

# Mad Folk News

## Madison acoustic musicians to perform Heat Aid benefit shows

An eclectic assortment of Madison musicians will perform this December at Heat Aid, a series of three shows that will raise money for the Keep Wisconsin Warm/Cool Fund.

The shows will take place the first three Saturdays in December, at 2 p.m., at MadCity Music Exchange, 600 Williamson St.

The series kicks off December 1 with the excellent acoustic blues and ragtime of Boo Bradley. Scott “Boo” Kiker’s slide guitar and versatile vocals make this one of the most compelling acoustic acts in Madison.

On December 8, the music takes a more avant-garde direction. Throat-

singer DB Pedersen will perform an improvised collaboration with the Brothers Grimm, a local duo featuring guitar and Chinese stringed instruments. This bill also features Spires That In The Sunset Rise, who re-interpret folk in a haunting and primordial vein.

The series wraps up on December 15 with sets from Dietrich Gosser and The Tiny Band. Gosser is one of Madison’s finest singer-songwriters, and The Tiny Band feature several Madison music veterans playing covers and originals on small instruments, including ukulele and a mini drum kit.

Listeners are urged to make tax-deductible donations to aid the fund, which

helps Wisconsinites pay their power bills in times of need. Those donating \$5 or more will receive a Keep Wisconsin Warm bear, while supplies last. The Fund and MadCity Music Exchange will provide raffle prizes. MadCity will also donate to the fund a portion of its sales from the show dates.

For more information on the Fund, or to make a donation, please visit [kwf.org](http://kwf.org).

The shows are presented by Arts Extract ([madisonartsextract.com](http://madisonartsextract.com)), a weekly podcast about music and the arts in Madison.

## Garnet Rogers Jan. 18 at The Brink

♪ Join us for what is sure to be a magical evening of songs and stories as we welcome back Garnet Rogers to The Brink!

“A brilliant songwriter. One of the major talents of our time.”

— The Boston Globe

Garnet sings extraordinary songs about people who are not obvious heroes and of the small victories of the everyday. As memorable as his songs, his dry humor and lightning-quick wit moves his audience from tears to laughter and back again. It is easy to see how he has become a Madison favorite.

“The greatest interpreter and vocalist performing in the contemporary folk

scene.”

— Sing Out

Garnet Rogers has established himself as ‘One of the major talents of our time’. Hailed by the Boston Globe as a “charismatic performer and singer,” Garnet is a man with a powerful physical presence - close to six and a half feet tall - with a voice to match. With his “smooth, dark baritone” (Washington Post) his incredible range, and thoughtful, dramatic phrasing, Garnet is widely considered by fans and critics alike to be one of the finest singers anywhere. His music, like the man himself, is literate, passionate, highly sensitive, and deeply purposeful.

Resolutely independent, Garnet Rogers has turned down offers from major labels to do his music his own way.



## SILVER AND GOLD: SONGS FOR CHRISTMAS VOLS 6-10

SUFJAN STEVENS ~ 2012 ASTHMATIC KITTY



Review by Kiki Schueler

Sufjan Stevens first registered on most people's indie folk consciousness in 2003 with the release of *Michigan*, a celebration of his home state, which he announced was the first in his fifty states project. Writing an album for every state seemed a lofty goal (I mean, a whole album about Rhode Island? Really?), but he seemed good for it with the release of *Illinois* two years later. While he seems to have forgotten about that pursuit (or maybe he just realized at that rate he would be 137 before he finished), he has not forgotten about Christmas, apparently not even for one minute. Every year since 2001 he has recorded an EP of holiday songs for friends and family. In 2006 *Songs for Christmas Vols 1-5* was released, and he follows that up this year with *Silver and Gold*, which contains the next six volumes. The box set includes a host of extras—including an eighty-page booklet, a poster, tattoos, and an ornament—which reinforces the already strong impression that he really, really likes Christmas.

Or does he? The six volumes here aren't exactly reverential despite including a healthy number of hymns and traditionals. "We Wish You a

Merry Christmas" sounds exactly like it was recorded during a night of spirited caroling, but you would have a hard time singing along with the unlikely bleeps and bleeps of the four-minute-plus "Good King Wenceslas." "Joy to the World" starts off the way you remember it before turning into a trippy electronic fantasy. "Do You Hear What I Hear?" is a nine-minute vocoder dance remix, while the snippet "Angels We Have Heard on High" was apparently recorded by a drunken Salvation Army band. More interesting are the nonreligious songs, like the achingly pretty, lo-fi "Let It Snow, Let It Snow, Let It Snow!" and "Sleigh Ride," which plays it surprisingly straight for its first half before getting silly. The well-worn "Jingle Bells" starts with refreshing promise before its off-kilter charm turns into a generic children's sing-along.

About half the songs here are original compositions that range from the bizarre (the decidedly non-Christmasy instrumental "Even the Earth Will Perish and the Universe Give Way") to the truly out there (the still very catchy "Ding-a-ling-a-ring-a-ling") to the decidedly normal (um, nevermind, there's nothing conventional about any of these songs). For example, his version of "Angels We Have Heard on High" asks "Have you seen a flying saucer?" even while maintaining the Gloria guise of the original. Stevens steers clear of the Frostys and Rudolphs, but he has his own characters, like "Mr. Frosty Man" and "Christmas Unicorn." The former is apparently much hipper than that snowman made of Christmas snow. To wit, "he's got a friend called Coolio, Vanilla Ice and Ice Cube," and instead of melting "when summer comes he sits inside the air conditioning." The

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latter is much, much more complicated. It's twelve and a half minutes long, incorporates Joy Division's "Love Will Tear Us Apart," and features lyrics like "Oh I'm a pagan heresy; I'm a tragical Catholic shrine; I'm a little bit shy, with a lazy eye, and a penchant for sublime."

Bing Crosby he's not, but it's certainly more interesting than an entire album about North Dakota. And if you don't care about all the swag included in the \$30 box set, all 58 songs are available streaming on Bandcamp. Happy holidays!



## Yorgesson Yule

The other day my wife Kristi and I were reminiscing about Christmas music from our formative (?) years. She brought up a song which her mother dearly loved and played at one time or another every Christmas for years on an old 78 rpm record player. The song was released in 1949, but I first met Kristi's parents in 1979, and they were still playing it then, thirty years after its debut, and continued to play it for many years after that. I bought an mp3 of it and Kristi and I are continuing the tradition. It's right up there on the party mix with Dylan's version of *Must Be Santa*.

Kristi's mother was a devout Lutheran. Was the song a deeply spiritual Lutheran holiday carol? No. She also was proud of her Norwegian heritage; was it a nostalgic song about Christmas in Norway? No. The song? *I Yust Go Nuts At Christmas*, by Yogi Yorgesson.

The song is one more dysfunctional family Christmas song in a long tradition of such holiday ditties; I've written a few of them myself. It's tempting to write songs like these because Christmas is so over the top when it comes to sentimentality, it's necessary to blow the treacle out of the brainpipes now and then. One of the verses in *I Yust Go Nuts At Christmas* is, for example,

*Yust before Christmas dinner  
I relax to a point  
Then relatives start swarming  
All over the joint  
On Christmas I hug  
And I kiss my wife's mother  
The rest of the year  
We don't speak to each other.*

This verse and others in the song remind me of my own vastly less popular *Big Dead Bird* song which has such regrettable verses as:

*Smelly Uncle Charlie  
He brings his wife.  
The one he calls Fartblossom  
And chases with a knife*

*The kids go build a roadblock  
For Santa's sleigh  
Gonna have a big dead bird for dinner  
On Christmas Day.*

Anyway, popular even today in many a goofy household, *I Yust Go Nuts at Christmas* is still one of Dr. Demento's most requested Christmas songs. Written and sung by Yogi Yorgesson, it is delivered with an exaggerated Scandinavian accent, more Swedish than anything else. I wondered if Yorgesson was really Swedish, so I did the usual bit of Googling.

No, he wasn't Swedish; in fact he was Norwegian. His real name was Harry Edward Stewart. According to a short but sweet online biography written by Steve Howard (see "yogiyorgesson" URL, below), Harry's father, Hans Skarbo, had emigrated to the US with Hans' older brother Nels and a sister, settling in the Tacoma, Washington area. When Harry was two, his mother Elise died in childbirth. Hans was grief stricken and unable to care for the children, so he put Harry up for adoption with the Stewart family. Harry's older brother George (b 1906) and sister Frieda (b 1902) were raised by Hans' brother, Nels. It's not clear why Harry was handled differently than his siblings, who, incidentally, were led to believe that Nels and not Hans was their biological father.

At any rate, I would guess that these unfortunate or at least unusual family circumstances helped provide Harry material for a lot of his goofball family-based songs, including such titles as *Aunt Freida is Enjoying Poor Health*, and *Someone Spiked The Punch At Lena's Wedding*. (Though my favorite title of his is another Christmas song, *I Give Up, What Is It?*)

The banjo-playing and goofy songwriting Harry Stewart made his way down to Los Angeles in his early 20s, looking for a radio job. Without much luck looking for work, the inspiration came to him to reinvent himself as Yogi Yorgesson, the Swedish mystic, who would gaze into his inverted fishbowl to answer questions from the audience in a thick Swedish accent. How do ideas like that *come* to people?

Yumping ahead a few years, in 1949 his Christmas songs, *I Yust Go Nuts at Christmas* and the flip side, *Yingle*

*Bells*, became pretty big hits, particularly in — of course — Minnesota. He put together a tour of that state, but his "Yogi" mystic character bombed. So he went back home and reinvented himself once more in a sort of "Red Green" style of rural bloke, though he apparently kept the stage name of Yogi Yorgesson. He booked another tour of Minnesota and surrounding states in 1951 and did much better.

I found a few ads in Minnesota and Wisconsin newspaper archives for his show. Wisconsin's *Monroe Evening Times* for Friday April 20, 1951, had an advertisement for Yogi Yorgesson playing at Turner Hall on Sunday the 22nd with his "Old time comedy orchestra." Cover charge was \$1.50 (about \$14 in 2012 money).

The *Austin Daily Herald* of Austin, MN, dated Wednesday, April 25, 1951, had an article titled "Yogi Yorgesson at Terp Tuesday," which would have been May 1st. It said he was to appear at the Terp ballroom in Austin. "This is one of more than 60 one-night stands Yogi and his Scandahoovians are playing on a five state tour through the Midwest... Yorgesson hits include *My Little Old Shack in Minneapolis Minnesota*, *Real Gone Galoot*, and *Nincompoops Have All the Fun*."

Harry Edward Stewart developed other characters and had a colorful life in the entertainment business, but unfortunately it was too brief. He apparently fell asleep at the wheel of his car after a performance in Ely, Nevada, in May of 1956, and was killed when it rolled over. He was only 48 years old, which, in my advanced years, seems very, very young.

As of this writing, there are online sites where you can hear samples of Harry's songs, and others where mp3's can be purchased. According to the site from which I took much of the info for this column, CD's can be ordered of all his songs. See the URL's below. Happy Holidays, and please drive judiciously your yeeps.

- [www.madmusic.com/song\\_details.aspx?SongID=851](http://www.madmusic.com/song_details.aspx?SongID=851)
- [www.yogiyorgesson.com/](http://www.yogiyorgesson.com/)
- [www.wikipedia.org/](http://www.wikipedia.org/)
- [www.madisonpubliclibrary.org/](http://www.madisonpubliclibrary.org/)
- *Monroe Evening Times*, 4/20/51
- *Austin Daily Herald*, 4/25/51

# The Mad Folk Refrigerator Cover

December 2012

## Mad Folk Events



Garnet Rogers

Friday, January 18  
The Brink Lounge -- 701 E. Washington Ave -- 7pm  
\$15 adv / \$17 d.o.s.

## Venues



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

### Cafe Carpe

All shows at 8:30pm unless indicated otherwise

- Sat, Dec 1 -- Lamplighter - Peter Mulvey / Randy Sabien / Count This Penny-- \$20 adv.
- Thu, Dec 6 -- Lamplighter - Peter Mulvey / Paul Cebar / Dayna Kurtz / John Sieger -- \$20 adv.
- Fri, Dec 7 -- Lamplighter - Peter Mulvey / Claudia Schmidt / Dayna Kurtz / Bill Camplain -- \$20 adv.
- Dec 12-13 -- Lamplighter - Redbird -- \$30 adv.
- Sat, Dec 15 -- Lamplighter - Peter Mulvey / David Goodrich / Bill Camplain / Satchel Paige -- \$20 adv.
- Sun, Dec 16 -- Lamplighter - Peter Mulvey / Birds of Chicago / David Goodrich -- \$20 adv.
- Fri, Dec 21 -- Chad Elliott w/ Bonita Crowe
- Sat, Dec 22 -- New Pioneers -- 8pm -- \$12
- Wed, Dec 26 -- The Merry Horde -- 7:30pm
- Fri, Dec 28 -- Devil in the Outhouse -- 8pm -- \$8 / \$4 Students



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

### The Brink Lounge

- Tue, Dec 4 -- Arkadiy Yushin / Lucas Cates Band -- \$5 donation
- Tue, Dec 18 -- Zachary Scot Johnson / Micah Olsan Band -- \$5 donation



## Jigs

Saturday, December 1, Harmony Bar, Madison, 9:30 PM -- Jim Schwall Band with Andy Ewen. Cover.

Thursday, December 13, Wisconsin Dells - Jim Schwall Band with Andy Ewen.

Saturday, December 15, Beverly IL -- Siegel-Schwall Band Christmas show.

Monday, December 17, Crystal Corner Bar, Madison, 9:30 PM -- Solo acoustic. Tip jar.

Friday, December 21, Wild Hog In The Woods Coffeehouse, Wilmar Center, Madison, 7:00 PM -- Singer-songwriter show with Rich Baumann, others. Donation.

## Misc

Saturday December 1st, 3rd, 15th -- Heat Aid Benefit shows at MadCity Music Exchange -- 600 Williamson St.

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

Bob's BBQ Emporium's Open Mic - Thu, Dec 20 -- 7pm -- 8164 Hwy. 14 Arena, WI

Cajun jam held every first Sunday 2 p.m.-5 p.m.

At the Froth House: 11 N. Allen St., Madison We welcome all levels of experience with instruments and Cajun music.

kcholden@wisc.edu for more info. [www.prairiebayoucajun.com](http://www.prairiebayoucajun.com)

## On the Air



Simply Folk on Wisconsin Public Radio w/ Stephanie Elkins, Interim Host

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](http://www.wpr.org/simplyfolk).



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

- Mon - Global Revolutions (folk from the world over) w/ David & Martin Alvarado & Eugenia Highland
- Tue -- For the Sake of the Song (traditional American folk) w/Jim Schwall
- Wed -- Back to the Country (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

WSUM 91.7 student radio

- Sun, 9am-10am -- Exiles Return w/ Elizabeth Delaquess

## 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 Strangers- Sun 12/23 - High Noon Saloon, Madison. -- 6pm Donation

• SpiritMoves Ecstatic Dance 2nd and 4th Weds, 7:00-9:00 pm -- The Center for Conscious Living, 849 East Washington Ave. -- \$7 min. donation

• English Country Dance taught -- 1st and 3rd Mon, 7:30-9:30pm -- Wil-Mar Center, 953 Jenifer St. -- 238-9951 or 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 [celticmadison.org/dance](http://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

## Mad Folk 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](http://www.madfolk.org) and at these outlets:

- Orange Tree Imports, 1721 Monroe Street
- Spruce Tree Music, 851 East Johnson

Purchase tickets ONLINE for Mad Folk concerts via Brown Paper Tickets:

<https://www.brownpapertickets.com/producer/10879>

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.

**Is this your last copy of Mad Folk News?**  
There are two ways to renew your tax-deductible membership

### Way #1 – online

Visit [www.madfolk.org](http://www.madfolk.org) and click on "Join MFMS"

### Way #2 – unplugged

Complete, clip, and mail this form

Madison Folk Music Society

join    renew

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
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Choose membership category: Senior \$8 \_\_\_\_\_  
Student \$10 \_\_\_\_\_  
Regular \$12 \_\_\_\_\_  
Family \$15 \_\_\_\_\_  
Friend \$25 \_\_\_\_\_  
Contributing \$50 \_\_\_\_\_  
Life \$500 \_\_\_\_\_  
Scholarship fund donation (optional) \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_

GOING GREEN - Send my newsletters electronically by email

Send your check, payable to MFMS to: Mad Folk c/o  
Tracy Comer, P.O. Box 930446 Verona, WI 53593-0446

Madison Folk Music Society  
P.O. Box 665, Madison, WI 53701  
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Renew your membership today at  
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