My days have been so wondrous free,
The little birds that fly
With careless ease from tree to tree,
Were but as blest as I,
Were but as blest as I.
Ask the gliding waters,
If a tear of mine
Increased their stream,
And ask the breathing gales
If ever I lent a sigh to them,
If I lent a sigh to them.*

Parnell was a depressive, alcoholic minister. His freaky poem "Night Piece on Death", appropriately published posthumously, is considered the first work of the Graveyard School of poetry. In it, King Death observes:

*When men my
scythe and darts supply
How great a
King of Fears am I!*

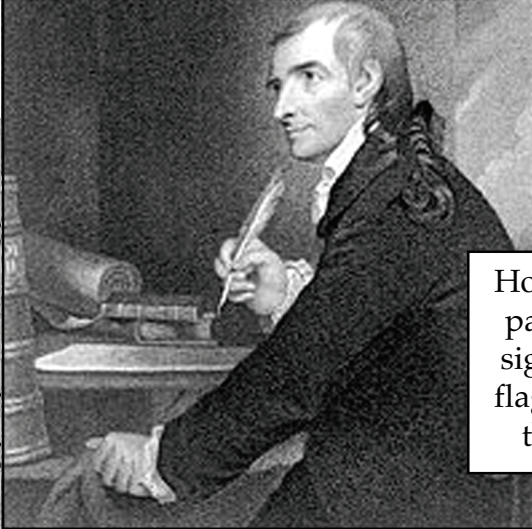


Parnell entered Trinity college in Dublin at age 13, became a minister, and was an eventual pal of Alexander Pope and Jonathan Swift.



Friend of George Washington, Hopkinson signed the Declaration of Independence (above left).

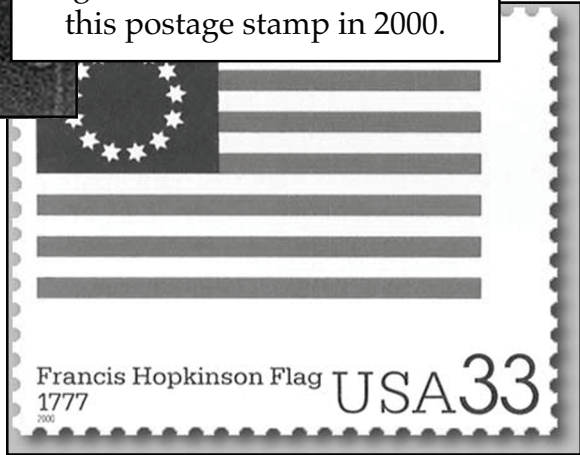
Sources:
www.findagrave.com/
www.wikipedia.org/
www.contemplator.com/
www.recmusic.org/



Hopkinson was a lawyer, poet, painter, and inventor. He designed various versions of the flag, one of which was used on this postage stamp in 2000.



Above is the ancient notation manuscript. You can hear a MIDI version of the melody at:
www.contemplator.com/midimusic/daysbeen.mid



SWBMAI adds instructors, options to jam class program

The Southern Wisconsin Bluegrass Music Association has expanded its instructor-led jam class program and now features different instructors every Tuesday, every week, all year long.

And the classes aren't all just for beginners anymore. The second Tuesday is geared specifically for seasoned players looking to polish their skills.

Private lessons usually cost about \$1 per minute. SWBMAI makes group lessons available to everyone and anyone for a mere \$5 suggested instructor donation for a class that typically runs for over an hour.



Tuesday jam class instructor line-up

- *1st Tuesday, 7:30pm – John Peik's Beginners' Jam* – Jon Peik continues the popular class sessions that laid the foundation for all SWBMAI jam classes. Jon is accomplished on guitar, mandolin, 5-string banjo, keyboard and acoustic bass. Jon is a founding and current member of the Nob Hill Boys and Above the Town. He teaches at Spruce Tree Music, Hartland Music and works as the music coordinator at his church.
- *2nd Tuesday, 7:00pm – Chris Powers' Improving Players Jam* – Chris Powers sings and plays guitar, mandolin, bouzouki and mandola with the Old Tin Can String Band. He has been the band leader for the Madison string bands Twang City Bluegrass, Bluegrass Survivors and The Hardly Brothers. He teaches the course "Folk and Bluegrass Jam" for the UW-Extension, and regularly taught the "Folk Ensemble" classes at School of the Arts at Rhinelander. He also hosts a weekly radio show, the "Mud Acres Bluegrass Special," on WORT-FM.
- *3rd Tuesday, 8:00pm – David Nance's Beginner's Jam* – Dave Nance may just be one of SWBMAI's leading Renaissance men. By day he is a hard-working attorney but in his free time you'll often find him immersed in his dual hobbies of music and photography. Dave is self-taught and plays guitar, dobro, mandola and bass. He's a regular at many area jams and is a member of the Weary Travelers Traveling Band.
- *4th Tuesday, 7:00pm – Catherine Rhyner and Mary Helmke's Good Old Days Jam* – According to Catherine, this instructor-led beginner session is "another chance to go out to play music and just jam, jam, jam. Everyone is welcome ... sit up front, sit in the back, you can play, lead, follow, sing or just hang. We don't care. We promise to keep the music going in a safe, coming-out, come-as-you-are environment. Please, come on down for a bit of the good old days."
- *May 12th, 7:00pm – John Fabke's Improving Players Jam* – John Fabke specializes in the old-time instrumental and vocal styles on banjo, guitar and mandolin. He is a highly experienced instructor and has been involved in the "Bluegrass in the Schools" program. Selected performances include "A Prairie Home Companion," NPR Clearwater Broadcast, Festival of Appalachian String Band Music, as well as an appearance with the award-winning Nob Hill Boys. John also hosts the weekly radio show, "Pastures of Plenty," on WORT 89.9 FM.



Natalia Zukerman

Antje Duvekot



Madison Folk Music Society

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Natalia Zukerman / Antje Duvekot

Natalia Zukerman's music is a cross-genre blend of blues, jazz, bluegrass and folk. Her songs are characterized by dense, cryptic lyrics that lack at traditional chorus-verse structure. The subject matter ranges from the whimsical to the metaphysical, with a vocal style reflecting strong jazz influences. Antje Duvekot is one of the brightest singer-songwriters to rise out of Boston's competitive acoustic music scene. Singer songwriter Ellis Paul says, "Antje is the rare artist that can write about the social and the personal in the same breath. She is as understated as she is wise and her songs go down mentally as well as soulfully. Her voice has a sound of innocence and naivety which makes razor sharp insights into the human condition." The two co-bill at the High Noon Saloon 4/11 at 7:00pm. Tickets are \$12 advance/\$10 door.

The Mad Folk Refrigerator Cover

April 2009

Mad Folk Events

On the Air



Sparky and Rhonda Rucker
Fri, 4/17 -- 8:00 at Immanuel Lutheran Church, 1021 Spaight St. -- \$14 advance /\$16 day of show

Karen Savoca & Pete Heitzman (co-sponsored by Mad Toast Live)
Tue, 5/05 -- 7:00 at The Brink Lounge, 701 E. Washington. -- \$14 advance /\$16 day of show

Tracy Grammer
Sat, 5/09 -- 8:00 at the Wil_Mar Center, 953 Jenifer St.. -- \$14 advance /\$16 day of show



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.

- 4/05 -- Classic traditional songs
- 4/12 -- Listener request program
- 4/19 -- Spring
- 4/26 -- An "Old-Timey" night with Bovee and Heil, Mike Seeger

Venues



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

The Brink Lounge

- Wed, 4/01 -- special *Mad Toast Live!* (see below)
- Sat, 4/04 -- Luke Sayers and the Last to Know -- 9:00
- Wed, 4/08 -- Aaron Williams and the Hoodoo
- Thur, 4/09 -- Robert J Acoustic Duo -- 7:00
- Sat, 4/11 -- Mark Croft Band CD Release party w/Amy Curl and Dan Kennedy -- 8:30pm -- \$10
- Thur, 4/16 -- John Statz Singer/Sonwriter Showcase w/Jana Holland & Cait Shanahan
- Wed, 4/22 -- Madison Songwriters Group, Songwriters in the Round -- 6:30
- Tues -- *Mad Toast Live!* music, talk and variety show hosted by Chris Wagoner and Mary Gaines -- no cover -- this month's guests:
 - 4/01 (Wed) -- Peter & Lou Berryman (7:30); Dan Newton and the Daddy Squeeze Trio (9:00) -- \$7.00
 - 4/07 -- The Old Tin Can String Band (8:00); Larkin (9:00)
 - 4/14 -- James Seem and Melissa Hyman (8:00); Cris and Ann Plata (9:00)
 - 4/21 -- KG and the Ranger (8:00); Richard Wiegel (9:00)
 - 4/28 -- Andy Ewen and Randal Harrison (8:00); The Micah Olsan Band (9:00)



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

Brocach Irish Pub

- Suns -- Live Irish Music -- 5:00pm
- Tues -- Open Mic w/Mark Croft -- 8:30pm
- Weds -- Live Irish Music Sessions -- 8:30pm
- Thurs -- Old Tin Can String Band (bluegrass) -- 9:00 pm



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

Cafe Carpe

- Thur, 4/02 -- Chris Spheris -- 8:00 -- \$15
- Fri, 4/03 -- Ernie Hendrickson -- 8:30pm -- \$7.50
- Sat, 4/04 -- Open Stage
- Thur, 4/09 -- New Pioneers -- 7:00pm -- \$7.50
- Fri, 4/10 -- Women in a Row w/ Michelle Dalziel, Tricia Alexander, Deborah Greene, Lojo Russo -- 8:30pm -- \$10.00
- Sat, 4/11 -- Jim Post -- \$15 (advance recommended)
- Thur, 4/16 -- Claudia Russell -- 8:00 -- \$12.50
- Thur, 4/21 -- Claudia Schmidt -- 7:30pm -- \$12.50
- Fri, 4/24 -- Stacey Earle & Mark Stuart -- 8:30pm -- \$12.50
- Sat, 4/25 -- Mike Dowling w/Randy Sabien -- 8:30pm -- \$20 advance



701A E. Washington
www.high-noon.com
608-268-1122

High Noon Saloon

- Wed, 4/08 -- Greensky Bluegrass -- 9:00 -- \$10 (18 +)
- Fri, 4/10 -- Richard Buckner / The Daredevil Christopher Wright -- 7:00 -- \$10 (18 +)
- Sat, 4/11 -- Natalia Zukerman / Antje Duvekot -- 7:00 -- \$12 /\$10 advance (18 +)
- Thur, 4/16 -- Ellis Paul -- 7:00 -- (18 +)
- Fri, 4/17 -- The Handsome Family / Marissa Nadler -- 9:30 -- \$12 (21 +)
- Sat, 4/18 -- Sugar Maple Festival Fundraiser / Sloppy Joe / Joel Paterson / Art Stevenson & High Water -- 8:00 -- (21 +)
- Sun, 4/19 -- Trampled by Turtles -- 8:00 -- \$14 /\$12 advance (18 +)
- Tue, 4/21 -- Maria Taylor / Whispertown -- \$10 /\$8 advance (18+)



1011 Williamson
motherfools.com
608-259-1301

Mother Fool's Coffeehouse

- Fri, 4/03 -- Ben Connelly w/Hayward Williams
- Sat, 4/04 -- John Fabke & Dave Fallow



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

Wild Hog in the Woods Coffeehouse

- Fri, 4/03 -- Steve Schad -- 8:00pm
- Fri, 4/10 -- Bill and Bobbi Malone w/Blue State Boys Dana O'Brien and John Fabke -- 8:00pm
- Fri, 4/17 -- Jefferson County Bluegrass Band -- 8:00pm
- Fri, 4/24 -- High School Acoustic Night -- 8:00pm



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 Country** (country music on a theme) w/Bill Malone & Jeff Hickey
- Thur -- **Diaspora** (folk and international) w/Terry O'
- Fri -- **Mud Acres** (bluegrass and acoustic) w/Chris Powers

Madison Dance

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

Cajun Dance with Jim Schwall and the Cajun Strangers -- 4/05 -- Harmony Bar -- #2201 Atwood -- 249-4333

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

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 www.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 -- UW Memorial Union, 800 Langdon St. -- 238-9951

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

Attn: Venue Managers & Gig Players!

To have your folk music concert information included in *Mad Folk News*: 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.

Gigs

Sarazin Blake

- Tue, 4/15 -- Cafe Montmartre, 127 E. Mifflin -- 9:00 -- (608) 255-5900

Radical Classical w/Rich Bauman

- Tue, 4/28 -- House concert at 3013 Nottingham Way -- 7:00 -- \$10 -- (608) 274-6340

Todd Lorenz

- Thur, 4/02 -- Jitters, 471 N. Prairie St., Whitewater -- 8:00 -- free -- (262) 472-JAVA

Jim Schwall

- Sun, 4/05 -- Cajun Strangers at Harmony Bar & Grill, 2201 Atwood Ave. -- 7:00 -- (608) 249-4333
- Mon, 4/27 -- Crystal Corner Bar, 1301 Williamson St. -- 9:30 -- (608) 256-2953