

APRIL 2015

The next meeting of the SVSA will be held **Wednesday, April 22** at Third Street Coffeehouse in Roanoke, Virginia. Doors will open at 7 p.m.; the meeting begins promptly at 7:30 and will last until the last song critique is finished, or 10:30 p.m., whichever comes first. Members may submit one song for critique (on cassette or CD, or you can perform it live) and should provide at least 12 copies of the lyrics. Critiques are limited to members only but non-members and guests are encouraged to sit in on the discussions and exercises.

➤ **The workshop for the April meeting will be  
“Chords 101: An Introduction to Chords.”**

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## **Songwriting, the Process**

*by Britt Mistele*

As I sat and thought about what kind of article to write for this month's newsletter, it again struck me what an incredible thing it is to be able to write songs. We take from the sum of our experience, add in a dash of diligence and a pinch of exuberance, and create, out of thin air, a thing that has never existed before! Focus on that for a moment: you have just created something that IS, out of something that WAS NOT! That is truly miraculous, a gift that should not be taken lightly.

We, as songwriters, are the guardians of this gift, as are poets and prose writers, and we should hold this gift as precious as any treasure worthy of kings and kingdoms. We share a gift that most people do not have, so hold it close and appreciate it every day, as it is a rare and wondrous thing!

Now, that being said, how do we channel this gift, and guide it to its fruition, a song? We have all endeavored to learn about this process from many sources.

For me, there are three areas that, if delved into with attention and fervor, will bring about the desired goal of writing a well-crafted song. These three are: Reading, Listening, and Writing. All of these elements are essential, and should

be used in harmony, to create the best result.

## Reading

Read everything that you can: Poetry, fiction books, magazine articles about writing and writers, books about songwriting. All of these will provide you with a wealth of information on how to improve your craft. Articles about writers let you get inside their heads on how to write, develop stories, and create characters. How to develop these ideas and how to set up meter and rhyme schemes. Poetry books give you a feel for how things should flow, and how they develop the images they want you to see, while developing the story. Books about songwriting do a similar thing, but more matter of fact, without the passion of poetry. They give you the nuts and bolts of putting words together, so that, in the end, you have something that resembles a song. What they don't give you is the feel that needs to permeate the song, that creates in the listener the desire to hear more. So, read all you can, it will only improve your craft.

## Listening

Listen to songs from your favorite artist/songwriter. How do they develop a story? What sort of writing scheme do they use? What makes you like their songs? Try and write a song yourself along the lines that you discover. Watch YouTube, and see how they perform their songs, experience the passion they feel for what they write. Get inside their heads and feel the flow of their thinking. One thing I have done is to create a personal channel on AOL radio. I put in the person I want to hear and they play that artist's songs, as well as other comparable artists. I have learned a great deal about their music, and have written several songs in their genre as a result. Go to songwriting workshops/seminars, and song camps. Learn all you can from the experts – you can only get better.

## Writing

Write all the time! Merle Haggard once said that after the first five hundred songs he wrote, he finally got some good ones! Paul Craft, a member of the Nashville Songwriting Hall of Fame, once hand wrote out all the lyrics of Hank Williams' songs, and wrote the hit, "Hank Williams You Wrote My Life" as a result. Do that with your favorite songwriter: find out what it is that draws you to them. Do songwriting exercises, co-write, anything which gets you into the

groove of writing and thinking about writing! After you do it for a while, you will get a feel for your particular process, and improve much faster. Remember, you must be present to win!! Nothing can take the place of sitting down and writing every day. Jot down ideas on a note pad. Save what could be hook lines in a folder for future use – you never know when they will come in handy (this helps us older folks, as we tend to forget things!). Write some stinkers and throw them away – the good ones will come once the mediocre ones are out of the way. Don't let your inner critic dissuade you. Keep the faith and proceed on – a great song might be just around the corner!

I hope that this presentation of how my songwriting process works, and how I go about gathering ideas, will be of some use to all of you on your journey to better writing. Good things come to all who perservere!

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## How I wrote that song: “Nobody in My Way”

*By Mike Franke, SVSA President*

This year at SVSA, we are trying to always have an active “song challenge” going. The challenge from earlier this year was to write a song with no repeating parts. The idea came from a song that David Simpkins brought to a meeting – “In Dreams,” by Roy Orbison.

We listened to the song, and, sure enough, it had no repeating parts. But you'd never have known it if you weren't a songwriter and obsessed with this kind of thing.

**In Dreams, by Roy Orbison:**

C Am  
**A candy colored clown they call the sandman**

Dm G13  
**Tiptoes to my room every night**

C Am  
**Just to sprinkle stardust and to whisper**

F G7 C  
**Go to sleep, everything is all right**

<sup>C</sup>  
**I close my eyes**

<sup>Dm</sup>  
**Then I drift away**

<sup>G7</sup>  
**Into the magic night**

<sup>C</sup>  
**I softly say**

<sup>C</sup>  
**A silent prayer**

<sup>Dm</sup>  
**Like dreamers do**

<sup>G7</sup>  
**Then I fall asleep to dream**

<sup>C</sup>  
**My dreams of you**

<sup>C</sup> <sup>G7</sup>  
**In dreams I walk with you**

<sup>F</sup> <sup>G7</sup> <sup>C</sup>  
**In dreams I talk to you**

<sup>C</sup>  
**In dreams you're mine**

<sup>D7</sup>  
**All of the time, we're**

<sup>C</sup> <sup>Dm</sup> <sup>G</sup> <sup>C</sup> <sup>Dm</sup> <sup>G7</sup>  
**Together in dreams, in dreams**

<sup>C</sup> <sup>Fm</sup> <sup>C</sup>  
**But just before the dawn**

<sup>C</sup> <sup>Fm</sup> <sup>C</sup>  
**I awake and find you're gone**

<sup>C</sup> <sup>Dm</sup>  
**I can't help it I can't help it if I cry**

<sup>G7</sup> <sup>C</sup>  
**I remember that you said goodbye**

<sup>C</sup> <sup>F</sup> <sup>G7</sup>  
**It's too bad that all these things**

<sup>C</sup> <sup>F</sup> <sup>G7</sup>  
**Can only happen in my dreams**

<sup>C</sup> <sup>D7</sup>  
**Only in dreams**

<sup>Dm7</sup> <sup>G7</sup> <sup>C</sup>  
**In beautiful dreams**

So anyway, the challenge went out – write a song in an ABCDEF format (no repeating sections).

I started my exercise with that in mind. My thought was to keep the chords simple, but use them in different orders and sequences. I’ve found this rather fascinating in certain songs. “The Pretender,” by Jackson Browne, is one that comes to mind – it starts off like this...

D G  
**I’m going to rent myself a house in the shade of the freeway**

D A G  
**I’m going to pack my lunch in the morning and go to work each day**

D G D G  
**And when the evening rolls around I’ll go on home and lay my body down**

D A  
**And when the morning light comes streaming in**

GD  
**I’ll get up and do it again, Amen**

GD  
**Say it again, Amen**

So I just started writing whatever was on my mind, and I presented the song to the SVSA in February. It was well-received, despite it being quite short (just under two minutes). In general the comments I got were how it held together remarkably well from a musical perspective, and that lyrically it still needed work but had some good stuff to work with. I even got a “pass” on the fact that my first two sections were almost repeating, but not quite.

Then, I got a gig playing at a church. The musical director was very open to having me play original music, and gave me the theme for the sermon that week (I had several weeks’ notice). The theme was “By Their Fruits” (from Matthew 7:16).

So with that in mind, I began playing this little song exercise over and over again. I happened to be playing it as a strumming tune – something of a departure for me, since I usually fingerpick – so it just felt good.

I changed some of the lyrics, and then got the bright idea to repeat the entire song – all 6 sections at that point. I changed the lyrics of the first three sections, and kept the last three the same, essentially making the first three sections the



B7 Em A7  
**Set me free, I got no time to waste**

G A Bm  
**Oh, Lord, help me see, 'cause I forget so easily**

A G D  
**Nothin' in my way but me.**

A G D  
**Nothin' in my way but me.**

GD GD GBm AGD (harmonica break)

(chords repeat...)

**If you were to say to me, what's that, that I see  
Falling from the corner of your eye?**

**I'd say to you, lately, have you seen the news  
Something always makes me cry**

**A million weapons aimed at one another  
A million children calling for their mothers**

**Put a hand on my shoulder, steady me as I get older  
Help me make a difference, help me bear a sweeter fruit**

**Amazing grace  
Set me free, I got no time to waste**

**Oh, Lord, help me see, 'cause I forget so easily  
Nothin' in my way but me.  
Nothin' in my way but me.**

On a final note... I found it remarkable how easy it was to write a song with no repeating parts. The more I thought about it, I realized that, with the “no repeats” constraint, you eliminate a lot of sources of potential “dings” in a song critique context. For instance:

- You can't be dinged on too much repetition.
- You can't really be dinged on “it needs a bridge.”
- You can't really be dinged on “the chorus is too much like the verses.

All in all, there aren't really any rules. But putting some constraints on your writing can be remarkably, and ironically, liberating.

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## Monthly Meeting Notes

At last month's regular SVSA meeting, a total of 18 SVSA members attended along with one guest. Our workshops and our monthly meetings are of great value to songwriters at any level. And for new and long-term members, a steady influx of new membership keeps our meetings interesting, lively, and progressive. Non-members may also attend up to two meetings before dues are requested. Non-members may also participate in the discussions as well as the song critiques but must become dues-paying members before submitting original songs of their own for critique.

Former SVSA President and current member Larry Sakayama presented a short workshop on co-writing that generated an enthusiastic discussion. SVSA Treasurer Greg Trafidlo also offered a helpful songwriting exercise on point of view that helped members answer the question "Who should sing the song?" Members were also challenged to write a song in the form of a letter for an upcoming meeting.

The March meeting saw 10 original songs brought in to be given the SVSA "treatment" in our regular critique session, which features an open discussion of each song with comments, opinions, suggestions, and observations. From simple guitar/vocal demos to professionally produced studio recordings, original songs submitted for critique get a thorough and non-biased listen from our membership. Critiques cover lyrics and music; perhaps the most important observations deal with whether or not the song melds the two elements into a successful whole. It's a proven fact: A song comes out stronger when it has gone through the "wringer" at an SVSA meeting. A popular option gives members an opportunity to perform their submissions live and in person.

And, as always, the pre- and postcritique discussions were lively, and a lot of interesting and helpful information passed around the room. The exchange of information, opinions, and ideas is at the heart of what makes the monthly SVSA meetings so worthwhile and interesting. If you haven't been to a meeting lately, plan to make time and bring in a song for critique ... we're always ready and willing to let you know what we think! Or just stop by and join in the discussions. Your two cents is always welcome!

Non-members are encouraged to attend as well. You can sit through a meeting or two and see for yourself whether or not you think the SVSA would

be beneficial to your songwriting efforts. The pay-off might not be immediate -- but the long-run benefits are many and valuable. You'll find SVSA members with nearly every level of experience who are willing to share their knowledge and enthusiasm with you on your songwriting journey. So plan to attend next month's meeting and check us out!

**- David Simpkins**



*SVSA member Greg Trafidlo (at right) performing with folk legend Tom Paxton (center) and Robin Bullock at the Tin Pan in Richmond, Virginia, on April 2. Photo by Mark Troxell.*

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## Upcoming house concert to feature Kate Campbell

Concerts at Ginger Hill, the Christiansburg, Virginia house concert series hosted by SVSA member Dale Hamilton and his wife Deborah, will be presenting a concert by nationally known singer/songwriter Kate Campbell on Thursday, July 9.

Campbell's gift for storytelling has drawn comparisons to southern writers such as Eudora Welty, Flannery O'Connor, and William Faulkner. Her music has been featured on NPR's Morning Edition, All Things Considered, Car Talk, and Mountain Stage. For more information about Kate Campbell, see [www.katecampbell.com](http://www.katecampbell.com).

Seating for the concert is limited, so call to reserve your spot and get directions and a hotel list. A potluck dinner starts at 6 p.m. with the concert beginning at 7 p.m.

A donation of \$15 per person is suggested. All proceeds go to the performer.

Call 540-382-1483 or 540-357-0226, or email [dshamilt@vt.edu](mailto:dshamilt@vt.edu) or [dalehamilton@ginger-hill.net](mailto:dalehamilton@ginger-hill.net).

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## Upcoming concert in Staunton: An Evening with Judy Collins

The American Shakespeare Center at the Blackfriars Playhouse in Staunton, Virginia is hosting "An Evening with Judy Collins" on June 1. The Grammy Award winner and Hall of Fame inductee will play a selection of songs from her iconic 50-album body of work. The award-winning singer-songwriter is esteemed for her imaginative interpretations of traditional and contemporary folk standards and her own poetically poignant original compositions.

Tickets for An Evening with Judy Collins at the Blackfriars Playhouse start at \$50 and are on sale now at <http://www.americanshakespearecenter.com>.

## Current SVSA membership

Members paid as of 4/19/15

Kathy Acosta  
Marc Baskind  
Andy Bishop  
Aspen Black  
Alice Black  
Bob Blackwell  
Dee Bowlin  
David Bowen  
Steve Clark  
Bob Coulter (Lifetime Member)  
Sid Crosswhite (Lifetime Member)  
Mike DeGiorgi  
Charlie Divers  
Paul Douglas  
Rob Fentress  
Mike Franke  
Jerry Gilmore  
Egan Green  
Dale Hamilton  
George Harris  
Dan Hildebrand  
Josh Jones  
Leigh Littleton  
Barbara Martin  
Marian McConnell  
Britt Mistele  
David Motley  
Mickey Nelson  
Jack Page  
Mike Pearrell  
Larry Sakayama  
Connie Sellers  
David Simpkins  
Andy Smiley  
Dean Smith  
Eddie Sutphin  
Greg Trafidlo

# SVSA Performing Members' Upcoming Gigs

## **Acoustic Reset**

*(David Bowen and Jerry Gilmore)*

May 9: Private Wedding, Bedford, VA

May 15: Attimo Winery, Christiansburg, VA

May 23: Blacksburg Farmers' Market

May 24: Beliveau Winery, Blacksburg, VA

## **Barbara Martin**

Sunday, April 26: 3-6 p.m., In the Round with Ruthie Logsdon & Suzanne Brindamour, Comfortable Concerts, Gaithersburg, Maryland. RSVP to Robin Markle kmarkle6@hotmail.com. \$20 suggested donation.

Friday, May 8: 12-1 p.m., Roanoke Main Library, 706 South Jefferson Street, Roanoke, Virginia 24016. Free admission.

Sunday, May 17: 9 & 11 a.m. services, Unity of Roanoke, 3300 Green Ridge Road Northwest, Roanoke, Virginia 24153. unityofroanokevalley.org.

Saturday, May 23: 9:30-11:30 a.m., Staunton Augusta Farmers Market, Johnson St. between Augusta and Lewis Sts., Staunton, Virginia. [www.safarmersmarket.com](http://www.safarmersmarket.com)

## **Marc Baskind**

Fri. and Sat., May 1 & 2: With the Walter Scott Trio, 7-10 p.m. Main dining room, The Greenbrier, White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia.

Sat. May 9: Solo, 9:30 a.m. to noon. Our Daily Bread, Roanoke

Sat., May 9: with Caravan, 7-10 p.m. Annie Moore's Irish Pub, Roanoke

Sat., May 23: Solo, 2-5 p.m. LeoGrande Vineyards, Goode, Virginia

Fri., May 29: Solo, 6-8:30 p.m. India Garden Restaurant, Blacksburg Virginia

Sun., May 31, Solo, 11 a.m.-1:30 p.m. (brunch). Preston's, The Inn at Virginia Tech, Blacksburg

## **Greg Trafidlo**

June 6: House Concert with David Simpkins and the KGB, Stuart, Virginia

June 20: Americana Afternoons with David Simpkins, Britt Mistele, Kathy Acosta, Barbara Martin, and Ron Ireland. The Floyd Country Store, Floyd, Virginia

## **David Simpkins**

Saturday, June 6: Time TBD, House Concert, Fancy Gap, Virginia. With the KGB.

Friday, June 12: Appalachian Spirit Art Gallery, main street Marion, Virginia. With the KGB.

Sunday, June 14: Play Away The Hunger II, Radford, Virginia (Bisset Park). With the KGB.

Saturday, June 20: noon-3 p.m., Floyd Country Store, downtown Floyd, Virginia. Americana Afternoons Songwriters In The Round with participants TBD. For more info, see <http://www.floydcountrystore.com>

# SVSA Members' Recordings



eyes on the horizon



kaleidoscope



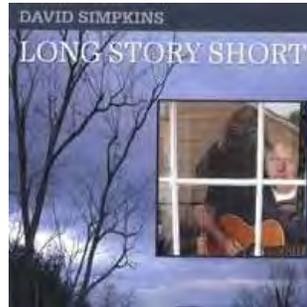
touch the sky



crossing over time



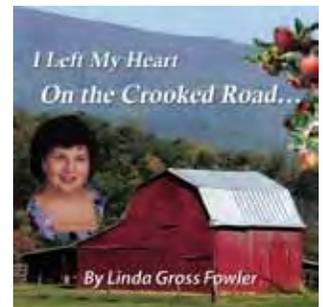
marc with a "c"



long story short



live from third street coffeeshouse



i left my heart on the crooked road

## Barbara Martin

**EYES ON THE HORIZON** — Jazz and all originals with Robert Redd on piano, Chuck Redd on drums and vibes, Steve Wolf on bass, Mac Walter on guitar, Bruce Swaim on saxophone, John Jensen on trombone, and Matt Finley on flugelhorn.

**KALEIDOSCOPE** — Barbara's jazziest CD. All original songs, with co-writes with Joel Evans, Mac Walter, and Greg Trafidlo.

**TOUCH THE SKY** — Swinging acoustic blues and jazz from Barb Martin and Mac Walter.

## David Bowen (Acoustic Reset)

**CROSSING OVER TIME** — Featuring folk-pop tunes. Eight originals and eight covers accented by solid guitar licks and accompanying instruments. Available at [acousticreset.com](http://acousticreset.com).

## Marc Baskind

**MARC WITH A "C"** — Sampler CD of covers and original songs offers a taste of the varied styles of this accomplished guitarist/singer.

## David Simpkins

**LONG STORY SHORT** — Offers 12 original Americana tunes blending rock, folk, blues, and country.

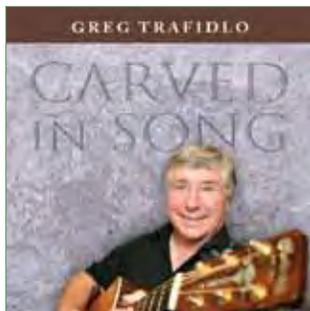
## Britt Mistele

**LIVE FROM THIRD STREET COFFEEHOUSE** — Four original songs and 11 covers, recorded live at Roanoke's Third Street Coffeehouse. With special guest Greg Trafidlo.

## Linda Fowler

**I LEFT MY HEART ON THE CROOKED ROAD** — Features 12 original compositions.

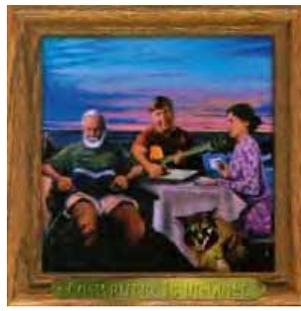
## SVSA Members' Recordings



carved in song



folk singular



co-writers in disguise



old dog, new tracks



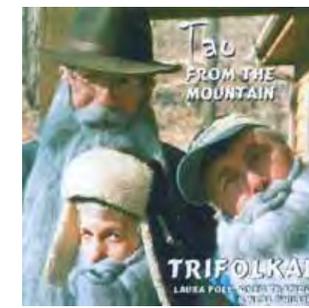
pacing the moon



dog joggin'



winkin'



tao from the mountain

### Greg Trafidlo

**CARVED IN SONG** — Most songs co-written with some of Greg's favorite songwriters. Listen to audio clips at [gregtrafidlo.com](http://gregtrafidlo.com).

**FOLK SINGULAR** — Greg's third solo CD reflects the diversity of his songwriting and production skills. With SVSA-ers on background vocals, and Marc Baskind on guitar and vocals.

**CO-WRITERS IN DISGUISE** — Contemporary folk/country with an emphasis on well-crafted lyrics and humor. With a number of SVSA members appearing on the CD.

**OLD DOG – NEW TRACKS** — Songs that range from silly to sublime, drawing you in with warmth, wit, and humor. Songs include "I Got Stuck Behind Buford," "Time is a Mountain," and "The Tumbler." Buy it from CD Baby or contact Greg at [kirasongs@aol.com](mailto:kirasongs@aol.com).

### Josh Jones

**PACING THE MOON** — Thirteen of the strongest songs Josh has written. For lyrics, short audio clips and additional information, please visit [www.jonesgroupmusic.com](http://www.jonesgroupmusic.com).

### Steve Clark

**DOG JOGGIN'** — Eleven sweet and true amusing tunes comprise this quirky singer/songwriter CD. Available at [cdbaby.com](http://cdbaby.com).

### Trifolkal

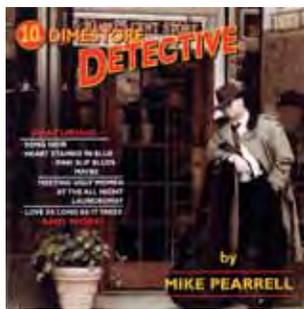
**WINKIN'** — Newest release from that "trio fiercely dedicated to fun" tempers the fun with poignancy and heart.

**TAO FROM THE MOUNTAIN** — Tight harmonies, warmth, and witty songwriting from Laura Pole, Greg Trafidlo & Neal Phillips. Features classics such as "Shenandoah" as well as original tunes including "Appalachian Rap" and "The Starbucks of County Down."

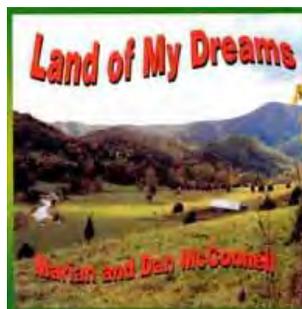
## SVSA Members' Recordings



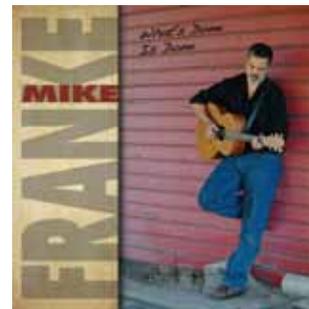
cup of contradictions



dimestore detective



land of my dreams



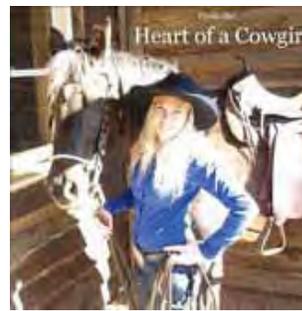
what's done is done



invisibility



eastern western  
cowgirl



from the heart of a  
cowgirl



horsegirl poet

### Mike Pearrell

**CUP OF CONTRADICTIONS** — 13 original songs. Lots of SVSA musicians singing and playing.

**DIMESTORE DETECTIVE** — Mike's first solo CD features 14 original songs. Produced by Greg Trafidlo; with a number of guest SVSA musicians. Available at Mike's shows.

### Marian and Dan McConnell

**LAND OF MY DREAMS** — Takes the listener along on an excursion in the Blue Ridge Mountains in Virginia through 14 original folk songs with celtic and country/rock underpinnings. Recorded at Catawba Sound Studio. Available at [cdbaby.com](http://cdbaby.com).

### Mike Franke

**WHAT'S DONE IS DONE** — A debut release of 14 original folk and blues tunes about everyday life and interesting people featuring Mike's fingerstyle and slide guitar.

### Aspen Black

**INVISIBILITY** — New cowgirl poetry. Available at the end of January 2015 at CDBaby.

**EASTERN WESTERN COWGIRL** — Eight original Contemporary Western songs. Available at [CDBaby.com/aspenblack7](http://CDBaby.com/aspenblack7).

**FROM THE HEART OF A COWGIRL** — Original spoken word poems adhering to the Western Music Association guidelines for the cowboy poetry genre. Available at CDBaby.

**HORSEGIRL POET** — Songs and poems about horses, cowboys, and rural life. Available at CDBaby.

**A HUNDRED YEARS TOO LATE** — All original music for horse lovers and those who yearn to preserve the spirit and lands of the last American frontier. Available at CDBaby.

### **About Classifieds:**

SVSA Music News free classifieds may be submitted by paid members only. All classifieds must be music-related. Members, e-mail your classifieds to svsa.songwriters@gmail.com.

### **About articles and other written contributions:**

SVSA members write feature articles for the SVSA Music News throughout the year. Members can submit other articles and features at any time. Non-members may also submit articles and other written contributions but their inclusion will be subject to time and space constraints. All articles may be edited for space considerations and will be edited, as time allows, for spelling and grammar. E-mail submissions to svsa.songwriters@gmail.com.

### **About Announcements:**

SVSA members may list music-related announcements in the SVSA Music News. E-mail them to svsa.songwriters@gmail.com by the second Tuesday of the month. Announcements from members will be e-mailed to members as soon as they are received and, if still timely, published in an upcoming issue of the SVSA Music News. Announcements from non-members will be held for publication in an upcoming issue of the SVSA Music News.

### **About Members' Gig Listings:**

SVSA members may submit their upcoming performance schedules for publication in the SVSA Music News. The submissions will be printed as submitted; the more information you provide, the more likely the response.

### **SVSA DISCLAIMER**

*The ideas and opinions contained in this newsletter are intended to be helpful to songwriters. The companies and organizations mentioned are believed to be legitimate; however, SVSA does not endorse any products or services and offers no guaranteed success based on the content.*

*We are always looking for articles about SVSA members and articles of interest to the songwriting community. Send articles and information to the Editor, Kathy Acosta, or svsa.songwriters@gmail.com. SVSA is a non-profit organization.*

### **SVSA Board Members:**

Mike Franke – President  
Mike DeGiorgi - Vice President  
David Simpkins – Secretary  
Greg Trafidlo – Treasurer  
Andrew Smiley - Board Member  
Marc Baskind - Board Member  
Larry Sakayama - Board Member  
Kathy Acosta - Newsletter Editor



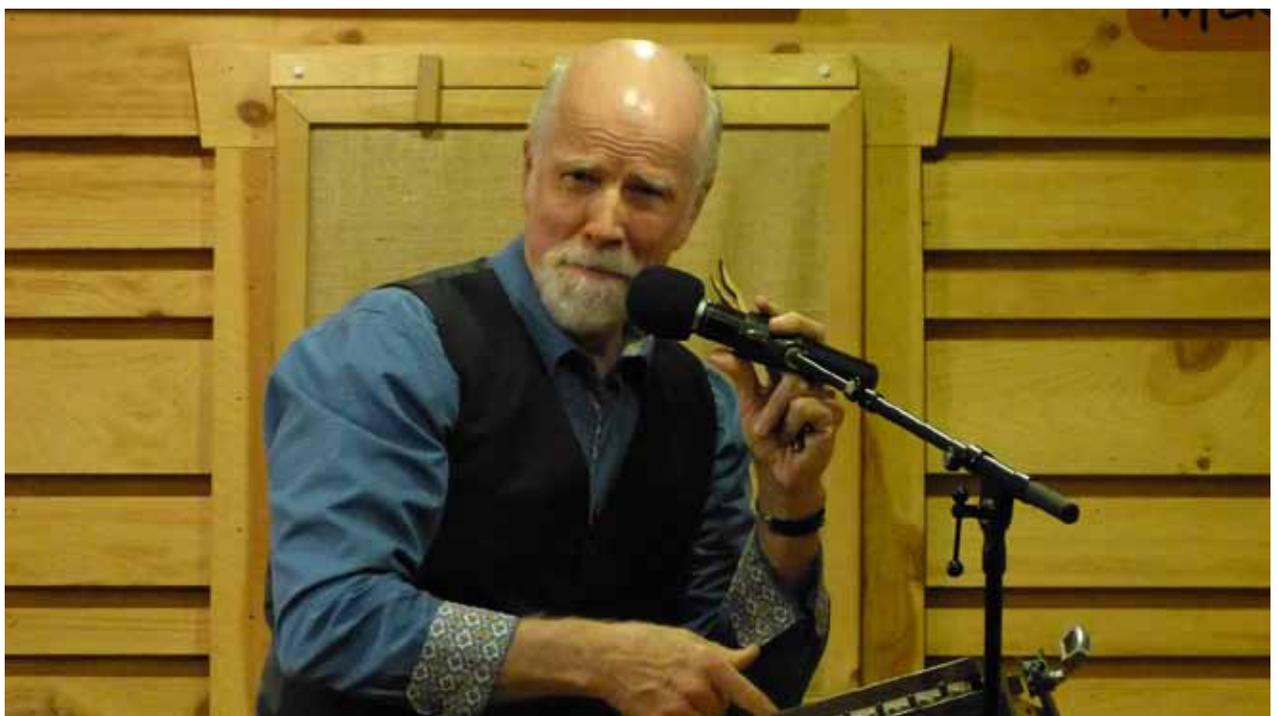
**SVSA**  
**P.O. Box 698**  
**Salem, VA 24153**  
**www.svsasongs.com**

# Seen on the Musical Scene

photos of music performances in Southwest Virginia



John McCutcheon in concert at the Floyd Country Store on March 20. Photos by Leigh Littleton.





A concert by Amy Speace, with Megan Palmer, at the Taubman Museum in Roanoke on April 3.  
Photos by Leigh Littleton.

