



Fiddler's Rag

Vol. 42, Number 4
Celebrating 41 years

Santa Clara Valley Fiddlers Association
www.scvfa.org or www.fiddlers.org

April 2014
Next Jam: Apr. 6



President's Note

Last month we started our 41st year. This is your organization so share your thoughts with us about ideas for programs and activities you would like us to consider. More importantly, help us to continue our current programs by

volunteering one hour a month. See me for details.

Fritz and Marge Buell were kind enough to host our trustee meeting on March 16. Thank you both.

Our March 2 jam was great fun. We owe our thanks to Pete Showman for being our jam manager and to Pete and Élan Alford for bringing our PA equipment from the nearby storage locker. Gary Breitbard once again led our popular Beginners Circle slow jam. Thanks Gary!

KidFiddle Workshops

Mary Kennedy has done a great job lining up two KidFiddle workshops. This month's will be taught by Jack Tuttle (see details in the next column).

On May 4, Luke Abbott will again teach our KidFiddle workshop.

Upcoming Cross-Tuning Workshop

Wes Mitchell will teach a **free** cross-tuning fiddle workshop on May 4 at 3:15 PM after our KidFiddle workshop. Learn new tunes played in a new way.

Share Your Photos

Share your photos and we will include your name if they are used in the Rag. Email them to Pete Showman.

Amazon Buyers

On the lower left side of our www.fiddlers.org website we have a link to Amazon. If you click on it to go to Amazon, we get a small commission if you make a purchase. It costs you nothing and it really helps us.

Audio CD of the 2013 Youth Fiddle Contest

We have one audio CD left of our 2013 youth fiddle contest. It includes announcements, all performances, and the award presentations. It can be yours as our gift for a \$10 donation. I can make more if there is demand.

- Richard Brooks

April KidFiddle

Jack Tuttle will teach this month's KidFiddle workshop. Afterwards, students will play on stage, showing us what they've learned. As a special treat, Jack's kids' jam-band will perform for us.



KidFiddle workshops are intended for advanced-beginner to intermediate fiddlers ages 17 and under. Participants should be able to at least play one or two tunes. Tuition is only \$5. Though you can sign up at the door, we'd appreciate it if participants would register in advance, email KidFiddle coordinator Mary Kennedy, at KidFiddle at scvfa.org.

May KidFiddle

On May 4, Luke Abbott will teach our second spring KidFiddle workshop.

Sign up for both KidFiddle workshops!



Cross-Tuning Workshop

Wes Mitchell's cross-tuning fiddle workshop will follow Luke Abbott's KidFiddle workshop at the May jam.

In This Issue:

Page

President's Message	1
KidFiddle and Cross-Tuning workshops	1
Photos from the March Jam	2
SCVFA Happenings: Directories, Trustee Meeting Highlights, Upcoming Events	3
Cross Tuning a Fiddle (and the workshop) ..	4-5
Modes? What's That?	5
More Photos from the March Jam	6, 8
Tune: Home With the Girls in the Morning	7

The Fiddler's Rag is published monthly by the Santa Clara Valley Fiddlers Association and is provided to members of the Association. The Santa Clara Valley Fiddlers Association (SCVFA), founded in 1973 in San Jose, California, is a nonprofit, volunteer-operated organization dedicated to the preservation, teaching, and enjoyment of traditional music. The first membership in a household includes the Fiddler's Rag; additional members sharing the newsletter are steeply discounted. To join, sign up at the jam or see www.fiddlers.org/join.

Officers and Chairs

President-Trustee Richard J. Brooks
 Vice President OPEN
 Recording Secretary Dinah Showman
 Treasurer Janet Johnston
 Membership Secretary Pete Showman
 Newsletter Editor OPEN (*Pete Showman, acting*)
 Newsletter Publisher Charlotte Prater
 Performances Contact Dave Williams
 Publicity OPEN
 Webmaster Pete Showman
 Youth Programs Chair OPEN
KidFiddle Coordinator Mary Kennedy
 Youth Fiddle Contest Chair, 2013 Pete Showman

Trustees

Seat 1: Pete Showman Seat 2: Élan Alford
 Seat 3: George Bradshaw Seat 4: Charlotte Prater
 Seat 5: Dave Williams Seat 6: Tom Clausen

To Contact the SCVFA:

Mail: P.O. Box 2666, Cupertino, CA 95015-2666
 Email: president at fiddlers.org Phone: (650) 328-3939

Newsletter Submissions & Comments:

Email: newsletter at fiddlers.org

Website: www.scvfa.org or www.fiddlers.org

Copyright 2014, Santa Clara Valley Fiddlers Association



Pete Showman photos

L-R: Charter member **Jack Sadler** with **Sam Morocco** and President **Richard Brooks**

From Marin to Monterey, Tracy to Tiburon...
...we're in the heart of bluegrass country



THE NORTHERN CALIFORNIA
BLUEGRASS SOCIETY
www.ncbs.us

Since 1982 the Northern California Bluegrass Society has promoted bluegrass and old time music in the San Francisco Bay and Monterey Bay areas. This highly active club has nurtured the development of bands and venues. The NCBS hosts the Good Old Fashioned Bluegrass Festival each August, an event that solely features California bands. We sponsor festivals, concerts and jams all over the area. Members receive the Bluegrass By the Bay magazine each quarter. Please join us!

Photos from the March Jam



Chip Curry and sister **Connie Curry** discuss the fine arts of playing banjo and mandolin.

SCVFA Happenings

Member Directories at May Jam

We brought the pre-addressed 2014 Member Directories to the March jam, and quite a few members picked theirs up, saving us considerable postage. Thanks! (Under new postal regulations it will cost us about 85c apiece to mail whatever directories remain.)



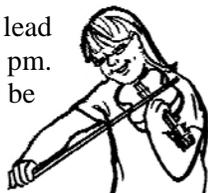
Directories will next be available at the May jam (Dinah and I have to miss the April jam). If you haven't gotten yours, and if you attend the May jam, please come and pick yours up. Later in May we'll mail those directories that remain.

- Pete Showman, Membership Secretary

Upcoming SCVFA Events

As noted on page 1, we have some exciting events coming up: two KidFiddle workshops and a fiddle cross-tuning workshop.

At the **April Jam**, **Jack Tuttle** will lead a **KidFiddle Workshop** at 2:00 pm. Following the workshop there'll be performances by the students and by Jack's kids' bluegrass jam band.



At the **May Jam**, **Luke Abbott** will lead another **KidFiddle Workshop**, also at 2:00 pm. As usual, the students will perform for us afterwards.

Also at the **May Jam** we'll have a **Fiddle Cross-Tuning Workshop** led by **Wes Mitchell** at about 3:30 pm. See Wes's article on cross tuning, and about the workshop, on pages 4 and 5.

Other Upcoming Events

The Parkfield Bluegrass Festival

The 2014 **Parkfield Bluegrass Festival** will be held May 8-11 (Mother's Day weekend), in Parkfield, CA. (Parkfield is about 3 hours south of San Jose, north and east of Paso Robles.) Many groups, including Peter Rowan, Jeff Scroggins & Colorado, and The Cache Valley Drifters, will entertain.

For more information see www.parkfieldbluegrass.com or call 805-463-2421.

Trustee Meeting Highlights

The SCVFA Board of Trustees met March 16, 2014. The Trustees:

- Made plans for two KidFiddle workshops, in April and May, and for Wes Mitchell's workshop on cross-tuning fiddles, in May.
- Reviewed and approved adjustments to our insurance coverage. Our equipment list will be updated and sent to our State Farm agent.
- Agreed to have Grace Clark and Lisa Burns as our featured performers at the June jam at Hoover.
- Agreed to have the July and August jams at the Rose Garden Park and the September jam at Hoover School.
- Thanked Pete Showman for producing the new membership directories. They will be available for pickup at the May jam. After that, the remainder will be mailed out.
- Discussed issues related to "payouts" (SCVFA performances elsewhere) and agreed to inquire about how to apply to perform in Santa Clara's summer music in the park series.
- Discussed several ideas from members that Élan and others brought to the meeting.
- Noted that SCVFA has received steady income from Amazon through their Amazon Associates program. Purchases made when Amazon is accessed through the link on the SCVFA website generate a small payment to SCVFA at no cost to the purchaser.
- Thanked Fritz and Marge Buell for hosting the meeting.
- Set May 18 as the proposed date for the next trustee meeting.

Dinah Showman, Secretary

Trustee meetings are open to all SCVFA members. They are usually held on 3rd Sundays of odd-numbered months (subject to change due to conflicts). If you'd like to attend a meeting, contact Richard Brooks: President@fiddlers.org.

An Opportunity in Oz

We've received a notice from the organizers of the annual **Canberra (Australia) Blues and Roots Festival**, which will be held Nov. 14-16 this year. Motto: "Seriously Having a Good Time!"

They invite any performers who might be interested, and who might be planning an Australian tour this fall (their spring), to perform at the festival. They don't pay for transportation, but can help get other bookings. See www.canberracountry.com for more information, or email Mike Crozier at info@canberracountry.com. The festival is held the 3rd weekend each November.

What is Cross Tuning

“Standard” concert tuning for a violin is in fifths: GDAE, lowest to highest, although scordatura, or “mistuning” is reasonably common in classical music. For some classical pieces written for scordatura, see the Wikipedia article for scordatura.

Cross-tuning is also common in different folk styles. My experience is mostly from the southern Appalachian repertoire. Cross-tuning was very prevalent throughout the region; Tommy Jarrell once said that he hadn’t heard a fiddle in standard tuning until he was in his mid-teens, and he came from a family and region renowned for fiddling.

Why Cross Tune

A cross-tuned fiddle has a markedly different sound. Depending on the tuning, there can be a lot of resonance from open strings in harmony with the note(s) being played. It lends itself well to drone notes, and also to punctuating the melody with bass notes for emphasis. Also, it is easier to transpose a melody down (or up) and octave if it is contained in either the top two or bottom two strings.

There is an energy and drive in a cross-tuned fiddle that works really well for dances. Probably in rural areas, a dance band might consist of just a fiddle and perhaps a banjo, so the fiddle had to carry a lot of rhythm as well as melody. The sound had to penetrate the general ruckus and drive the dancers.

Who Uses Cross Tuning

My completely biased all-star team of cross-tuned fiddlers would include, at minimum

- Hammons family of West Virginia
- Ed Haley, John Salyer, Bill Stepp, Estill Bingham, Isham Monday, Hiram Stamper of Kentucky
- Tommy Jarrell, Fred Cockerham, Charlie Lowe, Kirk Sutphin, Marcus Martin of North Carolina
- Bunt Stephens, John Dykes, Mike Bryant of Tennessee
- Robert Sykes and Norman Edmonds of Virginia
- and of course Bruce Greene, who taught me a lot and really sparked my interest in the music.

Example Tunings with Tunes

I’ve listed tunings somewhat subjectively in order of the size of the repertoire. It’s a close call between the keys of A and D, since these are the “frolic” keys most used for dances.

AEAE (Key of A) and GDGD (Key of G)

This might be the most common cross tuning pattern. It goes by a variety of names, including “sawmill” and “high-bass, high counter”.

There are several variants, usually lower than AEAE, but they all proceed as root→fifth→root→fifth (again listed from low string to high string). The tuning lends itself well to both a major key sound and a modal sound. A lot of the more “archaic” fiddlers varied the intonation of both the third and the seventh scale notes, playing a C# a bit flat, or a G a bit sharp.

☞ **We’ll be using GDGD in the workshop.** Many fiddlers tuned down instead of up, possibly because some instruments like gourd banjos couldn’t take the higher string tension, or simply because they liked a lower sound. Marcus Martin seems to have tuned down a lot.

I’ll start by showing you Marcus Martin’s version of “Booth” (or Booth Shot Lincoln) in GDGD.

A lot of people ask if there is a difference between AEAE and GDGD. Certainly the same fingering works for a tune. I’ll leave it for you to debate whether you like one better than the other.

Some good examples of a major key sound are tunes like Old Horse and Buggy, Grey Eagle, Breaking Up Christmas, or Sykes’ Black-Eyed Susie. There are tons of modal tunes: familiar ones like June Apple, lesser-known ones like Black Jack Grove. A lot of John Salyer’s A tunes are modal.

ADAE Tuning (Key of D)

Classic Round Peak/Galax D tuning. Also goes by the name “high bass”. Interestingly, some of the old timers used key to refer to a tuning, so a “tune in the key of D” meant tuning to ADAE.

Just about any D tune can be played in this tuning (unless it uses the low G note). Conversely, just about any D tune can be played in standard tuning. So why bother with cross-tuning in D? I hope to show you that the gain from the resonance, droning, and interesting fingering makes a big difference. In particular, a lot of the Round Peak tunes involve some bow rocking on the bottom two strings that would be hard to finger in standard.

Three very different examples:

- Clyde Davenport’s Five Miles from Town
- Tommy Jarrell’s Rockingham Cindy, and
- the Round Peak national anthem, Sally Ann.

(Continued on next page)

Cross Tuning Workshop at the April Jam (continued)

AEAC# or Calico Tuning

This is a really pretty, melodic tuning. To get there, tune the bass strings up a full tone, and the high string down to C#. The repertoire for this tuning is a lot smaller, at least for Appalachian/southern.

This is a good tuning for melodies that are not modal, and stay out of the high range of the treble. I'll play a couple of tunes like Eck Robertson's Lost Indian, or Benny Thomasson's Old Bell Cow for illustration.

DDAD Tuning

Tune the bass string down 2-1/2 tones from G down to D, and the high string down one tone from E to D. This is a wonderful droning tuning for D tunes. Some of my favorites in this tuning are

- Washington's March (Edden Hammons)
- Piney Ridge (Bill Stepp)
- Midnight on the Water
- Rusty Gun (Art Stamper)
- Yell in the Shoats

What's in the Workshop?

I'll start off illustrating a couple of tunes in cross-A tuning, show you how to get into GDGD tuning, and teach a tune that you probably already are familiar with: Marcus Martin's Booth Shot Lincoln.

If there is sufficient interest, we can continue the workshop for a few more times. Probably we'll try another cross-A tune, perhaps modal for variety, and then a common tune in high bass.

Modal? What's That?

by Pete Showman

Wes refers in the above article to "modal" tunes. What does that mean?

The term comes from musical "modes" – different ways of playing scales. In Western music there are seven modes. One way to think of them is to sit at a piano and play all-white-note scales starting on each of the seven white-key notes. I tend to think of modes differently, based on the number of sharps or flats in each scale, compared to the major version of the scale in the same key.

Two modes familiar to most people are major and minor. From the white-note-scale point of view, starting on C gives C major, while starting on A gives A minor. (Being on all white notes, neither has sharps or flats.)

From the number-of-sharps point of view, because an A-major scale (or key signature) would have 3 sharps, we can see that the A-minor scale has 3 fewer sharps than the A-major scale. It turns out that all minor scales have 3 fewer sharps (or 3 more flats) than their corresponding major scales.

The same is true for all the modes: the change in the number of sharps (or flats) for any mode compared to the "major" mode is *always* the same, for every key (scale starting-point).

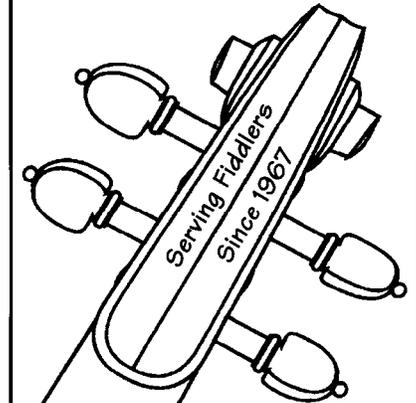
Four modes are common in old-time and Irish music: **major**, **Mixolydian** (-1 sharp), **Dorian** (-2 sharps) and **minor** (-3 sharps). As an example, D major has 2 sharps, so D Mixolydian has 1 sharp, D Dorian has no sharps or flats, and D minor has one flat. Similarly, a key signature with no sharps can mean C major, G Mixolydian, D Dorian or A minor. You need the name and mode.

So really, all tunes are "modal" (in *some* mode). But in old-time music, the term is mainly used for *anything not in major*: Mixolydian, Dorian, even minor.

KAMIMOTO

STRING INSTRUMENTS

"Fiddles
for
Every Style..."



- New & Old Instruments
- Repairs & Restorations
- One-hour bow rehairing (by appt.)
- Rentals: Violin, Viola, Cello, Bass

Hours: Mon-Sat 10:00 - 5:30

[408] 298-8168

www.kamimotostrings.com

609 North Fourth Street
San Jose, CA 95112

[800] 892-3199

Fax: [408] 298-8198

Photos from the March, 2014 Jam



Pete Showman photo

Celtic Soul entertained with some fine Irish music. L-R: **Larry Silveira** (guitar), **Yvonne Martin** (flute), **Catherine Borst** (fiddle) and **Darryl Patrick** (bodhran & vocals).



Richard Brooks photo



Pete Showman photo

Versatile **Warren Campbell** plays fiddle on stage, and button accordion with **Larry Joba**.



Pete Showman photo



Richard Brooks photo

Doniella Dumont plays us some tunes, accompanied by **Mike Bell**, and then dances with **Lee Clarke** (L) and **Dinah Showman** (R).

Key: D Dorian*
♩ = 90

Home with the Girls in the Morning

Traditional
(Appalachian)
Typeset by Pete Showman

A

Dm C Dm Am

5 Dm C Am 1 Dm 2 Dm

B

9 Dm C Dm C Dm

13 Dm C Dm C Am Dm

17 Dm C Dm C D

21 Dm C Dm C Am Dm

* Most versions I've found on the Web are in D Dorian, as shown here, but it can also be played in A Dorian (one string higher on fiddle or mandolin) -- though that puts it too high for some of us to sing.

Typeset in ABC by Pete Showman, 8/2012. I learned the tune from John Gregorin; this isn't quite how I play it, but it's close. This version is from abcnotation.com, which credits John Chambers' collection as the source. You can hear a MIDI file of this arrangement at www.showman.org/Tunes. (Rev 2, 3/25/2014.)

Fiddlehangout describes it as "an Appalachian modal tune that's been around since the 1800's. ... [It] has a surprising major chord in the second part of the tune that rings out against the minor sound. A great tune to play at a jam. It is often played in D Dorian ... (Dm & C chords, with the D major chord played in [only the second half of] the second part)."

Some lyrics, from Mandolin Cafe (chorus sung on 2nd half of B; major chord on "story"):

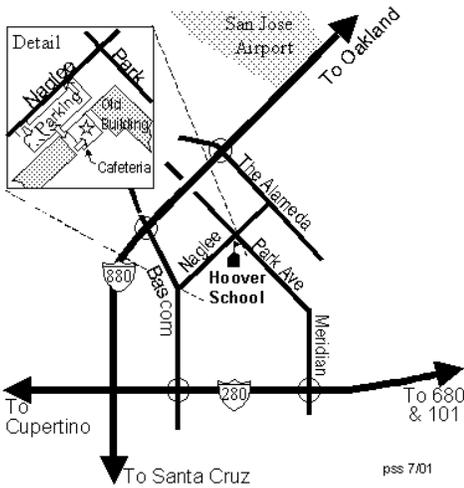
- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. When I was a younger man;
Come and hear my story, I'd
Sing and dance the whole night through,
Come home with the girls in the morning. | 2. Had a dream the other night, I
Thought I was in glory
Sang and danced the whole night long
Come home with the girls in the morning |
| C. Come on Grandpa, sing your song
Come and tell your story
Tell us how you danced all night
Came home with the girls in the morning | C. Come on Grandpa, sing your song
(etc.) |

Santa Clara Valley Fiddlers Association
P.O. Box 2666
Cupertino, CA 95015-2666

SCVFA Jam on the first Sunday of each month.
Location: Hoover Middle School, 1635 Park Ave.,
San Jose. The school is at the corner of Naglee and
Park. Cafeteria parking is on the Naglee side.

**Next Jam: Sunday April 6, 1-5 pm
at Hoover Middle School**

**Damaged or Missing Issue? Call us,
or email to: newsletter at gsscvfa.org**



Gary Breitbard (fiddling, foreground) leads the popular Beginners' Circle at the March 2014 jam

Susan Goodis photo