

Grace Ward—CTBA Youth Music Donation Recipient

As you know, the Central Texas Bluegrass Association established the Willa Beach-Porter CTBA Scholarship Fund, with income used to pay for scholarship awards to students who have demonstrated a serious interest and performance talent in bluegrass music, and who show a need for financial assistance to support their musical studies.

In addition to the scholarship, CTBA recently presented a \$250 contribution to **Grace Ward** as she begins the next phase of her music career. Grace, a Lakeway, TX, resident, is a 2017 graduate of Lake Travis High School who intends to further her music education at the New England Conservatory in Boston, MA, not unlike another local Texas girl who attended the NEC, named Sarah Jarosz. But, that's a whole 'nother story.



Presenting the contribution were (l to r) Bob Vestal (CTBA board member / newsletter editor), Leslie Collier (CTBA scholarship coordinator) Grace Ward, Alice Moore (CTBA board member), and Randy Collier (sound guy, home owner, and exceptional guitarist).
Photo by Jean Vestal.



Grace Ward and Rick McRae play together at a home concert August 17th, presented by Randy and Leslie Collier. Photo by boB.

Of course the story started much earlier as Leslie got to know Grace and brought her plans to the CTBA board as an opportunity to support a young and promising musician.

Since it was the end of the school year and Grace would be heading off to Boston, the board decided that the upcoming home concert provided by the Collier's would be a good opportunity to present the check to Grace.

That evening, Grace played some of her own compositions, some of her favorites, and then she and Rick McRae played together for what can only be described as a "you just had to be there" session. Naturally, Rick does what he does so effortlessly that you just get lost in the music.

The interplay and eye contact between the two was fun to watch, too. Here was a young musician just starting out on a great adventure playing with a seasoned professional best known, around here anyway, as that kid from San Antonio who just happened to play for so many years with George Strait and his Ace in the Hole Band. It was a musical delight.

So, I sat down with Grace after their performance, attended by a den-full of family, fans, and supporters, to talk about where she's been and where she's going.

CTBA: What's in your immediate future.

Grace: On August 23rd, I'm headed to New England Conservatory in Boston to study contemporary improvisation with guitar as my primary instrument. My mom and I are driving. It's a three-day road trip to

Boston. I'm taking an upright bass (I play more classical but am working on my jazz bass chops), two guitars, an amp, and all the other stuff I'll need to live. It'll be crowded!

CTBA: Why did you choose the NEC?

Grace: They are the only school to offer contemporary improvisation as a degree. The faculty in that program provides a broad diversity of instructors and students. I applied to Jazz Studies in my other school applications and, while I would have been happy with a traditional jazz degree, the contemporary improvisation degree was just so unique and so malleable and you can turn it into what you want. So, I can study songwriting and folk from cultures around the world as opposed to traditional jazz.

CTBA: Why is guitar your primary instrument?

Grace: I can only remember ever wanting to play guitar and wanting to be a musician. By second grade, I had been begging my mom for a long time to play guitar and so she agreed as long as I would commit to two years of piano before moving on to anything else. And, piano is a great instrument to help you understand theory and music as a whole so, as soon as I got through my two years on piano I moved on to guitar. I had to get my hands on one!

CTBA: I noticed some definite bass influence in some of your original songs. Tell about your songwriting.

Grace: I would agree with that. I don't know that I do it consciously but I do consider bass lines when I'm writing. I'm a slow writer and picky as well. I always start with the actual music first, chords, etc., then I usually write on a loop pedal where I loop it and see where that takes me.

CTBA: Another local Texas girl went to NEC: Sarah Jarosz. And, there will certainly be more in the future. What would you say to them?

Grace: Chase it non-stop, relentlessly. I was afraid of telling people I wanted to get into NEC because I was afraid it wouldn't happen. Don't do that. Go for it. Work at it relentlessly because it can happen if you want it bad enough. I'll admit I didn't have much of a social life in high school but I'm not upset about that. I'm about to go have an amazing experience in the next part of my life.

That you are!

CTBA is proud to support yet another aspiring and talented young musician from Central Texas who continues on to that next amazing experience. We wish you well, Grace. Come back and play for us soon!

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4 Day Advance Ticket: \$55
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Thursday, 6-10 pm: \$15
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Saturday, 1-10 pm: \$20
Sunday, 11-4 pm: \$15

TUESDAY

Banjo Bingo at Sunshine Inn, 2-4 p.m.

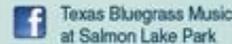
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As you know, the **2017 Texas State Champions** contest is in progress with three of the four events completed.

Winners at the 2017 Texas State Banjo contest held at Pearl on August 5th are:

- 1st Place: Hudson Doucette (Houston, TX)
- 2nd Place: Eric Welty (Houston, TX)
- 3rd Place: Brady Gandy (Austin, TX)

The next event is

- **Sept 13 -17 - National Competition, Walnut Valley Festival, Winfield, Kansas.**

Congratulations to all the participants and to the winners. Click on the **News** box at <http://www.pearlbluegrass.com> to see all the pictures.

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CTBA Bands

centraltexasbluegrass.org/bands.html

Black Diamond

Austin
Chuck Middleton
512-203-4574
clydemiddleton68@gmail.com

Blue Country Grass

Ben Buchanan
512-263-7193
benbuchanan108@gmail.com
facebook.com/
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Eddie Collins

Eddie Collins
512-873-7803
www.eddiecollins.biz
tuneman@austin.rr.com

Four Fights Per Pint

Jay Littleton
512-- 848-1634
www.facebook.com/
FourFightsPerPint
bluegrassman@usa.com

Hot Pickin 57s

Max Zimmet
http://hotpickin.com/
mzimmet@austin.rr.com

The Lost Pines

Talia Bryce
512-814-5134
www.lostpinesband.com
thelostpines@gmail.com

Missing Tradition

Dan & Diana Ost
512-845-8749
music@flatlanderfolk.com

One Eye Open

Max Zimmet
www.oneeyeopenband.com
mzimmet@austin.rr.com

Out of the Blue

Rob Lifford
512-422-7706
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Pearl and the Polka Dots

Rachel Bates
817-239-5624
www.facebook.com/
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batesincowtown@aol.com

Pine Island Station

Gary & Janine Carter
936-520-2952
www.pineislandstation.com
pineislandstation@gmail.com

The Piney Grove Ramblers

Wayne Brooks
512-699-8282
877-899-8269
www.pgramblers.com
pgramblers@austin.rr.com

Randy Collier and Grassland

512-346-0999
http://tinyurl.com/y8dx3pex

The Rusty Razors

Patrick Davis
515-802-7438
patrickshreds@gmail.com

The Sieker Band

Rolf & Beate Sieker
512-937-4496
www.siekerband.com

Shawn Spiars

Shawn Spiars
512-627-3921
www.banjohangout.org/my/
sspiars
sspiars@gmail.com

The Texas Honeybees

Leslie Collier
512-328-0144
lesliecollier1@yahoo.com

West of Waterloo

Austin & Hill Country
Michael Sanders
512-673-9095
m.sanders711@gmail.com

Wood Street Bloodhounds

Oak Park, IL, *Robert Becker*
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Leander
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Mason Homestead 1101 S. Bagdad Rd

The **12th Annual Leander Bluegrass Festival** will be on September 22 and 23, 2017 at the Mason Homestead (**1101 S. Bagdad**).

This is a **FREE** event that will feature live music, concessions, children's activities, and a variety of vendors.

**CTBA will again sponsor an open jam on Saturday, Sept. 23rd,
from 2:00 to 5:00 pm on the Mason Homestead porch.**

Alcohol and coolers are allowed but the city asks that you do not bring any glass containers. Friendly pets are welcomed on a leash.

You can read all about it at

<http://www.leandertx.gov/parksrec/page/leander-bluegrass-festival>

CENTRAL TEXAS 5-STRING BANJO FORUM—OCTOBER 15

Hello to all you banjo aficionados out there! You know: those of you who just love using three fingers to play in 4/4 time on a 5-string instrument.

We are excited to announce the premier meeting of the CT5SF, a forum for 5-string banjo pickers in Central Texas. The purpose of the forum, as conceived by legendary banjo master **Alan Munde**, is to share information, stories, playing tips, tunes, and just about anything related to the 5-string banjo.

The primary focus of this initial forum will be a presentation on the life and career of banjo great Allen Shelton given by Alan Munde.

Attendees are encouraged to bring their own topics and questions for the discussion. Also, please feel free to bring your instruments as we plan on doing some picking afterwards.

Noted banjo instructor, **Eddie Collins**, is on board for supporting the CT5SF and plans to help organize future presentations.

The initial forum will be held on **Sunday, October 15th at 3:00 PM**. The location will be Chuck Middleton's apartment in Central Austin. Attendance is strictly limited to 16 people due to space, so apply early. We hope to make the forum a quarterly event and expand to a larger facility.

Please reserve your spot by sending an email to clydemiddleton68@gmail.com.

The response email will contain the street address with directions.

Happy picking to you all,
Chuck Middleton

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Remember **Sam Armstrong**, the 18-year old mandolin player from Millican, TX? He was our **2017 CTBA Scholarship recipient**. We got a nice letter from him:

"I just wanted to thank you and CTBA again for sponsoring me at Camp Bluegrass. It was a great week. I learned a lot from my instructors and I also quite enjoyed getting to know them throughout the week. It's an experience that can only be had at Camp Bluegrass!"

Best wishes,
Sam Armstrong

BLUEGRASS MUSIC RISING IN NW HOUSTON (BMR)

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Second Friday

Bluegrass Music Knight Out Show & Jam (BMKO)

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September 08, 2017 Show & Jam!

2017 Show Dates: Oct. 13
Nov. 10 Dec 8
Jan 12, 2018

NOTICE Change of Location: Juergen's Hall Community Center, 26026 Hempstead Hwy, Cypress, TX 77433

TIME - Show: 6:25/8:30pm; Jam: 4:/8:30pm

A Free Community Event: EVERYONE IS WELCOME



1. Get Back Ten Band; 2. Almost Heaven Bluegrass Band; 3. Sabine River Bend Band

Contact: Tony & Nema Redding, 281-373-1777, 281-910-4396/95

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Info Re: Show & Jams, and for Booking 'Almost Heaven Bluegrass Band.'

Website: www.bluegrassrising.net; Email: tonynema@earthlink.net;



All BMR's BLUEGRASS MUSIC JAMS/Show IN NW HOUSTON:

- *A. 1. Every Monday Night Bluegrass Jam, Time: 6:15-9:00pm; Rm #403 & 404
- 2. Bluegrass Music Knight Out Show & Jam; Show-6:30-8:30pm; Jam-4-8:30pm

NOTICE: See Future Dates/changes in Bubble above.

Location: Weekley Community Ctr., 8440 Greenhouse Rd, Cypress, TX 77433

- B. 1. Fourth Saturday Bluegrass Jam, Time: 12noon - 4pm; Kleb Woods Nature Center, NW Houston, 20303 Draper Rd (@Mueschke), {Rosehill}, Tomball, TX 77377.

All Pickers and Listeners Welcome!

No Charge

5FB3A Fly Rev #9, 09-08-17



As you have surely heard by now, the Old Settler's Music Festival is moving from Driftwood to Dale (near Lockhart). Here's the word we got from Jill McGuckin of McGuckin Entertainment PR (www.mcguckinpr.com/latest-news.php).

The **Old Settler's Music Festival** will move to a new site starting with the **April 19-22, 2018** festival. The 30-year-old organization was surprised and disappointed to receive a letter on Aug. 8 from Scott Roberts, owner of the Salt Lick Barbecue Pavilion in Driftwood, informing the board that the property would not host the festival in 2018. The festival has been held on that site and the accompanying Camp Ben McCulloch since 2002.

Organizers had planned to stage one last, celebratory festival at the Salt Lick Pavilion site in 2018, honoring Mr. Roberts, the Salt Lick and everyone involved and giving fans a chance to bid farewell to the popular spot while the festival's new home in Lockhart was prepared for a 2019 unveiling. Roberts said in his letter that his decision was based on changing use of the surrounding property and concern about alienating his new neighbors.

"We have enjoyed our 15-year association with the Salt Lick, throughout the years introducing over 220,000 people throughout Texas and the world to the Salt Lick's delicious barbecue. They have been very generous over the years, as have the officials and people of Hays county," said festival executive director Jean Spivey.

In June, the iconic festival took an important step to ensure its future by finalizing the purchase of 145 acres in Dale, Texas, a small community nestled in Caldwell County just 20 minutes east of Lockhart and less than an hour from downtown Austin.

This will be its third site; Old Settler's began as a small bluegrass event at Old Settler's Park in Round Rock, from which it took its name. It has since grown to a nationally renowned four-day, family-friendly event attracting 16,000 roots-music lovers annually, which cele-

brated its 30th birthday this spring with a stellar lineup including Sarah Jarosz, Los Lobos, Old 97's, Shakey Graves, Sam Bush, Leftover Salmon, and many others.

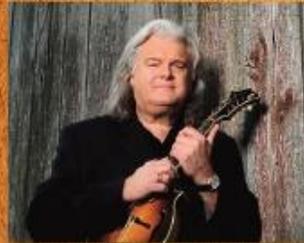
“While we really wanted another year to prepare the property, we are excited to have found a permanent home for the festival,” Spivey said. “Festivalgoers should continue to expect great lineups, an intimate, but more breathable atmosphere, and all the hallmarks of a well-run event.”

The new site doubles the festival’s space and allows for numerous improvements, while maintaining the previous site’s boutique feel. An expanded Kids’ Village, more room for eclectic food offerings, elimination of the need for satellite parking and shuttles, more camping space and other amenities will be available at the new location. The festival plans a careful, slow process of growing into the property, building a one-of-a-kind enclave that captures the cherished soul of Old Settler’s.

“Based on feedback — especially from the last two years — the board members had come to the conclusion that Old Settler’s had outgrown the space available at Salt Lick and Camp Ben. Given the Salt Lick’s decision, we’re really glad we purchased this property when we did,” said Old Settler’s board president Johnny Harvey. “The purchase will allow Old Settler’s to design and develop a festival site and camping-oriented facility that will soon be known as one of the premier event locations in Texas.”

You can always keep up to date on all things Old Settler’s at oldsettlersmusicfest.org.





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CTBA Area Jams

centraltexasbluegrass.org/jams.html

AUSTIN

Every Sunday, 3 PM-??, CTBA Sunday jam at Hill's Café, 4700 S. Congress; 512-851-9300.

2nd and 4th Saturday, 3-5 PM, beg./int. jam at Wildflower Terrace, 3801 Berkman Drive; Steve Mangold, 512-345-6155.

1st Thursday, 7-9 PM, beg./int. jam, Northwest Hills area; Steve Mangold, 512-345-6155.

Every Thursday, 6-9 PM, beg./int. jam, Texican Café, 11940 Manchaca Road; Dave Stritzinger, 512-689-4433.

Every Tuesday, 8-10 PM, Texas Old Time Fiddling, Scholz Garten, 1607 San Jacinto; 512-474-1958.

BANDERA

4th Friday of each month except Good Friday, November, and December at Silver Sage Corral – east of Bandera. Starts at 6 PM. For more info call 830-796-4969, www.silversagecorral.org.

BELLVILLE

4th Sat., Texas Bluegrass Music jam/show Jan. through September, 4pm jam, 6:30 pm show. Coushatta Recreation Ranch, 2812 Nelius Rd. 936-697-5949, coleebiller@aol.net, www.TXBluegrassMusic.com. Plenty of RV camping, restrooms, showers.

BLANCO

First Saturday, 2-5 PM at Buggy Barn Museum, 1915 Hwy 281 N; contact Deanna Dosser, 830-554-0006

2nd & 4th Sunday, 3:00-6:00 pm, Old 300 Barbecue, 318 4th St, Info: Tibby Armke 830-660-5734.

BOERNE

2nd & 4th Thursday, 6:30-8:30, at [Electric Coffee](#), 215 W. Bandera Road (Hwy 46), Info: Dave Moore, 210-846-9745, dmborne@gvvc.com.

FAYETTEVILLE

2nd Saturday, Fayetteville Picking Park jam Jan.-Nov. beginning at 1:00 PM on the courthouse square. Acoustic only. banjobooklady@yahoo.com

GARLAND

Every Saturday, Bluegrass on the Square, March- November, between Main and State Sts. at 6th, 7:30 PM to 1:00 AM.

GLEN ROSE

3rd Saturday, Oakdale Park, Paluxy River Bluegrass Association, free stage show, jam; and potluck Friday night before. Jim Chapman 469-231-6616, www.paluxybluegrass.com

HOUSTON

1st Tuesday, Fuddruckers, 2040 NASA Rd 1, 281-333-1598

JOHNSON CITY

3rd Saturday except in December, 2-6 PM, jam at The Dome, 706 W. Main St., Hwy 290 W; Charlene Crump, 512-632-5999.

Last Saturday of each month, 2:00 PM, Dally's Down Under 9097 US-290, Johnson City. Info: Cliff Robbins 701-770-8962 or telecliff@hotmail.com

LEAGUE CITY (BABA)

3rd Saturday: Jam 5:00 PM, Stage show 6:30 PM Jan- Nov., League City Civic Center, 300 W. Walker St. 281-636-9419. Sponsored by Bay Area Bluegrass Association.

LEANDER

1st Sunday, 2:00 - 4:00 PM, CTBA Beginner/Intermediate Bluegrass Jam, at Leander Public Library, 1011 South Bagdad Road. Bob Vestal, 512-983-5031

LILLIAN

2nd Saturday, 4:00 PM jam, 7:00 PM show, First Baptist Church, \$4; Dale Brawner 97-935-4525.

LLANO

4th Saturday, 2:00 PM, jam at Fuel Coffee House, 106 East Main St.; 325-247-5272; www.fuelcoffeehouse.org

MAGNOLIA

1st Saturday, West Montgomery County Community Development Center on Friendship Drive, 5:00 PM. Info: Bill Ingram, wingram77090@gmail.com

MEDINA

2nd Tuesday, all gospel jam, 6 PM at First Baptist Church; contact Linda Barton, 830-589-2486.

2nd Friday, jam at 6 PM, Masonic Lodge; Maude Arnold, 830-796-8422.

PEARL

1st Saturday: Jam all day/night, stage show, 12:15 PM-6:15 PM; food and RV hookups available. Pearl Community Center, on FM 183, 7 mi. south of Purmela; info@pearlbluegrass.com. Check website for show schedule: www.pearlbluegrass.com

ROUND ROCK

3rd Saturday, 2-5 PM except November and December, jam at Danny Ray's Music, 12 Chisholm Trail; 512-671-8663. www.dannyraysmusic.com

SAN ANTONIO

Every Monday, 6:30-8:30 PM, at The Barbecue Station, 1610 NE Loop 410 at Harry Wurzbach exit; 210-824-9191.

SCHULENBERG

1st and 3rd Tuesday, 6 :00 PM, jam at Schulenberg RV Park Community Center, 65 N. Kessler Ave. Laretta Baumgarten, 979-743-4388, camp@schulenbergrvpark.com

TOMBALL

4th Saturday, 4:00 PM, bluegrass jam at Kleb Woods Nature Center and Preserve, 20303 Draper Road, Tomball, 281-373-1777 or 281-910-4396.

INSTRUCTOR'S INSTRUCTIONS

Have you ever said or heard someone say, "I just want someone to tell me what to do."

Well, I've never had a problem finding someone who was willing to tell me what to do or where to go. And, every husband just silently said Amen! But, when it comes to music instruction, especially when trying to learn how to play an instrument, we all needed or still need a little help. Amiright?

Of course, we all know what the real answer to our success is but, we don't mind getting a little professional advice along the way in hopes of reducing the amount of time it takes to get either proficient or just better than we are today. Fortunately, we have a number of highly-qualified folks right here in Central Texas who are more than willing and fully capable of helping us get just plain old better.



Who among us has not, at one time or another, visited the Central Texas Bluegrass Association website at centraltexasbluegrass.org/instruction.html to find an instructor suited for our particular instrument? I know I have. At last count, which was about ten minutes ago, I noted that there are no fewer than 27 instructors listed there for all types of instruments, including voice and poise instruction, in all kinds of genres. At least nine of those instructors are CTBA members, too.

Last month I got to thinking, which is always dangerous, about the vast number of folks in Central Texas I run into who are involved in bluegrass music, one way or another. Some are dang fine pickers and others are really good and some are still coming along. I've been coming along for quite some time now but that's a 'whole nother story.

So, I asked our CTBA-member instructors if they would give me some instruction on instructing. That is, I asked, what do you tell your students, or anyone who wants to learn, to do, whether they are beginner, intermediate, or advanced, if that even matters. Here are their responses.

Max Zimmet: (<https://maxzimmethotpickinbluegrass.com>)

It's been said that practice doesn't make perfect, it makes permanent. Perfect practice makes perfect. It's so tempting to play things as fast as we can. However, it is much better, no matter what you're working on, to play things *slowly* and correctly. This will really speed up your progress.

Eddie Collins: (<http://www.eddiecollins.biz>)

A very important element in every learner's regimen should be listening. Listen over and over to whatever it is you hope to learn. You have to know what something is supposed to sound like then tirelessly pursue making your instrument sound like what you've heard. Nowadays there is no excuse, as there is software that will slow anything down to speed could potentially learn something.

For beginners, it is important to establish a routine to where you pick up your instrument every day. It is much better to play some every day than to think you'll have a marathon practice session to make up for missed days.



To work your way into being a solid intermediate player you need to be sure that you have developed proper right- and left-hand technique. You are pretty well assured to remain at a beginning level if you are fighting your instrument. Having a few key exercises designed to warm up your technique should be your first few minutes of every practice session.

To truly become an advanced player in bluegrass you need to make time to regularly play and/or jam with other like, or higher, level players. The need is to focus on becoming the "complete" player--one who can kick off a song, play nice, solid backup, take a good solo and end a piece. You can practice this stuff all you like, but it is a whole other element to do under fire in a group setting.

Hmm, I noticed a recurring theme through all the levels: practice, practice, practice!

Shawn Dean: (shawndean159@gmail.com)

I think **beginning** fiddlers can really benefit from thinking about tone, and specifically projection, from almost the very beginning. Tone is one of those things that gets overlooked when a player is starting out. There's so much to learn when you're getting started with an instrument--the physical mechanics of holding an instrument, basic scales, etc.--that tone seems almost like an afterthought, sort of like a polish to apply at the end of an already pretty good grasp of the instrument.



This, I think, is the wrong approach. My own guess is that tone is actually way more central to why we like an instrument than we realize. We may like certain versions of tunes played on an instrument or be inspired by certain players, but the first thing that really grabs us about an instrument is the way it sounds. Tone is central to why we choose a particular instrument ... and it's subconsciously demoralizing when we start out on an instrument and feel like we can never get it to sound right.

Fortunately, there are a few really easy ways to start to develop pretty good tone from the beginning. When I'm working with beginning students, I have them do this: stand in a room about 15 feet away from a wall, and think about getting the notes you're playing all the way over to that wall. Start out doing this with an open string. Use the entire length of the bow, and make sure that the entire length of that note makes it across the room. When you're playing those first tunes, make sure that each note you play makes it across the room. This exercise is good because it can help prevent habits of bad tone from forming, and also because it gives the beginner a taste of getting the instrument to sound the way it should (a welcome reward in what can be a frustrating process).

The **intermediate** years are a great time to start developing a good sense of timing. Timing is deceptively tricky. There's this intuitive side to it that we usually think of in terms of *feel*. In my view, the way to develop good timing is to spend solid practice time developing your ear, learning to hear the beat, patterns, and subdivisions very precisely, so that when you go to play with other players, your playing will reflect this precision even if you're not explicitly thinking about it.



There's a good practice regime for working on these types of subdivisions that I got from a guitarist friend of mine, who picked it up at Berklee. Find a sheet of bass drum exercises: relatively simple eighth note patterns. Next, get your metronome and set it on its lowest setting (somewhere close to 40 bpm). Now, using just one note, play the sheet of patterns along with the metronome, using the clicks as your 2 and 4. It may sound simple; it's not. Because you're playing these patterns excruciatingly slowly and without the aid of an externally-articulated down beat, all of the sloppiness inherent in how you subconsciously hear these common patterns will come right to the surface.

Very quickly, you realize that you tend to rush certain things, subdivide sloppily, etc. Work through measure by measure until you can play each pattern absolutely precisely and absolutely locked in with the metronome. Pay special attention to how you subdivide rhythms. Is your quarter note really the exact equivalent of two eighth notes? If it's not, then every time you play a quarter note, you're going to be losing the rhythm of the tune, and this exercise will make you realize it. Learn to hear a quarter note as two eighth notes glued together, and soon you'll start playing as though you were in a mathematical grid, even if you're not explicitly thinking about it.

I spent about four years doing this for 20 minutes at the beginning of each practice session. It will seem painfully slow and tedious, but it improves the way your ear hears timing astronomically, and if you're hearing timing this precisely, it makes it much easier to lock in rhythmically with the musicians you're playing with.

It's harder to come up with advice for **advanced** players. After you've been playing for a number of years, the things you need to work on end up being pretty specific to your own individual playing. However, one thing I would say advanced players could do is to continue to woodshed out and perfect specific phrases. Meaning, once you start to get comfortable with bluegrass as a musical language, there's a tendency to play off the cuff a lot. It's fun and it's exciting to see what you can come up with when you're playing a tune on the spot.

With that said, my sense is that improvisation has a more complicated relationship with worked-out phrases that we typically allow. Ray Brown, the great jazz bassist, pointed out that jazz musicians--the masters of improv--are playing licks 99 percent of the time. The point he was making was not that every solo repeats itself, but rather that good improvisers have such an extensive knowledge of phrases that the ideas it occurs to them to draw upon are ones they've considered ahead of time and practiced to the point of perfection.

Advanced bluegrass players might take a similar approach. In other words, if you want every solo you take to be new and exciting, you might consider woodshedding to the point that you have endless specific, say, two measure phrases, rather than avoiding those sorts of preparations so as not to inhibit one's creativity on the spot.

Jon Field: (bluegrass@suddenlink.net)

The **beginner** must always tune the instrument with a tuner. A clip-on tuner is handiest and stays on the instrument for constant retuning. I like the Intellitouch PT10. You should learn to count time. Learn some 1, 4, 5 songs and what it means. Start learning the Circle of 5ths and Nashville notation.



The **intermediate** player knows that the instrument must *always* be in *exact* tune. "Good enough" is **not** good enough, it must be *exact*! You must constantly check and recheck your tuning. Most instruments go out of tune in one or two songs and temperature changes cause tuning to go sharp or flat over a period of time.

Start learning the CAGED string technique and start learning playing in position (up the neck). You must master counting time. Finish learning the Circle of 5ths and master Nashville notation. Learn to support the song and your other musicians; you are a team.

For the **advanced** player, you should start mastering CAGED and playing in position. It's important to master your sharps and flats, Circle of 5ths. Always be in exact tune and always count perfectly. Learn effective intros and endings. Learn to lead your own band. Start writing your own songs.

So, there you have it. Words of wisdom from the wise to help you get better. This, and so much more, I'm sure you already know. We all do and yet we get frustrated by what seems like a lack of progress. But, in reality, you are getting better and better. It's just happening at a slower pace than you can perceive or want. We all want to be better than we are *now* instead of later. So, what is the key takeaway from all this? What are your action items?

Well, among all the specifics, the techniques, and the tips, I think you take everything you've heard, read, and learned so far and realize that Eddie nailed it when he wrote, there is a common thread to all of these instructions: **practice**. Ya just gotta do it. Happy pickin', y'all!



The 2018 HCAMP details are now online and early bird registration is now open.

See all the details at <https://www.hcamp.org>.

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CHRIS BRASHEAR AND PETER MCLAUGHLIN COMING TO AUSTIN



Austin area fans of bluegrass and traditional string band music are in for a real treat on **Saturday, October 7** when **The Hillside House Concerts** hosts the wonderful acoustic duo, **Chris Brashear and Peter McLaughlin**.

Chris and Peter are first-rate pickers and singers, and have been touring nationally as a duo for twenty years. They've released two duo CDs: *Canyoneers* and *So Long Arizona*. In the early 2000s they both played in the fine bluegrass band, *The Perfect Strangers*.

Chris Brashear plays guitar, fiddle, and mandolin and possesses a gorgeous tenor voice. He toured with Robin and Linda Williams and Their Fine Group for six years, and presently plays with the excellent string band, the Piedmont Melody Makers.

Peter is a brilliant guitarist who has won the National Flatpick Guitar Championship at Winfield, Kansas, as well as the Telluride Bluegrass Guitar Championship. He toured for six years with the Laurie Lewis Band.

Seeing Peter and Chris at a festival is always a treat and to see them up close in the intimate setting of the Hillside House Concert is an opportunity not to be missed! You can read a bit more about them at http://chrisbrashear.info/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/ChrisBrashear-PeterMcLaughlin_MediaSheet.pdf and on their individual websites.

The **Austin Friends of Traditional Music** is sponsoring this house concert at **7:30 PM** on **Saturday, October 7**. The Hillside House Concerts are held in an elegant north Austin location, and reservations can be made after September 2 by sending an email to musicgirl3205@gmail.com.



You probably already heard but, just in case you missed it, here's another example of a fine feller with Texas roots making it good in the bluegrass world.

Scott Vestal has joined a prestigious group of folks who have been awarded the **Steve Martin Prize for Excellence in Banjo & Bluegrass**.

There's a good write-up about it at <http://banjo.stevemartin.com>. Photo by Shelly Swanger.



Organization

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POSTSCRIPT



Grace Ward, playing at the Collier home concert on August 17. Photo by boB.

Turns out, parents, and other adults we encounter in our early years, are useful after all. Not that any teen would admit it at the time but, eventually, we all realize that parental influence, direct or indirect, has an effect on us. And, when that influence is purposeful and direct and supportive, good things can happen. Case in point: Grace Ward.

Here's a conversation I had with Grace's mom that night.

Julie: Really, when she came to me early on and said she really wanted to play guitar, I said, "Well, why don't we start with piano first so you can get some good basic piano skills under your belt. Start there and then we'll see."

So, she tried piano and it just so happened my neighbor was having her child take lessons with **Howard Lavine**, who plays with *The People's Choice* band, and after about six months he says, "This is talent. (Grace) has a talent that I rarely see in my students and never at this age. You should have her stick with it."

CTBA: So, what happened to inside you when you heard that?

Julie: What do I need to buy her! What kind of guitar does she need, what kind of amp, all that. We were thrilled and I believe so strongly in music and music education and the fact that she gravitated to music and guitar was just phenomenal. We were really happy about it. By the time she hit middle school, she was set on joining the orchestra and playing the upright bass. And, I'm thinking, "That thing is twice the size of you. Why are going to play that. And she says,

"I just want to play the bass" and that was her first introduction to **Anna Macias** who molded her career. (ed: Anna Macias is the Lake Travis Orchestra director who founder of *The Lake Travis Fiddlers*, a group of talented Lake Travis middle and high school students who meet before, after, and sometimes during school to learn and play Western swing music. See <http://laketravisorchestra.org/laketravisfiddlers>.)

So, Grace has had Howard as an amazing influence and Anna is an amazing influence and she got in with **JD Pendley**, another great Austin guitar player, and he's been a mentor, as well. So, we've been the purveyor of money and means and she has been blessed by amazing educators.

CTBA: Sounds like a good support system is essential.

Julie: Yes. With Howard's initial guidance and when she played in the sixth grade talent show, Anna said that Grace should get involved with the Lake Travis Fiddlers so, that got her introduced to Texas Swing, some folk, and all the things that Anna would put in front of those fiddlers. Because, they played everything from blues, to Czechoslovakian tunes, to western swing, and that's where she learned Bob Wills, and all this amazing fiddle music.

She was in the background for a long time playing rhythm guitar but, eventually, she took a little solo here and one there, and then she was playing twin guitars with JD who took her under his arm. Once some of the seniors graduated, she moved up closer to the microphone, and for the last couple of years she's been the lead guitar player and singer which is an amazing opportunity for a kid that age.

CTBA: She has a great voice, lots of power in it.

Julie: She's not really had any formal voice training. She took choir one year and decided that was not what she really wanted. I hope she pursues some voice training but I hope she doesn't change it. She's got that bluesy, old soul sound of maturity beyond her years.

