



Fiddler's Rag



Vol. 49, Number 1
Celebrating 47 years

Santa Clara Valley Fiddlers Association
www.fiddlers.org

January 2021
Next Jam: see p.3



President's Note

Important notice! It is necessary to have a quorum for the SCVFA Annual general meeting and elections. Your attendance is very important. It is safe and easy to attend this virtual meeting. Log in 5 minutes before 2:00 PM on Sunday February 7th during the regular Monthly Virtual SCVFA jam. We start immediately following the slow

jam and before the up-tempo jam. If you haven't participated in a virtual jam, come early for the slow jam (starts at 1:00) and stay after the meeting to give it a try. It's a good feeling to connect with others. Before the meeting, be sure to add the zoom app to your computer, tablet or smartphone. Join the meeting by clicking on this link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86361048416?pwd=amJNalBCL2x6Z0laUjBpYlRrTjNiQT09>

Contact me if you need any phone links to attend.
President [at] fiddlers.org

For years, friends have told me about an app that makes music practice like jamming at whatever tempo you choose. No speeding up, just a good steady rhythm. During the COVID quarantine, I have seen a few people using this app as their back-up rhythm section when playing online. Well, I finally gave in and got the free trial of "Strum Machine". I'm so glad I did! Now, I'm one of those people using Strum Machine as my jam buddy during this COVID quarantine. It's such a necessary tool that I wrote to the developer, Luke Abbott, to thank him and invite him to share an article about himself and "strum machine". Be sure to read it.

Megan Lynch Chowning coached 66 musicians from around the country (one from Japan) for the December Celebrity Series. We all learned the basics to play a great kick off, fills and a solid ending. Learning a little bluegrass is a good thing for our fiddlers. Megan informed us that she requires all her students to use Strum Machine when they practice. Yet another major vote of support for Luke Abbott's amazing app.

The next musician to lead the Celebrity Series on January 17th is Marla Fibish. She will teach us how to put the pulse of Irish dance music into your playing. Marla plays Irish music on mandolin, but all instruments are welcome. Start listening to the recordings [here](#) of the 3 tunes she will present at the workshop.

The COVID vaccine is here and I am looking for that light at the end of the tunnel. In my day job (pharmacist), I will be kept busy vaccinating people so we can end this pandemic. Here's hoping COVID is under better control by summer and that live jams in the park can resume.

Donations in lieu of membership are always appreciated to help with our modest expenses. They can now be made easily with PayPal to *Treasurer [at] Fiddlers.org* or use the "Donate" link on our website at fiddlers.org. Thanks for your continuing SCVFA membership and support of traditional music.

Happy Holidays to all. May you stay safe and healthy this New Year,

--Susan
President [at] fiddlers.org

Our annual Membership Meeting will be held via ZOOM on February 7th during the regular Virtual SCVFA jam. See the left column for the meeting information and see page 4 for the Trustee candidates' statement.

Celebrity Workshop with Marla Fibish
Irish Music See page 3 for details

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

Officers and Chairs

President-Trustee	Susan Goodis	News Editor	Patrice Tanti
Vice President	Dave Thomas	Newsletter Publisher	Doug Judd
Recording Secretary .	Jessica Ollmann	Performances Contact	Susan Goodis
Treasurer	Dinah Showman	Publicity	Dave Thomas
Membership Secretary	Pete Showman	Webmaster	Beverly Tracey

Trustees

Seat 1: Bev Tracey	Seat 3: Sam Schillace	Seat 5: Peter Forrest
Seat 2: Doug Judd	Seat 4: Dave Thomas	Seat 6: Cindy Dinga

To Contact the SCVFA:

Mail: P.O. Box 2666, Cupertino, CA 95015-2666

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Address changes: *membership [at] fiddlers.org*

Website: www.fiddlers.org

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The Santa Clara Valley Fiddlers Association is a non-profit member-supported organization.

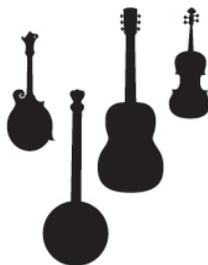
Donations to SCVFA are greatly appreciated and will assist in keeping traditional music alive by passing it on to the next generation.

Many local corporations offer matched donations for non-profits. Check with your employer... they may offer this benefit.

You can easily add SCVFA as a 501(c)(3) organization; our EIN is 51-0196154

Donate as you are able and traditional music will reap the benefits.

SCVFA wants musicians to know that we are "not just for fiddlers". The image to the right side of the Fiddler's Rag name on page 1 includes a mandolin, a banjo, a guitar and a fiddle, to illustrate the diversity of instruments played at our jams and events.

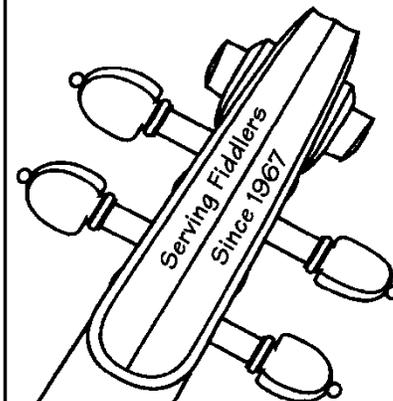


Quote of the Month

"Everything will be okay in the end. If it's not okay, it's not the end"
John Lennon

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SCVFA Happenings

SCVFA Virtual Event

Susan Goodis is inviting you to a Zoom Gathering and Jam. **Join us January 3rd** from 1:00 – 4:00; first hour is the Slow Jam. Join the Zoom jam at: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86361048416?pwd=amJNalBCL2x6Z0laUjBpYlRrTjNiQT09>

Meeting ID: 863 6104 8416

Passcode: Fiddle

One tap mobile (for San Jose):

+16699009128,,86361048416#,,,,0#,,802912# US

Marla Fibish – Irish Music on the Mandolin Workshop & Session



Marla has performed and taught in the US and in Ireland and was a featured performer at the 2018 Masters of Tradition festival in Bantry, Co. Cork. Her playing is featured on her most recent 2020 album, “The Bright Hollow Fog”.

- Date: **Sunday January 17th, 2021**
- Time: 4:00-5:30 pm Pacific Time (PT)
- Location: this is a free ZOOM online workshop and jam event.
- Sign up on Eventbrite
https://www.eventbrite.com/e/marla-fibish-mandolin-workshop-session-tickets-133040683265?utm_source=eventbrite&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=post_publish&utm_content=shortLinkNewEmail
- Zoom meeting ID: 412 609 1232
- Passcode: Fiddle

The Tip Jar — Supporting Independent Musicians
Instead of paying SCVFA for this amazing event, please leave a generous Tip as you are able.

SCVFA Dec Board Meeting Highlights

Membership (Pete):

Current membership of 120 households/180 members. The member directory was sent out electronically; thanks to Bert Raphael for his help. Pete printed and mailed 14 directories.

Newsletter: Pete posted the electronic version and it needs to be decided which position should be responsible for this job going forward.

Pete is working on getting the FileMaker database up and running by the new year.

Nominating Committee (Dave):

Dave has talked to Bill Boiko and he has agreed to be nominated for the open trustee position. He will submit a statement for the Fiddler’s Rag. Peter Forrest agrees to continue for another term.

Webmaster (Bev):

Beverly Tracey is now listed as webmaster on the website and the Fiddler’s Rag.

New Business:

Annual meeting: It can be held at the February 7th online jam. 18-19 members would be needed for quorum.

Celebrity workshops: They are going well. Musicians are happy to be able to engage with players. We have approved the workshops through June 2021 and authorized paying the artists \$200 per workshop.

Jam schedule: We don’t foresee having any inside jams before June, at which point we would move to jams in the park.

Meetup: We will extend the Meetup subscription for another 6 months and authorized the cost up to \$100.

SCVFA Youtube channel: Susan started a channel and posted celebrity series recordings as private videos that can be available to workshop participants. Send Susan any videos you would like added to the channel.

The next SCVFA board meeting will be on **Wednesday, January 20th, 2021** 7:00 – 9:00 pm
SCVFA members welcome to attend.

Join the Zoom meeting at:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/4126091232?pwd=Q3FWdVhiRjQwUVRhUGcyZVVvYi9lZz09>

Meeting ID: 412 609 1232

Passcode: Fiddle

Jessica Ollman – Recording Secretary

The SCVFA community has lost beloved member, Colleen Lethridge



We learned via Colleen's dear friend Lisa Barrett that Colleen Lethridge passed away peacefully on October 23rd in her sleep. She was 90 years old.

Lisa says: "She was interested in music long before I met her. She asked her husband, Bill, if he thought she could

learn to play the guitar...he bought one for her when they were living in LA. She loved playing and singing. I persuaded Colleen to go with me to her first bluegrass music festival in Grass Valley. I helped in the medical tent. She met many people there who remain friends. We have had a lot of adventures since. Colleen and I have been friends for more than 40 years. She was one of those exceptional and valuable people who will be missed. She was a much-loved person, a skilled musician, and had gumption, a sense of humor, and many friends."

Colleen was active with the South Bay Folks (SBF) community. SBF friend Phil Pflager wrote: "Colleen was well liked in the music community and she will be missed."

SCVFA's Pete Showman says: "Colleen had been an SCVFA member for nearly 10 years and was always ready with her guitar to jam or entertain."

Trustee Election in February

As usual, we'll have our annual Membership Meeting at the February jam (virtual this year, see page 1 for ZOOM connection information). The main item of business is the election of two trustees to three-year terms. There are six elected trustees, with two elected each year so their terms overlap. Seats 5 and 6 respectively held by Peter Forest and Cindy Dinga are up for election this year for 2021-2024. Peter Forrest (Seat 5) has agreed to run again, so he is automatically one of the candidates (Peter's statement below was first published in January 2018).

Peter Forest

I'm about as local as you can get. All my great grandparents, grandparents and parents were born in San Francisco as was I. My father was a team member of the original San Francisco 49ers football team in 1946. My grandfather played the piano on Vaudeville in San Francisco. Other than that, I'm the only player in my family.



In my high school years in the 60s, every party and school dance featured live music. It was everywhere. I always wanted to play. I acquired an old Kay guitar with terrible tuning machines after settling with a roommate. Oh, if only they had electronic tuners back then. Using a tuning fork all by myself stunted my start.

During this time, I got a lot of enjoyment from hunting and fishing. When the California department of fish and game closed the salmon season, I saw it as a sign to make a

change. I've never looked back. I joined the Santa Clara Valley Fiddlers Association and met more friends than I thought possible.

I find playing with others is the ultimate way to enjoy music. It's great to have an organization like the SCVFA that makes it so easy to find willing players of all levels.

The Board's Nominating Committee has nominated Bill Boiko for Seat 6.

Bill Boiko



Music has been in my life as long as I can remember - dad playing Italian tunes on the accordion or harmonica after dinner many nights growing up in New Jersey and hearing Glen Campbell on the old black and white TV, music is one of those things that is part of who we are.

Fast forward a lot of years... after playing a lot of different styles in the garage, I wanted to find a way to play with others and somehow bluegrass showed up. My first time playing bluegrass with others was the Sunnyvale Bluegrass Jam and over time that led me to the SCVFA monthly jam in San Jose. I've since hosted the Sunnyvale Jam, gone to music camps, brought some favorite musicians to town for shows and really come to love Bluegrass and old time music and the people involved.

If we want something to survive and thrive, we have to contribute our energy, so I'm ready to jump in and add what I can to the SCVFA. My approach is to come up to speed helping where I can then add more energy to help the organization keep blossoming.

How Strum Machine Came to be

by Luke Abbott



I've been playing music, bluegrass and old-time in particular, since I was a kid. My family started taking me to festivals and other music gatherings in the late 90's (I was 11), and we spent many years going over the hill from Santa Cruz to the monthly SCVFA jams. After a few years we began working on ways to help others in the community, mostly through leading workshops and creating learning materials. (Some of those materials are still available on my family's website, toneway.com)

A Virtual Choir Presentation by Several Cupertino High School Choirs

by Pete Showman

This is a pretty impressive production, and a huge amount of work. ("Zoom" virtual jam participants especially will appreciate how much work!). Each of the 200 or so choir members recorded his or her parts at home, and the resulting video (and audio) files were combined artfully into what you'll see and hear.

Excerpts from the video's introduction, by Andrew Aron, the choir director:

"This being our first ever virtual concert, it's been an amazing undertaking. ... What you're hearing ... is kind of a small miracle. We literally have over a thousand audio files that we have taken from about 200 students -- five songs apiece -- and we have

When I started teaching private lessons, it became clear to me that having good backing tracks to practice with at home made a huge difference in my students' progress and skill levels -- not to mention their enjoyment. So, I would record myself strumming the songs we were working on, in various keys and tempos. It worked, but it was tedious and limiting. What I wanted to exist was a tool that would generate a backing track for any chord progression, in any key, at any speed, using samples from a real guitar. This kind of tool existed for other genres, but I was never able to find what I wanted for bluegrass/old-time purposes. Eventually, I figured that if I wanted this thing to exist, maybe I should just build it myself.

After a month, I had a basic proof-of-concept of what would eventually become Strum Machine (strummachine.com). One of the first people to test the prototype was a 9-year-old fiddler in San Jose, Lilly. I met Lilly while teaching at one of the SCVFA KidFiddle workshops. We were doing weekly lessons over Skype, which worked well except I couldn't play in rhythm with her due to the latency. Seeing how well this prototype worked for her told me I was on the right track.

Now, five years later, both the user base and functionality of Strum Machine continues to grow. It is such an honor and privilege to get to devote my working hours to this tool that hundreds of people use every day in their music practice.

painstakingly lined every one of those files up together. ... These singers have never heard each other sing before; they've only heard themselves. They've never been together for [even] one rehearsal; they've never even heard how their choir sounds together. ...

"My greatest and biggest thank you of appreciation goes to our amazing accompanist, Ajung Won. ... She transformed herself this summer to be so much more than an accompanist. [In] August, before school started, she started recording our music on the piano, recording the parts, the accompaniment, so students had something to learn. And then of course she was there helping in class. And then when school was over, she became a ... digital audio workstation guru, helping put together files, editing videos."

The video is about an hour long. If you don't want to sit through the whole thing, I suggest you sample several parts of it. www.youtube.com/watch?v=kJklsO9v8h4

Hicks' Licks

by Pete Hicks



Every now and then in a bluegrass band, the time comes for a “hot” fiddle solo. The fiddle leaves the melody behind and takes the listener for a ride. The basic concept here is stringing licks together that work over the chord progression, while making a musical statement. The solo should begin and end clearly, like a good story. To be able to do this, the fiddler needs a library of nifty licks to choose from. One also needs to know which licks work over each chord.

There are different routes to take on this type of solo. You can use fast runs, long double stops, repeating patterns, rhythmic variation and any trick you choose. You can play simply or complex, or anywhere in between. The only rule is that the solo must be musical and fit with the song. Fortunately, bluegrass songs tend to have very similar melodies, so the same licks work in many situations.

If you are new to this type of playing, I suggest trying out each new lick you learn in different songs and transposing it to all the common keys. This will enable you to use it whenever you need it. Some licks don't come out so well in other keys, so a little adjustment might be necessary to make them work.

In our music examples, I am using “Roll in My Sweet Baby's Arms” as a vehicle, because I believe everyone knows this melody. I have left the bowing up to you. In Example 1, this solo starts with a common fiddle tune lick. Measure 9 uses a three-note repeating pattern that

gives a syncopated effect. The F sharp changes to F natural in measure 10 to highlight the G7 chord. Measure 14 is a classic Kenny Baker lick.

Example 2 is wild double stop riff in 3rd position. The little finger holds down the G note on the A string, while the B, A and E notes are played on the E string. Use the open E in the 3rd measure to get back to 1st position.

Example 3 is a riff that goes from high D on the E string to the low G. Once again, we use the open E to shift down to 1st position.

Example 4 is all in 3rd position. It is a high screamer.

Example 5 uses one-finger fifth double stops. This is a classic Benny Martin lick.

Example 6 comes from the fiddle solo on “Foggy Mountain Breakdown”. I use this one all the time. Try substituting examples 2, 3, 5 and 6 for the first four measures of the solo. Try example 4 for measures 9 and 10 and invent a new lick for the C chord in measure 11.

Happy New Year, and Happy Fiddling!

This column (Hicks #13) was first run in the December 2008 Fiddler's Rag.

Pete performs with *Bean Creek*, a smooth, solid traditional bluegrass band. With his rough-hewn fiddle strokes, honky-tonk voice and edgy mandolin he conjures up a great old time spirit.

Thanks to Pete Showman for typesetting and creating the MIDI files.

The MIDI files for the six examples are on the SCVFA web page at fiddlers.org/tunes_files/ :

[RollinSwtBabysArms_Ex1.mid](#)

[RollinSwtBabysArms_Ex2.mid](#)

[RollinSwtBabysArms_Ex3.mid](#)

[RollinSwtBabysArms_Ex4.mid](#)

[RollinSwtBabysArms_Ex5.mid](#)

[RollinSwtBabysArms_Ex6.mid](#)

Roll in My Sweet Baby's Arms

Traditional bluegrass standard
 Arr. Pete Hicks, typeset Pete Showman

Example 1

$\text{♩} = 110$ **G**

5 **G** **D** 0/4

9 3 0 3 3 0 3 3 0 2 2 0 2 2 0 2 2 **C**
 4 0 4 4 0 4 4 0 4 4 0 4 4 0 4 4

13 **D** **G**

Example 2 ("Wild double-stop riff" in 3rd pos'n, for meas. 1-4)

G 2 1 4 2 1 4 1 2 4 2 1 4 2 4 1 2 shift to 1st pos'n on open E
 4 4 0 4 4 0 4 4 0 4 4 0 4 4 1 4 1 2 1 4 * 0 3

Ex. 3 (Riff from high D to low G – meas. 1-2)

G 3rd pos'n shift to 1st pos'n on open E
 4 2 1 4 0 3

Ex. 4 ("High screamer" in 3rd pos'n – meas. 9-10)

D 4 4 4 2 **C** 4
 9 10 11

Example 5 (Classic Benny Martin lick, for start of solo)

G 1 3 1 0 2 0 3 2 2 3

Example 6 ("Foggy Mountain" lick)

G 2 3 4

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



Next Jam: January 3rd Zoom Gathering and Jam

See page 3 for info

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SCVFA To-Do List for January

- Shop at smile.amazon.com to benefit SCVFA.
- Attend the virtual Jam on January 3rd, 1pm.
- Attend the Celebrity event with Marla Fibish on January 17th, 4pm.
- Call into the Board Meeting on January 20th, 7pm.
- Email selfies (or unselfies) to [newsletter \[at\] fiddlers.org](mailto:newsletter[at]fiddlers.org), no later than January 24th to be published in the February Rag.
- While at it, wear your SCVFA tee-shirt (see right column to get yours).
- Plan to attend the virtual (see login info page 3) **Annual Membership Meeting** on February 7th.
- Stay safe until vaccinated (and ever after!).
- And have a Happy New Year!



Show your pride
in SCVFA

To get your wearable or bumper stickers, email [president \[at\] fiddlers.org](mailto:president[at]fiddlers.org)

