

CALLIOPE Rootz

Folk-a-Palooza

Rootz Late Summer, Early Fall Issue

AUGUST 2004

Summer is almost over and fall, well it's around the corner. But that's no excuse. You can still get out and hear some music. Play some music. And dance. This issue of Rootz is all about what's out there in Pittsburgh, and surrounding areas, to help you get your acoustic, folk and traditional music groove on.

For those Rootz readers who can't get enough of a good folk festival, Bill Locke, Calliope Board Member, we will keep you posted on the folk festival Circuit in his column "Out and About."

Out and About

WEST VIRGINIA FOLK FESTIVAL
GLENVILLE, WEST VIRGINIA
JUNE 16 – 19, 2005

As the saying goes, music is all around us, and in this part of the country, that couldn't be more true.



In "Out and About," we'll focus on the music that you can find in this part of the United States, including large concerts, small concerts, house concerts, back yard parties, and festivals. For this issue of Rootz, I'll fill you in on the **West Virginia State Folk Festival which happened this year June 17 through June 20. It will happen again next year during the same period: June 16 – June 19.**

This festival has been continuously running for fifty years and may be the oldest running festival in the country. The town of Glenville becomes a place where folks play music: on the porch of the bank, on the porch of the church, in the parking lot of motel. There are fiddles, banjos, hammered dulcimers, guitars. Friday and Saturday evenings include concerts by West Virginians as well as others from surrounding states. The ages of the performers span from teenage to nineties - every bit superb. These included fiddle, banjo, old-time bands, singers, humorists, people singing songs that they heard on the radio in their youth, and naturally spiritual songs from years ago.

Beyond music, the festival includes a good old fashion parade complete with old cars, horses, honor guards, politicians, and candy thrown from fire trucks. There was an exhibition of delightful quilts made by local folks. And a favorite for me, storytellers telling folk tales from the region. There are blacksmiths, basket makers, carvers, and weavers – all performing and talking about their trades.

It's a great festival especially for families with young children. It has all kinds of activities, including stories, dance, and music. Many youngsters were there playing fiddles and banjos. This part of the WV culture is very much being passed on.

THE FACTS:



There is limited camping space in the town of Glenville. There is a motel, The Conrad, and there is a Best Western about four miles out of town. Making reservations in advance is really required – it all fills up early. The Glenville State College opens up its dorms for \$10 dollars per night and there is plenty of this lodging available. This is about 150 miles from Pittsburgh. You take 79 south beyond Weston, and finally you take exit 79 and go west on Route 5. That takes you right to Glenville. Finally turn left on Route 33 and go to Main Street. If you stay at the Best Western you can take the shuttle. Admission is free.

*If you don't have time to travel this summer, great music is no further than the next neighborhood over. Calliope friend Robert Wagner fills us in on a great way to hear local songwriters and musicians at the **Calliope Songwriters Circle**, eating a plate of pierogies and washing them down with a cold beer.*

Dave Wells—September Featured Songwriter

CALLIOPE SONGWRITERS CIRCLE
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 7

BLOOMFIELD BRIDGE TAVERN, 4412 LIBERTY AVENUE, PITTSBURGH (BLOOMFIELD), PA 15224
(412) 682-8611

SONGWRITERS CIRCLE MEETS AT 7:00. DAVE WELLS PERFORMS AT 9:00. FREE ADMISSION.

As a rule, artists don't like to be defined by comparison, so it might be an unfair burden to Dave Wells to say that his ten best songs are as good as anybody's ten best songs. But that's my opinion. His vocal style is reminiscent of Pete Seeger in that he allows a song's melody and lyrics to speak for themselves. As a guitarist, he fingerpicks "jazzy" chords, providing simple syncopation and counterpoint so that his songs are complete in solo-performance. He doesn't require pickers or accompanists. His songs aren't the screenplay; they're the actual movie.

Although Dave Wells does not have a commercially manufactured CD available for sale, he has documented. He counts among his best work "The Last Chance Band" and "McIver Street." He says, "If someone doesn't like either of those, I'd probably better shut up and not bother them."

"McIver Street" contrasts the memory of an idyllic American neighborhood with the disillusionment and dubious propaganda of our post-9/11 lives. "The Last Chance Band" is an affectionate portrait of a group of aging musicians clinging to "the last grand fantasy."

You're not likely to see Dave Wells performing at clubs or festivals in the area. His spot as September's Featured Songwriter at The Calliope Songwriters Circle will be a rare opportunity for music lovers to hear an entire set of his songs. Come early. Take a seat close to the stage. The closer you listen, the greater the reward.

*If all this talk of playing and writing music makes you feel like picking up an instrument, maybe for the first time, here are a couple reports from two folk music fans that did just that. Emily Rodgers, Calliope staffer, and Dave Walton, Pitt professor and freelance writer, fill Rootz readers in on their experiences at the **Calliope School of Folk Music and Dance**.*

Register Now

*Registration is now open for fall classes at the **Calliope School**. Now's your chance, and there are no excuses. Classes are small, usually no more than 8 students. And affordable. Classes are located on the safe, secure campus of beautiful Chatham College with plenty of parking available. Calliope School class information is located on our Web site at www.calliopehouse.org. If you've taken classes before, and you register a friend, we'll give you \$5.00 off your tuition.*

Calliope School of Folk Music and Dance

I took up the harmonica in my sixtieth year, a whimsical choice for a guy with little musical experience and even less native talent. In high school I played the tuba, a monstrous instrument and a social liability on a school bus, and possibly that influenced my choice of the harmonica, an instrument that can fit in a pocket

I spent my first class at the Calliope School, a whole fall and winter, learning to blow through the right holes. My first Calliope instructor, Steve Weber, a man of infinite patience and understatement, kept saying, "It's better, David, if you blow through one hole at a time."

I still remember the night, late in November, when I first hit a 7 hole blow, clearly and properly, still remember the feel of the air channeling through my pursed lips, that first true note that I played once and couldn't match again for another three or four days. It was a feeling I've experienced often over my lifetime, writing and teaching, that feeling of earned excitement and discovery that one experiences regularly in the teen and twenty years, less often as the years go along. For me, the main virtue, the chief motive and rationale for taking up a folk instrument is it renews that sense of struggle and discovery that is so much a part of our selves and our sense of our life's possibilities. As a teacher, especially, this return to struggle, failure, and eventual success through motor practice has brought me closer to the struggle of my own students, and made me I feel a better teacher.

All of which is a roundabout way of saying I'm still not very good, but am having a great time anyway. I leave "Happy Birthday" on friends' answering machines, and they love it, or claim to.

Two years ago Calliope contacted Charlie Barath, who lives in Beaver County, to offer regular classes in Harmonica I, II, and Repertory. Charlie is a carpenter by day, and an astonishing harmonica player, and as a teacher someone who instills an ambition to excel. More importantly, since the classes are small and varied, he can work with people on a variety of skill levels simultaneously. I say this because the harmonica classes this past year have been undersubscribed and twice were cancelled, and if you're reading this and are interested in advancing your playing or know anyone who is, it's a rare opportunity to have a teacher this skilled and this effective.

Right now I'm practicing breathing, tongue placement, train rhythms, shuffle rhythms, the Lost John. I figure by the time I'm 70 I might do a half decent "Vie in Rose" or "Stardust." In the meantime, I'm still working on "Happy Birthday."

David Walton

Before I joined the Calliope staff, I had intended to take a class at the Calliope School, so it seemed especially convenient when everything came together and here I was, working at an organization that I had had so much interest in.

Out of school for the first time since kindergarten, I was just learning what it was like to have the "free time" I had heard about for so long. So when I heard that Calliope would be offering an introduction to the clawhammer (or oldtime) style of banjo playing I knew I couldn't pass up the opportunity to use my newfound spare time in a productive way, and to learn to create a sound that had fascinated me for years.

My classmates came from many different skill levels, many of them having come from a bluegrass banjo background and many of us complete novices. Calliope instructor Janet Reing was aware of these differences and made sure to cater to all of our needs, often breaking us into two groups so that we could work together on what we really needed to learn.



Photo by Stephanie Zerwas

Having finished the class, I must say that there is truly something special about the teaching that goes on at the Calliope School. I have taken private lessons for almost as long as I can remember but I am certain that I learned more in the group setting offered by Calliope than I ever would have in eight weeks of private lessons. What I found most helpful about Calliope classes was that, though I could have as much individual attention as I wanted, I also had time to work out techniques for myself in a fun

and low stress environment.

I have so far put my banjo skills to good use, and have started writing tunes on the instrument and I hope to perform them in the near future—and when I do I will be sure to thank the Calliope School from the stage.

Emily Rodgers

Calliope has been sponsoring Legends Concerts at the Unitarian Church in Shadyside since 1998. The concerts showcase musicians coming through Pittsburgh that fans of traditional music might not otherwise have an opportunity to hear, especially in a small, intimate venue like the Unitarian Church.

The Legends Concert Series

WILBURN HAYDEN
MEMBER, CALLIOPE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Some six years ago, Robert Ham, Teri Hayes and a number of other Calliope Board members launched the Emerging Legends Concerts. The First Unitarian Church of Pittsburgh was our partner then and has remained with us. The Church also had nearly perfect acoustics and a now a new state of the art sound system.

In recent years attendance has ranged from 40 to 80 people. The Legends Concert Committee, Mary Pam Kilgore, Patricia Trudeau and Wilburn Hayden are currently working on a five to six concert series for the 2004-05 year. The Series will run from September through May.

Musicians may lead workshops during the afternoon before the evening concert, and sell CDs and other materials. All the proceeds from the workshop and sales go to the musicians. Accommodations for the artists are provided at the homes of members of Calliope.

The Legends Concerts musicians have to be based outside of Pittsburgh. Some of the artists who have performed include: Bob Franke, Mustard's Retreat, Small Potatoes, Dan Levenson, John Roberts & Tony Barrand, and Cathy Fink & Marcy Marxer.

For more information on Legends Concerts, and what's coming up, check out our Web site www.calliopehouse.org.

Dance Pittsburgh!



Photo by Bob Fritz

Don't be shy. Get out of your chair, stop hugging that banjo, and put that guitar down! Dancing is a wonderful way to experience the music you already listen to or play. You just need comfortable loose clothing, clean-soled shoes (street grit is hard on finished floors), and 2 feet of any size. Take a look at the list of groups below and find one that appeals to you - Newcomers are always welcome. Most of these groups offer instruction in the basics at the beginning of the evening, and several also offer additional classes. Some groups take a break in the summer heat, so confirm the day and time before you go out the door.

Links to these and more groups can also be found on the Resources page at www.calliopehouse.org. Keep an eye on that page for the latest updates.

Square/Contradance
Community Dance Network

English Country Dance
Country Dance and Song Society of Pittsburgh

Irish Ceili / Set Dance
Pittsburgh Ceili Club

Scottish Country Dance
Pittsburgh Scottish Country Dance Society

Cajun Dance

International Dance
Tuesday Night International Dance Group
Bulgarian Macedonian Cultural Center

Latin Dance
Pittsburgh Salsa Web

Argentine Tango
Pittsburgh Tangueros
Tangueros Unidos

Ballroom Dance
US Amateur Ballroom Dancers Association

Swing Dance
Coal Country Traditions
Pitt Stop Lindy Hop
The Groove Juice Special Dance
MezzJelly
Pittsburgh Swing
Pittsburgh's Swing City
Steel City Boogie Club



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