



Artwork by Emily Isbell

THE GRASSY GAZETTE

*A Year of Bluegrass in the Time of a Pandemic
December 2020*

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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

As I sit here reflecting on what has taken place over the last year, I can't help but feel an immense amount of gratitude. The CTBA was at what felt to be a new dawn; bluegrass nights and brunches seven days a week, jams multiplying, new members spanning the generations and an influx of new followers on our social media. All of this on top of our already established programs



across the 34 counties of Central Texas felt like an incredible feat.

We all know the rest of the story. Every one of us has had our worlds flipped upside down in some way or another. One thing that hasn't changed is the unbelievable sense of community that has banded together through these times. Whether creating GoFundMe's to support the venues we call a second home, participating in virtual

competitions or hosting pick-alongs all to keep the spirit of bluegrass alive, community is the heart of our association.

Adapting to a virtual world certainly doesn't come as easy to some of us. This time has challenged us to grow into a new platform. We have accepted the challenge with vivacity and of course some technical issues. On the other hand, how wonderful is it that we can now have friends and family as far as England participating in our Annual Meeting? We must make the most of this time, because wherever we look, there is an opportunity to grow, to support, to listen, to pick.

I am grateful to this community for the opportunity to serve those whose music, whose love and passion, has lifted me in times of darkness, and surrounded me in light. I am grateful to this incredible Board for their dedication; bringing new ideas, perspectives and visions to CTBA. I am grateful to you, our members and supporters, who remind us everyday why the CTBA continues

Looking forward to a new year and new reasons to be grateful.

Libby Mayfield Brennan

GREETING FROM THE NEWSLETTER CHAIR

Hello and welcome to this issue of the Central Texas Bluegrass Bulletin. This is a small note from the newsletter chair Mike McKinley.

It is an honor and a pleasure to coordinate the Newsletter for the Central Texas Bluegrass Society.

The Central Texas Bluegrass Association has been supporting Bluegrass Music in our area since 1978. Check out the excellent 3 page story about the CTBA and past newsletters.

CentralTexasBluegrass.org/History

CentralTexasBluegrass.org/Newsletter-Archive

I've been looking at these sections of the website and all the work that has been done by our Association. I feel proud to help to continue this great

tradition of serving the bluegrass community that the past editors and board members have established. It is truly inspiring to see an all volunteer organization like ours that is still healthy and relevant after all these decades of being in existence.

We highly encourage bands to join the CTBA as well as instructors so we can help promote their music and services. Instructors are not required to be members to post information on our website.

I am open to ideas for articles related to Bluegrass Music, especially in Central Texas. You are welcome to send feedback, ideas or submissions to me at ctba@centraltexasbluegrass.org.

So here is my first newsletter. Thank you to all our members and the Bluegrass Community that is so strong and vital in Central Texas.

CENTRAL TEXAS BLUEGRASS ASSOCIATION: 2020 RECAP

by Mike McKinley

The newly elected CTBA Board met on the patio of CTBA jam locale Oskar Blues in North Austin for the first meeting of 2020.

There we elected a new Board of Directors and delegated roles for Chair positions.

- President, Libby Brennan
- Vice President, Chris Jones
- Treasurer, Lenny Nichols
- Secretary, Chip Bach

Other members of the 2020 Board are: Noah Jeffries, David McDonald, Mike McKinley, Brad Wolbert/Celebrindal Roberts*, and Sammy Sanchez.

Some of the other members who volunteer with various aspects of the CTBA include Jon Lundbom, Leslie Collier, Eddie Collins and artist, Emily Isbell.

The board set a goal of doubling our membership to 200 members by December 2020. While COVID has prevented us from most of our public engagements we have more than doubled membership from 50 members up to 130 since October 2019.

Jon Lundbom, super-volunteer, webmaster and membership liaison, updated our platform to create a more streamlined and user-friendly way of managing our membership database. Thank you for the hard work Jon!

The early winter months brought new opportunities to jam. We incorporated two business members, Easy Tiger the LINC in Central Austin and St. Elmo

Brewing CO in South Austin into the lineup for monthly jams which both proved to be filled with potential.

Longtime friend and bluegrass aficionado, Brad Wolbert was set to serve a two year term but accepted a job in Wisconsin. We were sad to see him go but know that he is still very much a part of this community. With his departure we welcomed the effervescent Louisiana native, Celebrindal Roberts whose multi- instrumental rapport has truly made her one of Central Austin's flourishing talents.



In the Beer gardens and outdoor pubs, spring was just starting and the outdoor music season was just heating up when the pandemic hit the US and Texas, and the economy went into lockdown. Jams, the gigs, and the outdoor concerts all over Austin went silent. Musicians and Instructors alike had to quickly adapt to the new technology of stacking collaborative performances like acapella and live facetime style apps. Shows were streamed live from their homes; garages, living rooms or acoustic friendly locale.

The workings of the CTBA also were put into limbo by the shutdown. The CTBA were set to have our regular summer schedule of events, including Memorial Fest, the Band Scramble/Garage Sale and send a couple lucky youth to music camp through our scholarship program.

Old Settler's Festival was an annual event we were incredibly excited about sponsoring and attending, being able to reconnect with previous members and meet new fellow lovers of Bluegrass as well as fellow musicians and music lovers. We updated our merch table and got ready for a great weekend.

While we couldn't have an actual Band Scramble, our Summer Sessions virtual competition was a great inaugural event. There were 18 entries for the contest, viewed and voted on in an open election with 3 elected winners and a board favorite. We still have a big stash of items ready for the next Garage Sale when it is safe to convene again.

With music camps cancelled for the summer, we partnered with Artistworks, an on-line music school for 1- year subscription to their classes. This allowed us to adapt to the times and expand our scholarship program from 13-21 year olds to 13 and up!

The scholarship recipients were 13 year olds Evan Boatright and Isabella D'Allesandro, as well as adults Shane Orr, Julian Root, Rick Skelton, and U.T. student Luke Stecklein. Congratulations to the Recipients of the 2020 Willa Beach-Porter CTBA Music Scholarships!

Diversity, equity and inclusion were huge themes for the year. On June 8th, the CTBA Board issued the following statement:

The Central Texas Bluegrass Association exists in order to celebrate, promote, and preserve Bluegrass music. Along with this, we hold a responsibility to encourage diversity and inclusion within the Bluegrass community. Standing in solidarity with the Black community and all people of color, we, the CTBA board, commit to the following:

- Recognize the important and impactful contributions that People of Color, e.g. Deford Bailey, Arnold Shultz, Rhiannon Giddens, and many others have made to Bluegrass music.
- Emphasize the spirit of inclusion at CTBA events, without regard to race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, age, ability, or financial status.
- Promote just and fair treatment for all people.
- Contribute to a spirit of unity within our community through connection, education, tolerance, and, of course, through music.

Additionally, several Board members attended a Bluegrass Diversity seminar presented by the International Bluegrass Music Association in August. The importance of these difficult conversations are incredibly relevant and intend on educating and integrating an equitable playing field for Board members, members and fans.

Amidst the chaos of the year, we still had an Annual meeting and Election to plan. Nomadic Beerworks was selected as the location for our Annual Meeting. The event was broadcast in a live stream over Facebook and YouTube.

Three bands performed for our small group of people and the sizable virtual audience, and the election results were declared. An Artistworks scholarship was raffled off and the new members were announced.

Financially, the CTBA remains in good standing. Our monthly statements are prepared by Treasurer Lenny Nichols and published on the website. While we remain in good standing, there is always opportunity to grow.

With a challenging year behind us, lots of lessons learned, we are looking forward to 2021 as we continue to look for ways to build connections in our bluegrass Community in the future.

We know we would not have a bluegrass Association without the selfless work of past and present Board members, volunteers and of course, our membership!



Novice and seasoned pickers at the South Side jam hosted by St. Elmo Brewing Co.

KEEP ON (VIRTUALLY) PICKIN'!!

By Chip Bach

Physical distancing precautions during 2020 have provided musicians with opportunities to hone skills, learn new tunes, transcribe, explore theory, and listen to the music we love. But for most of us, something is still missing. Playing music with friends is a tough joy to match, and even the most introverted musician needs musical interaction with other musicians. It's part of who we are.

Thank goodness for technology! During my current isolation, I have found several programs which help to ease the sense of emptiness left behind when playing music with my friends is curtailed. Although these programs don't completely fill the need for musicians to play music together, they provide a very nice creative outlet. Here are my 6 favorite software packages, along with a brief description of each. I'm sure there are some others out there that will likely become "essential" once I discover them! I also included a description of equipment and platform needs in the section on "My Gear." Keep picking!

Amazing Slowdowner (ASD) by Roni Music:

<https://www.ronimusic.com>

While there are a number of slowdowner applications available, ASD was the first one I tried at the recommendation of a friend. The features ASD provides, such as tempo and pitch changing, looping, etc., can be found in several different available programs. However, the ability to import directly from Spotify is a boon. It is rare that I am unable to find even a rare or obscure fiddle tune on Spotify. Seems like all recorded music can be found on Spotify. Spotify's library is huge. Once I have saved a tune into my "ASD" playlist within Spotify, it is quite easy to load that file into ASD for study.

ASD is available for PC, Mac, Android, and iOS devices. The computer based versions are \$49.95, Android version is \$9.95, and the iOS version is \$14.95. It is well supported. I have been a user for several years. I use ASD extensively when trying to learn a fiddle tune or mandolin break note for note.

Strum Machine (SM) by Luke Abbott:

<https://www.strummachine.com>

I can honestly say that SM changed the way I approached practice. For traditional music styles, SM provides the most realistic sounding computer-generated back-up I have heard. There are more than 1,000 different backing tracks already loaded, including Bluegrass, Old-Time, Celtic, Americana, and other genres. But the real beauty of SM is the ease at which chord progressions for your own tunes may be added. It is quick and easy with preview, tempo, key, time signature options available. Major, minor, seventh, and diminished chord voicing are available. Half-measures may be added for those crooked Old-Time tunes. Common (4/4), waltz ($\frac{3}{4}$), jig (6/8), and slip jig (9/8) time signatures are available. Tunes may have an intro or tag line added, and a song may loop as many times as you wish. Tune organization within the program is very intuitive.

Be careful though! This program will tempt you to forgo your metronome practice! I love the realistic sounding backup and the ease of creating my own chord charts.

SM is a subscription service. A subscription is \$49 per year. I have been a user and a beta tester for SM for a couple years.

Audacity by Audacity:

<https://www.audacityteam.org>

Audacity is all the mixing software most home studios need. Full featured and easy to use, you can import/export tracks, or record them directly using external mics or sources. I typically use Audacity with recorded tracks from my Tascam portable recorder. The array of effects is tremendous.

Audacity is open source and free, and downloads are available for Mac or PC. I have used Audacity for several years. I like its ease of use plus the plethora of features.

Acapella by Mixcord:

<https://www.mixcord.co/pages/acapella>

Acapella allows musicians to create synchronized, multi-frame videos, individually, or collaboratively with other musicians. It is intuitive, and while better audio equipment will improve the sound quality in the resulting videos, decent results may be obtained with nothing more than an iPhone and the supplied earbuds (ones with a microphone built in). It is fun, and certainly helps to somewhat satisfy musical creativity needs. Resulting video files may be saved to your device, shared with friends and on social media, and even sent to others who can add their own tracks to it.

Mentioned earlier, sound quality can be improved with better audio equipment. See the discussion on inexpensive audio equipment alternatives below.

Unfortunately, Acapella appears to be currently supported only on iOS.

Acapella is a subscription service, costing \$9.99 per month or \$47.99 per year. Acapella was a discovery for me since going into isolation. I really like the product that I can easily make with it.

Zoom by Zoom:

<https://zoom.us>

Yup, despite the latency issues, Zoom, when used with decent (but not necessarily expensive) audio equipment can provide a decent platform for social and musical interaction. The lag produced by internet latency prevents jamming synchronously, but a song-circle Zoom session can be quite fun. With only one person un-muted at a time, others can listen or play along. Sessions such as this also provide nice social interaction between songs. Since Zoom was designed for voice meetings there are some tweaks that may be applied to improve the outgoing sound quality. Do a quick internet search for “Zoom for musicians” to find tutorials.

With a user ID alone, a user may hold sessions for up to 40 minutes with multiple participants, or longer sessions for only two participants. A subscription allows the user to access many more features, including conferences for up to 100 participants, screen sharing, scheduling, session recording, and other features.

A Zoom subscription costs \$14.99 per month. It is available on all major platforms. Zoom was a discovery for me since going into isolation. Zoom is great for conducting both meetings and song circles.

JamKazam (JK):

<https://www.jamkazam.com>

JK is the newest software in my “must have” category. Using JK with friends with whom I share low latency (~30 ms or less) is as close to real time on-line jamming as I have come. It is certainly not the same as sitting around a fire, under a starlit sky, and enjoying an adult beverage while playing music with good friends, but it is still loads of fun. After setting it up, I must admit, I feel a bit like an old ham radio operator! I’ve had conversations with musicians from all over the US, Canada, and Europe. Here in the Austin area, a group of techno-musicians (present author included) have set up JamKazam at our homes, and found the experience quite enjoyable. These folks are all Austin area traditional music and bluegrass (and even a bit of jazz sax) musicians.

JK was initially free to use, however in January it will go to a subscription platform. It is an Austin based company, which is pretty cool! It requires either a Windows 10 PC or a Mac (no tablets or Smartphones). A wired internet connection is required. You should be able to hook up an Ethernet cable to the back of your router. I use a cat 7 Ethernet cable, but a cat 5 or 6 may be sufficient. JK also requires some additional audio gear which I explain below.

One of the local techno-musicians has put together a nice tutorial on setting up JK. It can be found here <http://paulmaine.com/jamkazam/>. Check the page often, as it is frequently updated.

It ain't perfect every time, but JK does fill a need for this isolated musician. I actually set up a JK account several years ago, however I have gotten it much further along since going into isolation. I like the thought of being able to make music synchronously with my friends. In fact, I look forward to the time I can enjoy a nice face-to-face jam with friends!

My Gear:

I admit it. Since March, I have purchased additional audio equipment. Please don't tell my wife! Seriously though, I have purchased a few adapters, and cables, as well as a decent condenser mic, and an audio interface. There are several equipment configurations which I found useful. These are shown in the schematics below.

For the Amazing Slowdowner, and Strum Machine, a smartphone, tablet, or computer with no fancy additional audio equipment is necessary. For Strum Machine, I do enjoy an external Bluetooth speaker, to keep up with my loud playing, but the phone or tablet speakers are fine for all but the loudest players.

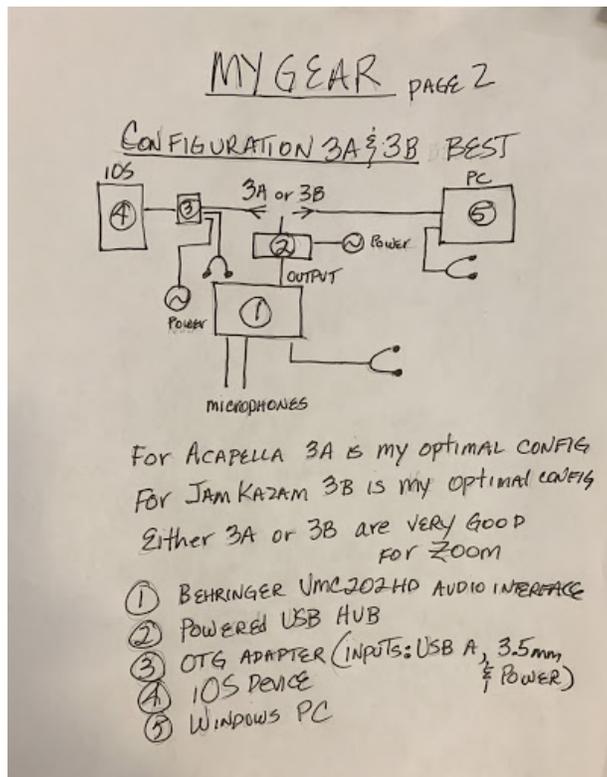
For Acapella, I have made some acceptable videos with nothing more than my iPhone XR and the Apple supplied earbuds (configuration 1 below). For improved sound, however, an external Bluetooth microphone, coupled with headphones or earbuds is an improvement over the basic configuration. This is shown in configuration 2. Finally, on my high end, is the addition of an XLR condenser mic and a digital audio interface. This is shown in configuration 3. Configuration 3 equipment can be purchased for under \$300.

Zoom can be run under the simplest configurations for voice only meetings, but headphone or earbuds will enhance the experience, and an external microphone will improve your transmitted sound to others. Configuration 2 or 3 work for Zooming musically.

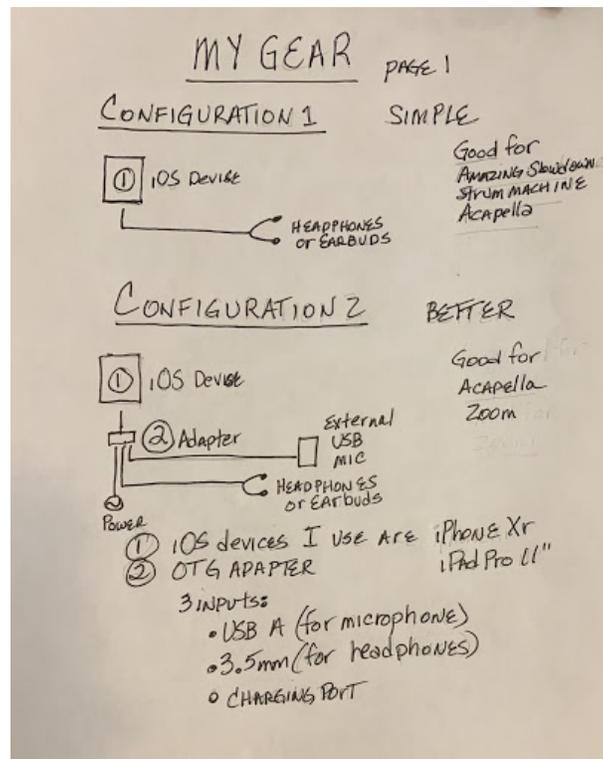
For JamKazam, a wired internet connection is highly recommended. Hook up a cat 5 or better Ethernet cable from your router to your PC. Also, an external audio interface reduces your internal latency significantly. Configuration 3 (or better) is necessary.

So my equipment purchases to support these essential software packages included:

1. Behringer U-Phoria UMC202HD 2-channel audio interface. \$130
2. Sabrent 4-port Usb powered hub. \$17
3. MXL 770 Cardoid Condenser Mic. \$77
4. Cat7 Ethernet cable 50 ft. \$20
5. OTG Adapter for Lightning (my iPhone) (3 inputs, USB A for sound in, 3.5 mm for headphones, Lightning for charging). \$18
6. OTG Adapter for USB C (my iPad) (3 inputs, USB A for sound in, 3.5 mm for headphones, USB C for charging). \$20



I already owned various cables, mic stands, nice headphones, earbuds, dynamic mics (SM57, SM58, Beta58), a Windows (slow Intel i3 processor) PC, an iPhone XR, and an iPad Pro 11.



I've shown some of my drafting skills below. Three different audio equipment configurations which I've used successfully are sketched out. Remember though! YMMV!

Hope everyone is safe and healthy! Call a friend today, keep smiling, and pick on! Even if virtually for the moment!

SCHOLARSHIPS AND AWARDS

By Mike McKinley

The Willa Beach Porter Scholarship fund was established in 2004 and named in honor of a wonderful member of our picking community, a renowned and beloved fiddler.

The CTBA has usually sponsored scholarship recipients for a week at a bluegrass camp. As this was not feasible, in lieu of bluegrass camp, the CTBA partnered with online music school ArtistWorks.

Artistworks provides a platform in which the recipient can choose from a wide variety of lessons led and supported throughout the 30 week program by a Master musician.

In previous years, scholarships were allotted to youth ages 13-21. Because of the nature of the virtual lessons, the Board unanimously voted to extend the opportunity to anyone over the age of 13. This year, the applicant had to be a Texas resident and provide at least two letters of recommendation.

The 2020 recipients of the Artistworks scholarships are:

- Isabella D'Alessandro, 13 years old, Round Rock
- Evan Boatwright, 13 years old, Gatesville
- Luke Stecklein, 21 years old, Austin
- Julian Root, 32 years old, Austin
- Rick Skelton, 72 years old, McGregor
- Shane Orr, 49 years old, Austin

In addition to the Scholarships, the CTBA was thrilled to honor Martina Stecklein's contribution to our 2020 Summer Sounds Video competition with the gift of a Kentucky Mandolin.



SUMMER SOUNDS VIRTUAL COMPETITION

By Mike McKinley

Due to the limitations of the pandemic, the 2020 Band Scramble was replaced with *Summer Sounds*, a virtual competition. Participation was open



to anyone and encouraged bands and solo ages of all ages to participate.

Video submissions were accepted between July 1- July 31st in these categories:

- Youth/Family

- Multi-performer
- Solo performance

A total of 12 videos were submitted and posted on the CTBA YouTube page for public voting. They were submitted on the acapella app, a virtual platform which allows participants to stack parts of a given song, and mix into a multi-track song video.

The Summer Sounds participants with the most votes are:

- Youth: "Blackberry Blossom" by Jackson Wreden
- Group Instrumental: "After Me" by Bobby Giles & Texas Gales
- Solo Instrumental: "New Camptown Races" by Shawn Spiars

Thanks so much to everyone who participated in our first virtual competition. It was so fantastic and such fun to see everyone's videos.

There are plans to have more virtual competitions in the future, so keep your eyes open for more to be announced.

You can view all of the submissions on our [YouTube page](#). Don't forget to subscribe to stay up to date on future posts!

MUSIC LESSONS

By Chip Bach

I enjoy music! You, too, huh? Playing music increases my enjoyment exponentially. Plus, the music lessons from which I have learned over the years have become an integral part of who I am today!

"Wait," you ask, "you took lessons?" Well actually, yes, I did take lessons. Although I've had a few one-time one-on-one lessons along the way from performing musicians, I haven't had any recurring or regular lessons since I was 13. The lessons I speak of here are not the lessons I took to learn to play music, but rather, the lessons that I have learned through a lifetime of playing music. There is a difference!

Responsibility:

I learned early that "it's either in your lap or in the case." This makes a lot of sense. Fortunately, this lesson was learned with only a few instrument dings and bumps and perhaps some frayed nerves. In my college days, a good-natured midnight raid into my dorm room by a fellow student through the unlocked, first-floor window of my dorm room resulted in my guitar

performing a rather loud face-plant. It carried bruises from that fall. Within the last couple years, I saw a father and son ALMOST come to blows, when the father hopped up and sat on the open tailgate of his own pickup truck. The son became perturbed when his dobro (which had originally been propped up against the same tailgate) fell to the ground separating the neck from the body. Thankfully, no blows were delivered. After mentoring my grandkids on mandolin and ukulele for a few weeks, it has been a real joy to see the seriousness of my 9 year old granddaughter, and my 5 year old grandson, when explaining the “case or lap” rule to others. They are learning responsibility.

Practice Makes Perfect:

We all see the improvement that practice makes. Improved playing always means greater enjoyment! Mixed in here is work ethic. I can remember in my teens, playing the banjo, by myself, continuously for periods greater than just a few hours. Sometimes I do think I should introduce myself as, “Hello, my name is Chip. I am a mandoholic.” But hard work, dedication and follow through often become ingrained in music students who have taken up the craft. These values quite often transfer to activities outside of music. As teachers and/or parents, it is imperative that we keep the fun-to-work ratio heavily weighted towards the fun aspect of music when we teach our younger kids. So far so good with Piper! Her mama tells me she practices daily. During our last sit down (lesson), Piper showed me some right hand picking exercises that she made up herself! They were spot on! She will be a great one, because practice makes perfect.

Perfect Practice Makes Perfect:

I took a single one-on-one lesson with Jim Hurst a few years back (great guy as well one of the best on the six string). Jim asked me, “How much do you practice?” I answered, “Jim, I’m probably playing the guitar or mandolin for a total of 6-10 hours a day!” Obviously, I had hoped that this would impress Jim, but he replied, “No ... how many hours a day do you practice?” My puzzled look, resulted in a discussion of the differences between playing tunes and practicing. Jim said that he put 3 one-hour sessions on his calendar each week. During these sessions, he would do scales, arpeggios, right-hand exercises, chordal scales, and he would play tunes in non-standard keys (to which he demonstrated a cool version of Wildwood Flower in Eb). Practice efficiently and effectively! Watch your posture! Try to have a purpose or goal each time you pick up your instrument. Set goals for yourself. PRACTICE! In my pre-retirement working role, we used to say, “We work as we train, and we train as we work.” Good lesson, and music reinforces it. Make your practice perfect!

The Thinking Musician:

Those fog-clearing insight moments which result in (what feels like) a quantum step in my understanding of the mandolin, come when I find a new pattern. The pattern can involve either or both hands. Efficient practice requires a fully engaged brain! Foster and encourage your own “musical curiosity.” Explore, in depth, those new accidental licks, that sound really cool. Record them. My granddaughter’s development of new right hand exercises was a result of a fully engaged brain processing what her ears and fingers were telling her. Yes, there are times when playing an

instrument can seem almost meditative, but most of the time, for most of us, the more thinking the brain, the prettier the music!

Timing, Timing, Timing:

JD Crowe is known for his amazing timing. Both he and John Hartford said in interviews something to the effect that good music is all about the space between the notes. Hmm. Could he mean timing? Well, JD's timing is impeccable. I think that for many years, I failed to adequately focus on improving my timing. I rarely used and therefore had difficulty playing with a metronome. I didn't place enough emphasis on Timing, Timing, Timing. Timing and bluegrass are like, well, to quote Forest Gump, "like peas and carrots!" Spend time with a metronome, metronome-type program, or rhythm producing software (I use Strum Machine every-single-day). It will pay huge dividends for you in the long run. I promise. The ability to hold a tempo (and perhaps the importance of being able to do so) is perhaps best demonstrated by Earl Scruggs and brother Horace starting a tune on the front porch, then each walking opposite ways around the house until they met again at the porch. If, when they re-met back at the porch, their timing was not in sync, they would do it again, and again, until they got it. Timing, Timing, Timing!

Keep a Life Balance:

Perhaps one of the hardest lessons for me to learn. Unfortunately, I seem to have to periodically re-learn this lesson. Also, unfortunately, my body may respond rather negatively if I play too much music. But, Music is fun! Music is rewarding! I gotta pick! We've all heard the quote, "Lord, give me coffee to change the things I can, and music to accept the things I can't." Sometimes I think I need a bit more coffee and a bit less music. As an adult, I should know that if I over-do it, my left wrist will complain for days! Well, I should know that by now. Do other things. Be rounded. Put down the music sometimes. Keeping a life balance is especially important for our kids. If especially driven, they may need our help. It is especially important that we don't over-do the music with our kids. Our part, in my opinion, is to keep it fun! Do stuff! Go play outdoors! Many kids have given up music due to being burned out! Keep a Life Balance!

Be a Team Picker:

Music is a team sport, especially our traditional and acoustic bluegrass. It was played by family and friends on the front porch, or in a barn while supplying dance music. The end product is nearly always better if there is a spirit of cooperation. Cooperation is best achieved when each individual in a group of musicians does all they can to make the other musicians as well as the group product sound the very best they can possibly be. Try to be mindful of your fill-ins and doodles. Give others an opportunity to be heard. If you can't hear the lead instrument or the vocalist over your own playing, back down. Maintain a sense of humility, recognizing that everyone can add to the enjoyment of the music. I have always maintained, I'd far rather play music with a beginning player who is pleasant, cooperative, encouraging than with a seasoned, but unpleasant, picker. Be a team picker!

Have Fun!:

When I watch a bluegrass band on stage the amount of fun that I experience is directly proportional to the amount of fun the band appears to be having! Promise! It's the same in a jam. "If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands!" As a topper, to really help the whole group have more fun, signal when you like what you hear a fellow picker do during her break. One other thing... If you don't know what I mean when I say "Guitar-Face," you need to do a search for it on YouTube and get familiar with it. Then you need to practice it. Then, during jams, stage shows, etc, you need to put on your greatest Guitar-Face ever! Next time we see each other, let me tell you a story about my 9 year old granddaughter's guitar-face! Have Fun! Keep Picking!

ANNUAL MEETING 2020



The 42nd CTBA Annual Meeting was held at Nomadic Beerworks on November 15th, 2020 from 5-7PM. Due to the limitations of the pandemic, the event was live streamed on facebook and youtube. While this year's event was limited in attendance, we were incredibly excited to welcome viewers from as far as England to San Francisco.

Nomadic Beerworks is a fairly recently opened brewery and restaurant in South Austin at 1804 Woodbury Avenue. They have an outdoor seating area that was perfect for our small gathering. The proprietor, Dan, has proven to be a true friend of the CTBA and was thanked by the Board with a one year membership to our organization.

The technical streaming work was done by Board member Noah Jefferies, who also set up the PA and mixed the sound. Vice President and Merch Czar Chris Jones set up a merchandise table featuring our new CTBA bandanas and hand sanitizer, hats, T-shirts among other CTBA swag (available for purchase at CentralTexasBluegrass.org/Store)

The Annual meeting started promptly at 5 with some wonderful remarks by our President, Libby Brennan. (Libby was instrumental in making this event happen out of sheer will). She then introduced the first band, lead by Board member **Celebrindal Roberts**, a fine bluegrass trio with some very good song surprises and great vocals.

The second band on the bill was **Burnt Orange Bluegrass**, the University of Texas at Austin Bluegrass organization, with a 5 piece band consisting of students Sammy Sanchez on Guitar, Luke Stecklien on Banjo, Travis Flippo on mandolin, and Aaron Light on fiddle. Their show was very enjoyable and they were joined on bass by board member Chris Jones. A very nice set.

There was a raffle for an Artistwork year long scholarship (Congratulations to new CTBA member Randy Green!), Nomadic Beerworks swag, and of course, election results.

With David McDonald's tenure up, we will be welcoming Natalie Turner to the Board for the '21-'22 years.

Following the results of the election and raffle, webmaster and previous Board member, Jon Lundbom led his group the **Greenlawn Rangers** for a nice long set of ripping bluegrass featuring board members Noah Jefferies, Celebrindal Roberts and Lenny Nichols.

The CTBA Annual meeting showed that the spirit of live bluegrass music can exceed all bounds. When the social order is once again restored and viable, the CTBA is ready to do all we can to present and promote events and bring people together to enjoy each other's company and bluegrass music as before. In the meantime, we will continue to adapt our program in the safest and most compliant way so we can be together, in person, once again!



BOARD MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: NATALIE TURNER



We welcome Natalie Turner as the newest elected member of the Board of Directors, elected for a 2 year term. Here is her bio to learn more about the newest Board member!

"I was raised in North Carolina by two music-loving parents: my dad whose roots run deep in North Carolina, and my mom who's from Peru where I was born. I grew up with singing, guitar playing and dancing in the home. I learned to read music, play the piano and dance (tap, ballet,

square dance, waltz and salsa to name a few) throughout my childhood and into adolescence. I developed a love for a variety of musical genres, from classical music to classic rock, from bluegrass to traditional Peruvian music, and from grunge to hip hop.

As a child, one of my favorite records that my dad used to play was from a bluegrass band he knew called the Red Clay Ramblers. I started listening to bluegrass regularly in college at UNC Chapel Hill, where I hung out with a bunch of pickers, saw as much live music as possible, and helped organize a small music festival. I moved to Austin in 2004 and immediately fell in love with the music scene, particularly bluegrass, americana and cumbia. I started attending the Old Settlers Music Festival the year after that, then sniffed out the Flipnotics bluegrass night. Ever since, I've stayed tuned to the development of the bluegrass presence here in Austin and Central Texas. I've been delighted to be able to listen and dance to live bluegrass most days of the week, sometimes with my now 3-year-old son in tow!

Aside from bluegrass, I enjoy rock climbing, flamenco dancing, drawing and being outside as much as possible. I'm currently the school counselor at Casey Elementary, close to my house in South Austin. I was also a Spanish teacher for many years before becoming a counselor."



Burnt Orange Bluegrass is an association of University of Texas students who play and love Bluegrass music. Sammy Sanchez is a member of the BOB and a newly reelected board member of the CTBA. He reports on the group.

This is from a reflection from one of the founders "in the case someone was interested in learning how the organization got started."

"Burnt Orange Bluegrass (aka BOB) is close to completing its 5th year as an organization at the University of Texas at Austin, pending the end of this semester. BOB started in the Fall of 2015 with a couple of guys who found each other playing around campus and decided to group up. The life of BOB revolves around the weekly jam that takes place outside, in true bluegrass fashion, so people passing by often stop to enjoy the free concert while we jammers pick away. The jam takes place at the north side of the WCP (William C. Powers, Jr. Student Activity Center) by the MLK statue, every

Friday from 4-6pm. Anyone is welcome to join the jam, however, membership in the organization is restricted to students and staff of the university.

For anyone who has come to our jams, you will notice that they are much different from something like CTBA jams. We recently got schooled by McD and Chris on how a proper jam should flow haha. But due to the nature of the group, it can be really hard to make that happen. Most of the members have never played or listened to bluegrass before joining and a few are completely new to their instrument. Many are not very familiar with musical terminology and concepts, myself included, so some aspects of a jam are cut out to allow our members to follow along.

From there, we branch out to performances in the city that have included Texas Sports, 6th street venues, Koke Radio, Trail of Lights, Longhorn Run, and CTBA Annual Meeting, just to name a few.

Simply put, we're a music community on campus playing an uncommon form of music because we fell in love with it."

Check them out on [Facebook](#), subscribe to their weekly newsletter, or send them a note at: burntorangebluegrass@gmail.com.



Time to celebrate the great stories that have been passed down through the years and preserved in our heritage... Especially the morbid and shocking stories. Welcome to...

MIKE'S CHAMBER OF BLUEGRASS HORRORS

Today's song is Mary of the Wild Moor, a song at least 200 years old about a woman who was once a happy young bride, but due to the horrors of life,

finds herself frozen to death on her own doorstep. Best sung by the Blue Sky Boys and the Louvin Brothers.. Let's all learn it!

It was on a cold Winter's night,
When the wind blew across the wild moor
That Mary came wandering home with her child
Till she stopped at her own father's door.
Oh why did I leave this fair spot
Where once I was Happy and Free?
And left here to roam without a friend or a home
And no one to take pity on me.

Oh Father, Dear Father! She cried.
Come down and open the door.
For I fear that my child She will Perish and Die
From the winds that blow across the wild moor.
But the old man was deaf (deef) to her cries
Not a word of her voice did he hear
Though the watchdog did howl and the mission bell tolled
And the wind blew across the wild Moor.

Oh how the old man must have felt
When he came to the door the next morn'
And found Mary dead, but the child still alive
Closely clutched in it's dead mother's arms.
In anguish he tore his grey hair
And the tears down his cheeks they did pour
When he thought about how she had perished and died
From the wind that blew across the wild moor

In grief the old man pined away
And the child to its mother went soon
And no one they say has lived there till this day
And to ruin the cottage has gone
But the villagers point out a spot
Where the roses grew over the door
Saying there Mary died-Once the gay village Bride
From the winds that blow across the wild moor



ALBUM REVIEW: "NO MATTER WHERE WE GO FROM HERE" BY WOOD & WIRE

Reviewed by Mike McKinley

Wood & Wire have released a new album of music, titled *No Matter Where We Go From Here*, on the Blue Corn label. It's a collection of memorable songs recorded in Dripping Springs at The Zone studio with co-producer and engineer Pat Manske. The sound quality is striking. It's a direct infusion of music into your imagination with a clean and relaxed texture that is a joy for listening.



Wood & Wire is a well known and regarded band not only here in Austin, but increasingly so on the national festival and concert circuit. This is their first project since their Grammy nominated *North Of Despair* (2018) which catapulted them into a higher notch of notoriety, setting the stage for *No Matter Where We Go From Here*.

There are two instrumentals on the disk, "Roadie's Circles" and "Clamp's Chute". "Roadie's Circle" is very melodic with a proto bluegrass/new acoustic sense, written by Trevor Smith, banjo and composing innovator. Peter Rowan joins in. "Clamp's Chute" digs in with a penetrating groove that doesn't let up, and keeps you involved for all of its duration of 9 minutes and 16 seconds. Written By Billy Bright, it showcases mandolin and banjo, and listen for the fine guitar solo. "Spirit of '96" is a story song about the Whiskey Rebellion in the year or 1796, in which the Federal government sent troops to western Pennsylvania to quell a disturbance related to taxing

distilling of spirits. It resonates with the age old friction between government and individual freedom.

Several songs touch on life in these times. "Pigs" was released with a video earlier this year, with insights into the role of media regarding preachers, reality TV, and the alarming polarization of American culture. A person's relationship with the expectations of society to conform vs the American ideal of being a free spirit is explored in "John", written and sung by guitarist Tony Kamel.

"My Hometown" is a portrait of El Paso written by native son and mandolinist Billy Bright. "Paddlewheels" takes you out on the Ohio for a run down the river on a steam powered slow boat. It captures a summer's day on the deck heading to the next port where someone is waiting for you. Co-written and sung by bassist Dom Fisher. "Home On The Banjo" is an ode to home, bluegrass music, and a bemused outlook on life. "Can't Keep Up" is the familiar story of a fellow chasing his tail trying to keep up with his girl. *No Matter Where It Goes From Here* is an authentic musical landscape that shows off Wood & Wire's writing, singing, and picking skills and invites the listeners aboard for these nine songs.

In a perfect world this album should be nominated for another grammy. Alas, the nominations are out and the academy has screwed up by overlooking *No Matter Where We Go From Here*.

Highly recommended.

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