



Coronavirus Forces Cancellation of Coffeehouse Concerts, Folk Festival

The COVID-19 pandemic that has closed down all non-essential activities throughout the United States and the rest of the world has had a similar effect on central Ohio and the folk music activities that were planned for the spring season.

Americana / Folk Concert Series

Scheduled for: Sat March 28 (Dan Weber) (rescheduled for 3-27-21)
 Scheduled for: Sat April 25 (Buffalo Rose) (rescheduled for 2-27-21)

Central Ohio Folk Festival

Scheduled for: May 2 & 3 (we will look forward to seeing you May 1 & 2, 2121) !

Restaurants, bars, fitness centers and gyms, hair cutting salons, schools, churches, even libraries....all are closed and Americans have been asked to “shelter in place,” i.e., self quarantine and limit contact with others, until the pandemic can be brought under control.

For just about everyone, this is uncharted territory. Nothing like this has ever happened within anyone’s lifetime.

Your Columbus Folk Music Society will be prepared to resume normal activities as soon as conditions permit. Watch for news and developments on our website:

<https://www.columbusfolkmusicsociety.org/>

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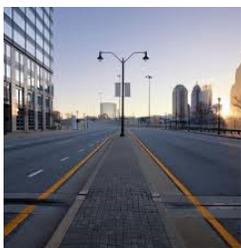
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Community Singing: The Comeback

This article by Jim Walsh was printed in the April 7, 2011 edition of the MinnPost. We reprinted with permission in the October 2014 issue of *A Different Strummer* and we are again reprinting it in our April/May 2020 issue.

Forward: Oct, 2014: In Minneapolis, thanks to a group of women organizing the project, today community sings are becoming more and more popular. One of the organizers, Betty Tisel, explains her enthusiasm for starting up the project in an article appearing in an April 7, 2011 issue of the MinnPost which follows below. To see what they're doing in Minneapolis, visit: <http://mnsings.com>.
Update April, 2014: Now is a good time to reflect on the power of singing together as is evidenced throughout the world, with people across all nations finding creative ways to sing together – even though they are separated physically due to the coronavirus.

Unimaginable today, but the page one banner headline of the July 27, 1930, *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune* blared: "MINNEAPOLIS IS TEACHING AMERICA HOW TO SING." The biggest story that day was about people of all singing stripes coming together to lift their voices in area parks – a phenomenon that is on its way to being revived by Betty Tisel, a Minneapolis native/singer/activist, who launched Minnesota Community Sings with a couple of friends last year. "I have put a lot of energy into the community singing movement in Minnesota," says Tisel, between securing microphone stands and Braille song sheets for the next community sing. . . . "Doing this work has meant my doing less political activism, but I feel OK about this because the payoff for community singing is that people get refueled for the struggles we have to keep working on together.

'Sing More, Worry Less'

One of the Minnesota Community Sing's slogans is "Sing More, Worry Less" – not a bad meditative approach at a time when the human race is worried about everything from potholes and poverty to natural disasters and nuclear meltdown.

"Maybe there is a time and place for worrying; as you know, there is a heck of a lot to worry about," says Tisel. "But community singing feeds us so that we can go out and keep on trying to make the world a better place. Singing brings me joy and a sense of vitality that is the essence of what I think of as good health.

Singing in a group also raises your level of oxytocin, which makes you feel good and trust others."

The community sing has a rich history, most notably in the film "The Singing Revolution," which documents Estonians overcoming Soviet rule in the late '80s via community sings. As for the roots of Minnesota's community sings, Tisel knows her history.

"During World War I, community singing was mandated by state governments, including in Minnesota, as a way to keep spirits up, propagate patriotism, solidify culture, and to basically keep an eye on people," she says. "A statewide community song poobah was given the task of making sure that every county and township had volunteer community song leaders and regular gatherings for singing."

Phenomenon spread after the war

"After the war, community singing kept spreading. My singing buddy Bret Hesla and I became aware of the postwar Minneapolis park singing after Theodore Wirth's seminal book on the history of the Minneapolis Park system was reissued in 2006. It's all there: For decades, people by the thousands went to their neighborhood parks to sing together on summer evenings. These community sings were co-sponsored by the Minneapolis Park Board and the Minneapolis Tribune. The Tribune provided excellent coverage. Imagine: standings printed in the paper, big honking trophies for the best singing park – it was the 'American Idol' of participatory culture."

Saturday's sing is part of the Neighborhood Sustainability Conference, and will feature a multimedia presentation on the 35-year history of the community sing in Minnesota.

"Community singing is participatory culture," says Tisel. "It's different from a choir – everyone is welcome and there is no practice or performance. It's different from a concert: there is not an audience; everyone sings. When people spend an hour or two singing together, they tend to get energized, feel connected, and leave saying, 'When can we do this again?'"



Minneapolis Tribune archive



A Riverside Park community sing, circa 1921

Jammers Play and Sing “Together” Despite Coronavirus Crisis

It's not the same as playing and singing together in person, but CFMS jammers have found a high-tech way to keep the spirit of their jamming alive, while still obeying “social distancing” guidelines from health officials in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Using an app called Zoom, jammers have been able to play and sing into their computers or smart phones, while simultaneously seeing several others. Everyone appears in their own little box on the screen.

One drawback, though: because of half-second time delays in the audio, the system only works well if one person plays and sings for everyone else, while the others all mute their own audio. The result? Each person can play and sing along to the person who “has the microphone,” but the only person who can be heard by everyone over the computer is the lead person. Still, everyone gets a chance to lead a song or two, as the virtual microphone is passed around the group.

On March 19, one group of jammers got together and symbolized the fact that distance was no hurdle. Most of the jammers were at home in Columbus, but Charlie Flowers joined in from his vacation home along Lake Huron in Michigan, Mike Zajano joined in from his new home in New Hampshire, and Nancy Kovacs joined in while vacationing in North Carolina.

The jams began with a schedule of Thursdays and Saturdays, but quickly, the jammers saw a need to expand their plan to every day of the week at 10 a.m. To access the jams, you can link up with the Zoom app by going to this address:

<https://zoom.us/j/417684853>

**You probably won't be asked for an ID
But IF you are asked, type in this
ID: 417 684 853**

**CFMS member Mary Finney is helping
coordinate the daily jams. If you have
trouble accessing the zoom app, you
can email her with questions**



Bill Cohen playing with others during a virtual jam

Singing Together

Our world is changing day by day, even hour by hour, and we are forced to adapt to alternative ways of existing through the current health crisis which reaches across national boundaries.

Meanwhile, here are some uplifting samples of folks from around the world singing and clapping and in general, and just being united!

ITALY: Jenna Vehviläinen Tweeted:

A whole Roman neighborhood singing a popular Italian song “Volare” from their balconies and waving at each other. An amazing flash mob to lift the spirit in these crazy times ♡☐
#Italy #coronavirus #forzaitalia #roma #flashmob #love
<https://twitter.com/jennavehvi/status/1238515371063357440?s=20>

GERMANY: People in the Bavarian town of Bamberg, Germany, took to their rooftops and windows to sing ‘Bella ciao’, an Italian resistance song, in solidarity with Italy, where the death toll from the coronavirus outbreak continues to rise
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z5CrSciHAuE>

SPAIN: Heartwarming Applause for doctors as Coronavirus Lockdown begins
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mfl1b_zcX2w

USA / CALIFORNIA: Students sing together from home after coronavirus cancels concert.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZSPG186HvMg&list=RDZSPG186HvMg&start_radio=1

Member Profile: Hank Arbaugh



Hank Arbaugh is a true-blue Ohian, through and through. Born and raised in Upper Arlington, he went to college at Ohio University and while at OU he became involved in the nascent folk music revival. At some point during his undergraduate days, he acquired a Martin guitar, which he still plays to this day.

Hank gravitated away from what he considers the “commercial” folksingers.....Peter, Paul and Mary, The Kingston Trio.....and toward the “purer” folk artists like Mike Seeger and Peggy Seeger (Pete’s siblings) and the New Lost City Ramblers.

So Hank Arbaugh became a folk musician at OU and continued developing his repertoire during two masters programs (Education and English) at Ohio State. As a grad student he started performing at the Sacred Mushroom coffeehouse in Columbus. A class in traditional folk music at OSU helped to deepen and expand his understanding of the roots of folk music in England and Scotland and the migration of the songs to the Appalachian areas of the U.S.

Hank Arbaugh’s working years were spent as a high school English teacher. For 30 years he was a faculty member at Whitehall High School in Columbus. He continued performing during his working years, at the Sacred Mushroom and other venues in and around Franklin County.

He also found time to teach a class in the old ballads at OU and to guest lecture and perform at Ohio State.

The Martin guitar that Hank acquired in the 1960s was supplemented by a Taylor guitar as he expanded his repertoire and his range of performances. In addition to guitar, Hank also plays the mandolin and dobro. He has performed at folk festivals in Tennessee, Kentucky and West Virginia. For seven years he was a regular performer at the Smoky Mountain Folk Festival in North Carolina. On the local level, Hank Arbaugh can be seen performing traditional folk songs at Taranto’s Restaurant in Lewis Center and Stadz Restaurant in Blacklick every Monday evening.

A freak accident during a recent performance has temporarily sidelined Hank Arbaugh’s musical career. He tripped and fell while exiting the stage at an open mic session and fractured a hip. But he is undeterred and has been undergoing physical therapy and will be out performing again as soon as he is able.

Hank Arbaugh was involved with the Columbus Folk Music Society during its earliest days, serving as President for 5 years back in the 1960s. There were “just a few dozen members” in those days, he recalls. Today, he views it as his mission in life to preserve the old Child Ballads and other forms of traditional folk music. Once he is up and running once again, you will be able to see him at Taranto’s in Lewis Center, Stadz in Blacklick, and various open mics in Franklin County.

Come out and applaud this traditional artist who is carrying on our folk music heritage.



The Folk Community Seeks To Pay Back Old Friends

Remember the old Areopagitica Bookstore on North High Street in Clintonville? Remember how for several years it became a second home to the Columbus Folk Music Society, with its monthly coffeehouse, poetry readings, theater performances, and more? Remember how owners Doug and Rebecca Rutledge welcomed us?

Now the folk community has a chance to pay back Doug and Rebecca for all that hospitality. Doug passed away last year, and Rebecca is now severely pinched financially, saddled with a house that was torn up by renovations that were never completed and mortgage payments she is struggling to pay.

Doug and Rebecca never made a lot of money. Instead, after their bookstore was forced to close during the recession of 2009, they worked jobs that helped newly-arrived immigrants. Justice and kindness were more important to Rebecca and Doug than money was. Now, that priority has put Rebecca in a bind.

A “Go Fund Me” account has recently been created to take in contributions that could help Rebecca get back on her feet financially. Click on the link below to access this special fund and make your contribution:

https://www.gofundme.com/f/743na5-repaying-rebecca-rutledge-for-her-generosity?utm_source=customer&utm_medium=copy_link-tip&utm_campaign=p_cp+share-sheet

Note: Before this fundraising drive was one week old, donations topped the \$5,000 mark. That’s half-way toward the eventual goal: \$10,000.

If you knew Doug and Rebecca Rutledge during the days when they were providing a second home to the Folk Music Society, consider making a contribution, in whatever amount.



Pete Seeger: “No More Awards!”

Editor’s Note: This article, penned by Scott Alarik in 1996, seems fitting to rerun in the April/May edition of the CFMS newsletter, both because of the messaging Pete carried to the public as well as his prolific contributions to American tradition in the form of lyrics and music.

As a performer for nearly 70 years before his death in January, 2014, Pete Seeger embodied the ideals of folk music – communication, entertainment, commentary, historical continuity, and inclusiveness. “The songs he has written, and those he has discovered and shared, have helped preserve our cultural heritage, imprinting adults and children with the sounds, traditions and values of our global past and present.” (PeteSeegerMusic.com)

“Too many awards,” Pete Seeger said a little glumly. “After this, if somebody wants to give out awards, they can give them to somebody else. If they want me to come and sing for them, I’ll come sing.”

The legendary American folk singer has always been a most iconoclastic icon, and the awards heaped on him recently are heady fare indeed: the *National Medal of Arts* from the National Endowment for the Arts, the *Kennedy Center Lifetime Achievement Honor*, the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

As uncomfortable as he is with this kind of attention, he was genuinely pleased and honored when asked to accept the second *Harvard Arts Medal* (Jack Lemmon received the first in 1995): “My wife, Toshi, and I decided years ago that I would refuse any honorary degrees, since I’m not really part of academia, but that we would make an exception if Harvard asked.”

An arts award seems to sit better with the 76-year-old Seeger than an honorary degree, since he spent less than two years at Harvard, dropping out in 1938.

“Well, I guess I did take Fine Arts 1-A,” he said cheerfully, as if trying to help bolster Harvard’s case for the award. “Learned that the name for the curve on a Greek pillar is *entasis*. Gives a sense of weight, they said. Fine Arts 1-A.”

His brief Harvard career actually revealed much of the man he would become. He recalled attending classes with what is perhaps best described as a defining sense of independence, spending much more time working with the student union than with his studies, starting an underground paper called *The Harvard Progressive*, and becoming furious with a professor who always used the biggest, densest words possible; what Seeger has ever since called “scholar-gawk.”

Musically, he was not admitted to the jazz band because he couldn’t sight-read quickly enough (“I’ve been strictly an ear musician all my life”). He did join the Banjo Club, but its policy of learning just one tune at a time, practicing it exclusively until it was performed—and wearing tuxedos while performing—greatly abbreviated their association.

This month, Seeger is also celebrating a new printing of his wonderfully vivid, anecdote-rich and properly song-filled memoir “Where Have All the Flowers Gone?” (*Sing Out*), and his first studio recording in 17 years: the deliciously Seegeresque “Pete” on Paul Winter’s Living Music label. He said the project was Winter’s idea, since many of his more recent songs had not been recorded.

Seeger’s fame as crowd-pleasing folksinger, human rights advocate and environmental activist often eclipses his songwriting. He has penned some of the

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Pete Seeger: “No More Awards!”

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most memorable tunes in the American songbag: “Where Have All the Flowers Gone?,” “If I Had a Hammer” (with fellow Weaver Lee Hays), “Turn, Turn, Turn” (lyrics from Ecclesiastes).

His voice has suffered from what he calls “a wobble” for some years, but sounds great here, rich in texture and personality. Pete-purists may find it a bit overproduced, laced with Winter’s sax, Joanie Madden’s tin whistle and three separate vocal choruses. But it feels like a Seeger show, with lovely choral work and Pete joyfully urging the singing along.

Many of his best-loved anthems are here: “Well May the World Go,” “My Rainbow Race” and “All Mixed Up,” along with standards such as “Water Is Wide,” “Kisses Sweeter Than Wine” and “How Can I Keep from Singing?” It is always pretty and, though sometimes heavy on the choral arranging, all the more quintessential Seeger for including so many voices.

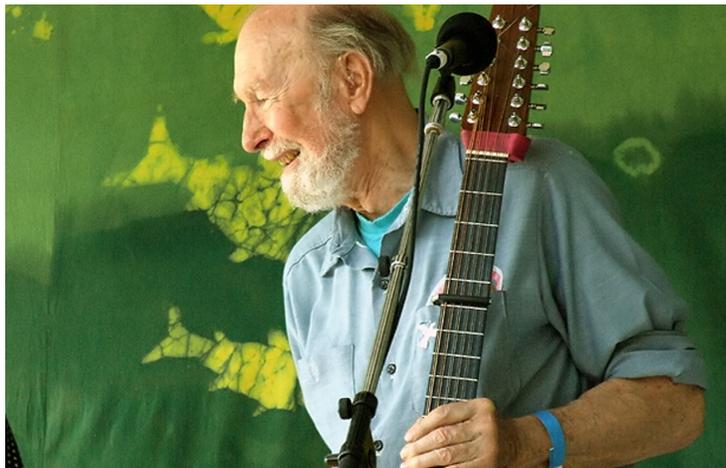
“My main purpose in life is not to put songs in people’s ears but to put them on their lips,” he said. “I think singing together is important, whether it’s a mother singing to a child or a family singing together or a choir. Because it’s a way people can relate to each other besides talking. Now, talking is good, but it has its limitations. My father called it the lingo-centric predicament. The world is full of people who say, ‘Aw, you can’t talk to them, they don’t make any sense.’ Or, ‘The only language they understand is guns.’

“I think we’re less human beings when we don’t participate, and this nation is being turned into a nation of spectators. For years I’ve joked about it, that people don’t bother participating in sports, they just watch a professional athlete. They don’t tell jokes to each other, they just watch a professional jokester. I’ve been on a campaign recently to get the papers to pay more attention to participation sports. They’re part of the problem, not the solution, if all they talk about are stars. And the supreme stupidity is a husband and wife sitting there watching a professional lover pretend to kiss a professional lover on TV. Is that what living is all about? No, you want to do something in this world, not just watch other people doing things. And singing, well, singing can lead to other things.”

—April 26, 1996

Taken from: ***Deep Community: Adventures in the Modern Folk Underground*** By **Scott Alarik**. Used with permission.

“Participation! It’s what all my work has been about.” – **Pete Seeger**



The Columbus Folk Music Society

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For credit card transactions, visit CFMS website at: <https://www.columbusfolkmusicsociety.org/member-application.html>

Membership amounts may be tax-deductible. My place of work matches donations:

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