

RJ Cowdery to Perform Her Introspective Music at April 30 Concert

INTERVIEW BY BILL COHEN

R J Cowdery will share her unique music in-person at 8pm on April 30 for the *Americana/Folk Concert Series* held at the Mennonite Church. Influenced by artists including Karen Carpenter, Indigo Girls and Nancy Griffith, RJ's inspired songwriting builds universal conversations from personal experiences. Columbus musician Brian Szuch will play backup lead guitar. The capacity restriction is lifted, so no need to pre-register. Masks will be encouraged but optional. There will be no checking of vaccination cards. This is all subject to change and barring drastic news from the health department. We will resume the open jam at 6pm.

Bill: It's a pleasure to welcome you back for an indoor, in-person show for CFMS. How badly did the Covid crisis interrupt your touring and your in-person concert schedule? Did you pivot to doing online shows?

RJ Cowdery: It's kind of fuzzy to look back on now, but I remember having to cancel a Texas tour in March, right when everybody was starting to shut down. I also remember that a couple venues were not too thrilled about me choosing not to come. Maybe it's a Texas

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Tribute to Songwriter and Performer, Bill Staines





BY MIKE ZAJANO

Bill Staines, a great folk songwriter and performer, left this life on December 5, 2021 after 74 delightful years. Staines wrote dozens, probably hundreds, of songs. Among his best known are "River," "A Place In The Choir," "The Roseville Fair," and "Music To Me." A gentle soul not given to a big stage or the limelight, Bill's songs are better known than he was.

Bill Staines was itinerant, driving tens of thousands of miles each year to play coffeehouses, small churches, and home concerts. He also appeared on *A Prairie Home Companion* and *NPR's Mountain Stage*, but not, as far as I can tell, on high profile venues like Red Rocks or Grand Ol' Opry.

He did an annual house concert in Warrenville, Illinois, that I always wanted to get to. My images of The Roseville Fair are of Warrenville's Fourth of July celebration. He lived about 30 minutes "up the road" from where we now live in NH, but COVID shut down our socializing.

Bill wrote his best-known song, "River," when he was 27. He epitomized folk music for me. His song "Salt Air" captures vivid memories I have of our visit, years ago, to Nantucket. I was a bit wary the first time I played "Down The Road" at a Saturday Farmers' Market jam, but the simple three-chord song was playable and melodic, and it got a great response.

The capstone of Bill's musical life, for me, is "If I Come To Need An Angel," the last line of which is, "If I come to need an angel, one will be there for me, I know."

I am sure that was true, Bill. May you rest in peace.

A gentle soul not given to ... the limelight, Bill's songs are better known than he was.

Mike Zajano



RJ Cowdery, from pg 1

thing, but I know it was the right choice and who would have known what would be to come. It all snowballed from there. I had just come out with a new recording that I was going to be touring and promoting with shows all over. I played a few online shows early on (and still do) but not to the extent of some of my friends. It wasn't an easy adjustment for me to play to a computer!

Bill: You are beloved for your introspective song writing, and you've earned many awards and accolades for it. In the past, one of your themes has been how you've felt like a "square peg in a round hole," but you've embraced and celebrated that role, so it's become an inspiring theme for us all. What impact did the Covid crisis have on your song writing? Did it interfere with it, or did it energize you? Did it prompt new themes and insights?

RJ Cowdery: I'm still dealing with the impact. It was really tough for me to think about being creative. Lots of anxiety related to the general state of the world at the time. Covid only amplified that for me. So, yes, it interfered but I'm OK because maybe I just needed to be an observer, be

a sponge for a while. Now, I'm back to trying to put those observations in song.

Bill: For people who've never heard you perform, how do you describe your music and your voice? Are there other well-known musicians that you try to emulate? Are there others who have inspired you?

RJ Cowdery: My music and voice are just me. It's hard to describe but growing up in Appalachia probably had an influence on my style. My family's collection of music absolutely has had an impact on my music today. Singing old time hymns and The Everly Brothers, Connie Smith and Hank Williams . . . to name a few. Plus, whatever was on the radio during the 70's. Karen Carpenter was the first voice that I probably tried to emulate. I still love that voice. There are lots of singer songwriters that have inspired me too (Mary Chapin Carpenter, John Gorka, John Denver, Indigo Girls, Cheryl Wheeler, Patty Larkin...). Nanci Griffith was a huge inspiration for me as a young adult. I just connected with her whole presence.

Bill: At your April 30 show, long-time Columbus musician and CFMS performer Brian Szuch will be backing you up on lead guitar. What kind of musical magic do you think he will add to the show?

RJ Cowdery: Brian is a gem. As a solo artist, he's great to play with because he knows what to bring to the song without stepping all over it. He'll add some great texture and we'll have a big fun!

Bill: You've been performing for decades now. You started as a "small-town girl"

The Central Ohio Folk Festival Workshops - a Cure for the At Home Blues



BY JEFF PUTNAM

Imagine that the last couple of years have kept you inside more than you like, or have prevented you from pursuing new interests, learning new skills, and meeting new friends. You're feeling a pent-up demand to get out and get going, maybe even in delightful spring weather amid beautiful natural surroundings. If this sounds like you or someone you know, you're in luck. The Central Ohio Folk Festival is right around the corner.

Over its 25-year history, the workshops have been an integral and popular part of the Central Ohio Folk Festival. They're a chance for attendees to learn musical skills at all levels in an intimate setting, interact with festival performers up close, and even try out a new instrument. This year's line-up of 31 workshops and 26 presenters is the most diverse and wide-ranging yet, with more cultures, traditions, and musical styles and instruments represented than ever before. You can find the complete schedule on the next page.

More than a dozen festival performers, including our headliners, the Way Down Wanderers, will be sharing their expertise in workshops in addition to their performances. Other experienced musician/presenters will focus on a variety of high-interest topics. Subjects range from songwriting, musical arranging, and the fundamentals of playing in a band to instruction at all levels on a dizzying array of instruments: guitar, mandolin, Irish and American fiddle, Scottish folk harp, ukulele, autoharp, mountain dulcimer, Native American flute, Chinese guzheng, Swedish nyckelharpa, various Latin percussion instruments, and even rhythm bones. For many of these workshops, loaner instruments will be available, allowing beginners to dip their feet, hands, and voices into the wide pool of traditional music.

Informational workshops will cover a range of subjects, including protest and social-justice music of the 1960s and beyond, traditional country music, how to get started in a jam group, playing music in hospitals and care facilities, and the past, present, and future of house concerts. For a more hands- (or voice-) on workshop experience, you (and your kids) can write a song together, learn some simple songs in Spanish, or learn to play the cigar box guitar you made in the instrument-making tent. A festival staple, the hymn/gospel spiritual sing, will get your Sunday morning off on the right foot.

Whether scratching your post-pandemic itch involves singing, playing, learning, or just listening, you'll find the cure for what ails you at one of our COFF workshops. Attend as many as you like—they're free once you're on the festival grounds!



PRESENTER

WORKSHOP TITLE AND LEVEL

ş	1244			
	THE WAY DOWN WANDERERS	Songwriting & Song Development as a Group (ALL)		
	BEE HUMANA	Latin Songs & Percussion for Kids – Bring the Kids! (ALL)		
	BILLY & EMILY	Song Arranging & Reimagining (ALL)		
	RACHEL CLEMENTE	Come & Try the Folk Harp (Some loaners available) (ADV BEG)		
	BILL COHEN	Anti-War Songs of the 60s: Reflecting History (ALL)		
	ELEXA DAWSON	Land-Based Songwriting: Connecting Place & Music (ALL)		
	GENELLE DENZIN	Introduction to Swedish Nyckelharpa (ALL)		
	JAMES FARTHING	Playing the Cigar Box Guitar (Some loaners available) (BEG/ADV BEG)		
	HAYES GRIFFIN	Essential Mandolin Skills (ALL)		
	PHIL HART	Songwriting with Kids – Bring the Kids! (BEG)		
	JOANNA LI	Guzheng (Chinese folk instrument) for Beginners (BEG)		
	THOM & JAN McCAIN	House Concerts: Past-Present-Future (ALL)		
	SHANE McLAUGHLIN & LUCY CLABBY	Songwriting: Harnessing Ideas & Getting Unstuck (by songwriters from Buffalo Rose) (ALL)		
	TYLER MOORE	Act Natural – Tips to Improve Your Fiddling (Some loaners available) (ALL) Adding Character — Irish Fiddle Ornamentation (INT/ADV)		
	JOHN MORGAN	Playing Music in Hospitals and Nursing Homes (ALL)		
	KATY OBERLE	Mindful Songwriting: Creating Meaningful Songs (ALL)		
	JEFF PUTNAM	Folk Guitar for Beginners (2 workshops, some loaners available) (BEG)		
	HOWARD & JUDY SACKS	Traditional Country Music (ALL)		
	BILL SCHILLING	Hymn/Gospel/Spiritual Sing (ALL) Beginning Melody Autoharp (Some loaners available) (ADV BEG)		
	LINDA SIGISMONDI	Learn Native American Flute (Some loaners available) (BEG) Playing Harmony on the Mountain Dulcimer (ADV BEG/INT)		
	SCHLENKER & GRIFFIN	Fundamentals of Playing in a Band (ADV BEG/INT)		
	ADAM SCHLENKER	Flatpick/Bluegrass Guitar: More Creative Breaks/Solos/Tunes (ALL)		
	EMILY SLOMOVITS	Learn to Play Rhythm Bones (Some loaners available) (ALL)		
	PAISHA THOMAS	The Role of Music in Social Change (ALL)		
	DEBORAH VAN KLEEF	Getting Started on the Ukulele (2 workshops, some loaners available) (BEG)		
	GEORGE WELLING	Introduction to Bluegrass Jamming (BEG/ADV BEG)		

Most Outrageous Song in the World Contest

BY JANE VANAUKEN

Central Ohio Folk Festival 2022 presents a festival favorite:

The Most Outrageous Song in the World Contest Saturday, May 7, 2022, 4:15 - 4:50 pm Bailey Acoustic Performance Tent

Consider competing. Create your own song or perform someone else's song. The song can be either a solo performance or a group performance. Please use family friendly lyrics.



Each contestant performs before an audience. The audience judges which song rates as the most outrageous. Outrageous applies to content or story line, not technical or performance skill. Contestants are allowed to use a prompt sheet.

If you are interested in entering this song contest, please sign up with Jane VanAuken. jvanauken@columbus.rr.com

Exciting Festival Talent



Yep, picture it now, wafting in the music in the great outdoors! The many exciting bands include local groups and talented performers from Michigan, Pennsylvania, Vermont and Kansas! The John Prine Tribute Band will perform his thought provoking, powerful songs and Adam Schlenker & Hayes Griffin, accompanied by Denison University students and alumni, will play an entire set of Hartford songs. The upbeat and extremely talented Buffalo Rose will perform and Elexa Dawson, a member of the Potawatomi Nation and known for her soulful singing and land-based connection, will be among the Storytellers, performers, and workshop leaders.

But wait, there's more! The Saturday evening headliner will be the high-energy Way Down Wanderers.

New this year – there are no ticketing fees for the Saturday evening headliner or workshops! It is all donation-based, and your generous \$\$ support at the door or pre-event via Eventbrite makes this exciting event possible.

If you want to be on the list to contact when we open up reservations for inside tent seating for Saturday night, we recommend you pre-donate at: centralohiofolkfestival2022donate.even tbrite.com.

We hope to see you at this year's Festival!



Tyler Reed

Join the CFMS for only \$20/year (for an individual). See the form on the back or visit:

<u>www.columbusfolkmusicsociety.org/</u> <u>member-application.html</u>



Save the Date!

Concert Series

RJ Cowdery

Saturday, April 30 at 8pm

Open Mic: 7pm Open Jam: 6pm

Venue: Columbus Mennonite Church 35 Oakland Park Ave, Cols, OH Donation at door: \$15 / \$10 for CFMS members. No need to preregister, no caps on number of attendees. Masks will be encouraged but optional. There will be no checking of vaccination cards.

Zoom Jam Sessions

Mon, Tues, Sat: 10am-Noon;

Fri, Sun: 2-4pm.

Thurs: 10am-Noon (virtual jam for

nursing home residents)

To get the current link to sessions, contact Jane at: vanaukj@gmail.com

In-Person Jams

Sat (inside & ending 4-30): 9:30-11:30am – All Saints Lutheran, 6770 N. High St., Worthington, OH Sat: (outside April 9 & 23): 9:30-11:30am – Worthington Farmer's Market.

RJ Cowdery, from pg 3

from Southern Ohio and blossomed into a well-respected singer/songwriter who's in demand across the country. What are your feelings as you look back on your musical career?

RJ Cowdery: I've written songs since I was a young adult and was pretty shy about letting people hear my music because the subject matter was so personal. Over the years I've tried to turn personal subject matter into universal conversations that we can all relate to. While finding the truth in a song doesn't necessarily mean it's part of my personal story, it does bring me great joy when a song that I created becomes someone else's truth. That mutual connection with a listener is the absolute best. I'm grateful for where this path has taken me so far and am proud to be a part of the folk community. Looking back, I feel pretty good about it.

The Storytellers of Central Ohio present: Fireside Tales

Hear stories that will take you to other places and music that will make you tap your feet from Central Ohio's own storytellers, Adele Browne, Kevin Cordi, Michelle Cornell, Jim Flanagan, Teri Lott, Roy Nichols, Cathy Jo Smith, Melody Tolle and Joan Van Becelaere with music by CFMS' own Charlie Flowers.

Sunday, April 10, 2022, 7:00- 9:00 p.m.

Doors open at 6:30

The Ohio History Center's auditorium, 800 E. 17th Avenue

Suggested donation of \$10/person; \$15/family Pay at the door, via Pay Pal or by check

For information, contact Teri Lott at **lotts.of.tales@gmail.com** or at 614-395-8178.



The Columbus Folk Music Society

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Membership renewals are due annually on September 30th. Check one of the membership levels listed below.					
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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. <i>My place of work matches donations:</i>					
Like to volunteer?	Please click all that ap	oply. We are a	n all-volunteer driven organization!		
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