



Fiddler's Rag



Vol. 49, Number 2
Celebrating 47 years

Santa Clara Valley Fiddlers Association
www.fiddlers.org

February 2021
Next Events: see p.3



President's Note

Have you received your special gift? An SCVFA Holographic Sticker or Window Cling was sent to every member to thank you for your support and to invite everyone to the Annual General Meeting and elections. Display your sticker proudly as we hope for live outdoor jams by summer.

It is important for everyone to join us on Sunday February 7th at 2:00 pm to

ensure we have a quorum for the elections during the Annual General Meeting. Exercise your right to vote for the new trustees. Attendance is easy and safe. Log in 5 - 15 minutes before 2:00 pm. The Annual General Meeting starts immediately following the slow jam. **BEFORE Feb 7th**, add the Zoom app to your computer, tablet or smartphone. (The back of the letter also included printed instructions for Zoom). Join the meeting on line with this link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86361048416?pwd=amJNalBCL2x6Z0laUjBpYlRrTjNiOT09>

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

If you haven't participated in a virtual jam, come early for the slow jam (starts at 1:00 – link to slow jam tunes page 3) or stay after the meeting to give the up-tempo jam a try. It's a good feeling to connect with others.

Farewell to SCVFA member and vice president, Dave Thomas. He has moved to Portland, Oregon to be closer to family. Thank you, Dave, for your years of service as an SCVFA trustee & VP. Thanks to the virtual world of Zoom, Dave will continue as trustee until we find another enthusiastic member to join the board. Dave has spent many hours writing the grant applications for SVCcreates arts grants. This has positioned SCVFA to do more for our members. We will all miss him, but take solace knowing he is in Portland with excellent traditional musicians and the Portland Old Time Music Gathering. Our paths will certainly cross again.

Marla Fibish led a wonderful Celebrity Series on January 17th.

On February 21st, Paul Rangell accompanied by Emily Abbink will lead the Celebrity Series Workshop as they share the Tohono O'odham fiddle tradition of southern Arizona. Paul will be teaching a sampling of tunes including a polka, shotis, mazurka, cuadrilla and a two-step. Paul and Emily lived on the Tohono O'odham Nation Reservation and learned the tunes from local musicians they met there. Those musicians were later known as the *Gu-Achi Fiddlers*. Recently the SCVFA Celebrity workshops have been selling out. Be sure to sign up early. Caleb Klauder is leading on March 21st and April Verch on April 25th. Mark your calendars.

Several new members have joined in recent months. Welcome to all of you. You have come to the right place to continue your musical journey. I do hope to meet you in person soon.

As COVID continues, the SCVFA board has extended all current members' memberships for another 6 months. No membership fees will be required until at least August. Donations in lieu of membership are always appreciated to help with our modest expenses. They can now be made using PayPal from our website's Donate page. Thanks for your continuing SCVFA membership and support of traditional music.

Here's to herd immunity as more and more folks are vaccinated. I'm so glad to be part of the solution.

--Susan

president [at] fiddlers.org

Annual Membership Meeting

February 7th (See left and page 3 for info and see the candidates' statements in the January Fiddler's Rag)

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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	Matt Mathis
Web Content	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

Email to Susan Goodis: [president \[at\] fiddlers.org](mailto:president@fiddlers.org)

Newsletter Submissions & Comments: [newsletter \[at\] fiddlers.org](mailto:newsletter[at]fiddlers.org)

Address changes: [membership \[at\] fiddlers.org](mailto:membership[at]fiddlers.org)

Website: www.fiddlers.org

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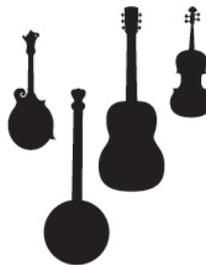
Donations to SCVFA are greatly appreciated and will assist in keeping traditional music alive by passing it on to the next generation.

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.

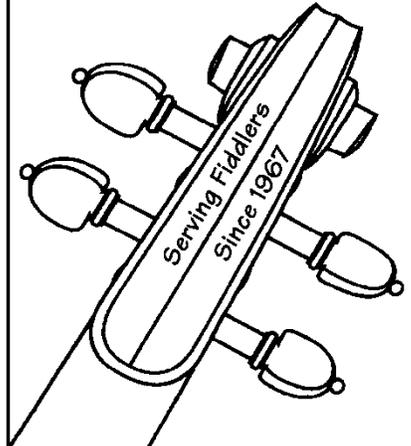


Quote of the Month

“Music is the space between the notes”
Claude Debussy

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SCVFA Happenings

SCVFA Annual Membership Meeting

Sunday, February 7th, 2021 – 2:00pm

The meeting will be held on Zoom from 2:00pm to 2:30pm, followed by the Up-tempo Jam from 2:30pm to 4:00pm. During the meeting we will elect trustees and hear remarks on the association by President Susan Goodis.

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

Meeting ID: 863 6104 8416 **Passcode:** Fiddle

The two Trustee candidates' statements can be found in the January Fiddler's Rag: Peter Forrest for Seat 5 and Bill Boiko for Seat 6.

SCVFA Special Board Meeting

Sunday, February 7th, 2021 – 2:30pm

<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/79291252174?pwd=NXh1V0ZiOFhsU1czaTBGS1ZkanNsUT09>

Meeting ID: 792 9125 2174 **Passcode:** Ntjn5Z

Link to Slow Jam Tunes

To be played on February 7th, 2021 – 1:00pm

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1-tZV4TtHEU-SL6aMOPkFfN5TSJuauZID1j6Z124TnXI/edit?usp=sharing>

Meeting ID: 863 6104 8416 **Passcode:** Fiddle

Paul Rangell & Emily Abbink Workshop & Jam Session



The Tohono O'odham traditional fiddle music is derived from European dance music as seen through the lens and sensibilities of the Native American players. Over a period of about two hundred years, the music of the Tohono O'odham evolved as it passed from the missionaries to the native inhabitants.

Paul Rangell, accompanied by Emily Abbink on guitar, will be teaching a sampling of these rhythms including a polka, shotis, mazurka, cuadrilla and a two-step. Paul and Emily learned the tunes from local Tohono O'odham musicians, known as the *Gu-Achi Fiddlers*, who played the tunes mostly in their village for ceremonial and social gatherings.

Don't miss this unique opportunity to learn about and play this wonderful, yet often overlooked, music.

- When: **Sunday February 21st, 2021** 4:00-5:30 pm Pacific Time (PT)
- Register on Eventbrite at:
<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/paul-rangell-emily-abbink-tohono-oodham-fiddle-tradition-tickets-138393710313?aff=erelexpmlt>
- Zoom meeting ID: 412 609 1232
- Passcode: Fiddle

SCVFA Board Meeting Highlights

Wednesday, January 20th, 2021

meeting conducted online via Zoom

Budget

Treasurer Dinah Showman has worked out a preliminary budget for the 2021-2022 fiscal year, though a lot depends on when we can resume our usual activities.

Zoom subscription

Susan will look into non-profit rates as we decide whether to renew our subscription. For now, Zoom jams (and meetings) will continue at least until summer.

Membership renewals:

In order not to drop any members experiencing financial hardship due to COVID-19, all memberships will be extended for an additional 6 months

Website

Matt Mathis is helping with the technical side of the new website, while Bev Tracey focuses on the content. Newsletter and tune archives, including Pete's music from showman.org will soon be added to the new site.

Celebrity workshops

The celebrity Zoom workshops have been very well attended, and future workshops are lined up for February, March and April.

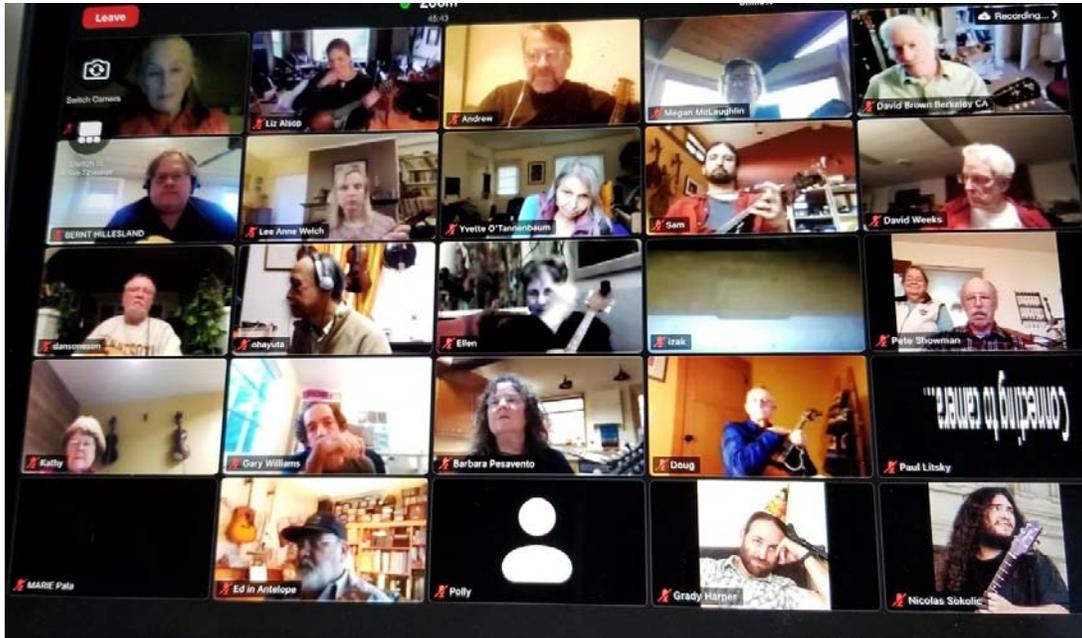
Alternate venue search

Board members will begin researching alternate jam venues to determine if there is a better location to meet our needs than Hoover school. Given the long, COVID-19 imposed break, this would be an easy time to transition.

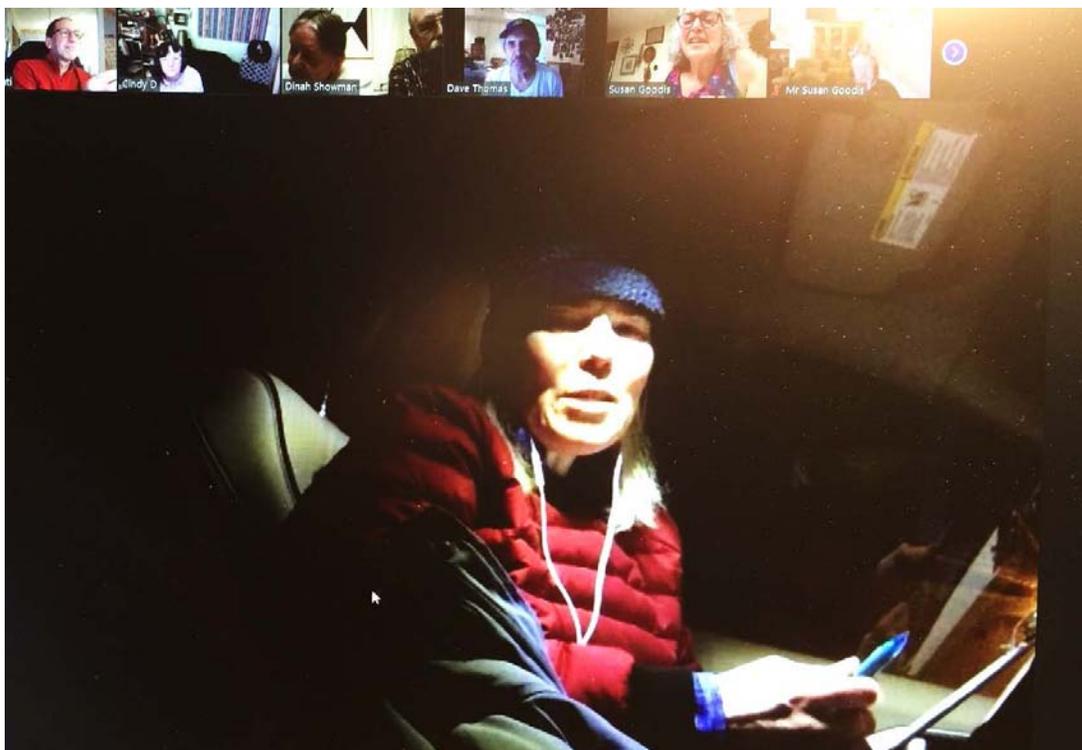
Next Board meeting on Wednesday, April 21st, 2021.

Jessica Ollman – Recording Secretary

January Photos



A screen shot showing 25 of the 64 attendees at the Marla Fibish workshop (Photo: Susan Goodis)



Jessica Ollman, SCVFA Recording Secretary, attends the January Board Meeting from her car during a storm power outage. Dedication has no limit!

On Memorizing a Song

by Chip Curry



This article was first published in the January 2009 newsletter.

A few months ago, after I wrote an article about vocal warm-ups (Fiddler's Rag, April 2008), I received an email asking me to write something about memorizing songs. I am currently

playing about three to four gigs a week in retirement communities and am having to learn a lot of new material to keep the show fresh. So, I offer my thoughts and welcome anyone to contribute other ideas.

To cut to the chase: I learn songs by walking. Yes, walking. I take a printed song out for about a 20 to 25-minute brisk walk around the neighborhood and return with a memorized song. My process is simple. I start with the first line, read it, and think a little about what the song means—really means. Then I put down the sheet, say the line a few times, look at a little scenery, and repeat the line. Then I go back to the paper for the next line. I say from memory the first line through the current line being learned, and so on, adding lines, one at a time, but not adding a new line 'til I can say the whole song to that point. I may sing or say the words, not worrying about the melody until the guitar is in hand. But this is just the beginning. The song must then make the journey from short term memory to part of my very being—who I am, not just what I know.

The next step is practice. Now I play the song with the chords five, maybe ten times per day for a week. If the chords are complicated, like the song I am currently challenged with, Tea for Two, this could take about 50 to 100 run-throughs. I overheard a fellow in a fiddle tune workshop say that he needed to play a tune 65 times before it was really learned.

Now I've learned the song, and next comes step three: performance. I don't know about you, but even after I really learn a song with the above process, the first time I play it in public I usually forget it almost completely. This has happened so many times that I plan on it. I just go ahead and keep singing, making a fool of myself, stuttering and going ah and da da dad duhh. The point here is to keep smiling, sing as many phrases as possible and end strong—good and strong! At this point, the worst is over. Then any number of things can occur: First, I could be so humiliated that I never want to hear that song again for the rest of my life. Second, I might discover that there were indeed a few parts that worked. Maybe the chorus had a good punch, or some player picked up on some cool break, or the audience was engaged. There is a third possibility which rarely happens but can indeed occur. I completely blow the song, but the

crowd loves it! This happened recently on the song When You're Smiling. If this happens, the message is being communicated, and all that is necessary is to fill in a few gaps.

However, most often item number two happens. The song almost worked but needs work. Once I know what singing the song imperfectly feels like, I am less afraid, and subsequent performances improve. But sometimes there is a structural problem, the groove was wrong, or it might have been in the wrong key, or too fast or too slow, etc. It might need more swing, or a different kind of backup, or perhaps it will require a shift in mindset—maybe I am not used to taking more time with the bluesy lyric, or I have to become a torch singer or a different character. This is a problem in delivery. I have the words and the music, but the audience somehow does not get it. Then I ham it up a little, make it big. The job is to really “sell it.”

Then I play it more in public—give it a go. There may be instances where the song works, and times when it doesn't. Not all of 'em make it to the top ten, but learning new material is good for the musical mind, and when a song becomes a small hit, it's money in the bank. And that means something in this day and age.

There is one important footnote: In practicing, if I am missing something every time, it is necessary to slow down to where I can do it and then gradually speed up. If we keep repeating a mistake, we will be learning the mistake. I find it necessary to catch the error soon and slow way down; otherwise, a pattern sets in.

Also, there are several tricks to memorization that could be researched on the web. “Association with the ridiculous” often helps. For instance, in Walking the Floor by Ernest Tubb, the first lines in each verse are “You left me and you went away” and “Darlin', you know I love you well” and the third verse starts with “Now someday you may be lonesome too.” To get me into each verse, I simply remember “You left me by the well, lonesome,” and I use these three key words to get into each verse.

Chip Curry is a Bay Area based professional musician performing Bluegrass, Western Swing and Old-Time. Chip plays several hundred shows a year for children, seniors and general audiences.

He joined the SCVFA in 1981 and volunteered many years as Rag editor. Chip is a regular SCVFA monthly jam participant, really livening it up, playing almost any stringed instrument. For more information go to www.chipcurry.com.



by Doug Judd

If you're looking for inspiration, visit Nashville! During this time of the COVID-19 pandemic, with offices shut down, I decided to spend a few weeks working remotely from Nashville, Tennessee. To get started exploring the local music scene, I issued an Internet search, *Bluegrass in Nashville*. The top result was a listing for The Station Inn. This venue opened in 1974 by a group of six bluegrass pickers. Many of the world's most talented and successful musicians have played at The Station Inn, including Bill Monroe, JT Gray, Alan Jackson, Jerry Douglas, Sam Bush, Vince Gill, Alison Krauss and John Prine. Located at 402 12th Avenue South in the heart of the Gulch district near downtown Nashville, The Station Inn is housed in a 1930 stone building and stands in stark contrast to gentrification that surrounds it.

The band that was playing on the first night I attended was Johnny Meyer and Friends. Johnny's voice and songwriting are as good as it gets. But what really knocked me out was the level of musicianship from all the other members of the band. The fiddle player, Jenee Fleenor, was awarded the 2020 CMA Musician of the Year award and has written songs recorded by the likes of Blake Shelton, Del McCoury, and Dolly Parton. The outstanding young Dobro player, Gaven Largent, is a Nashville session musician and recording artist. During the second half of the set, Russ Carson, the banjo player for Ricky Skaggs Kentucky Thunder, was invited onstage to lend some of his talent. At one point, even the doorman was called up onstage to join in with some blazing guitar pickin'. This was easily one of the top performances I've ever attended.

On my second visit to The Station Inn, the David Grier Band was performing. David grew up steeped in Bluegrass as his father Lamar was one of Bill Monroe's Bluegrass Boys in the mid-60s. David's down home, folksy persona onstage belies his guitar playing which is distinguished by sophistication and virtuosity. For you guitar players out there, David Grier is well worth seeking out. To get an idea of the level of talent of The David Grier Band and the Dobro player from Johnny Meyer's band, check out [The David Grier Band "Fireball" Featuring Gaven Largent](#).

If a trip to Nashville is not in the cards for you, there is good news! To help keep the lights on during the pandemic, they have developed a live streaming program called Station Inn TV. For as little as \$8.99 per month, you can stream the live performances directly into your living room. Not only is this a good cause, but judging by the talent level, I suspect it is worth every penny for the inspiration alone.



Johnny Meyer and Friends



The David Grier Band



A quiver of bass fiddles in the back

Apple Blossom

(Pennington's Farewell)

Traditional, arr. Pete Hicks
Typeset by Pete Showman

$\text{♩} = 90$

A **D** **Bm**

B **D** **Bm** **A** **D**

D **Bm** **A** **D**

D **Bm** **A** **D** **Fine**

() indicates 'ghost' notes (see text)

pss 12/16/08 r2

Notes from Pete Hicks:

Eddie Pennington tells the story of his great-great grandfather, in 1846, who was sentenced to hanging for a murder he claimed he did not commit. Since he was a large fellow, the rope broke the first time they tried to string him up. While someone was sent to get a stronger rope, Pennington asked if he could be untied and play one last tune on his fiddle. Permission was granted, and he sat down on his casket and played a fiddle tune known as Apple Blossom. Soon after, the new rope arrived and they proceeded with the execution. A few years later, the guilty party confessed to the murder, and Pennington's name was cleared. Since then, Apple Blossom is known as Pennington's Farewell in some areas.

Our music this month is my concept of how Pennington may have played Apple Blossom. You can compare it with the version in *The Fiddler's Fakebook*. This version is much more old-timey in feel. (Part 2 is almost exactly the same melody as Part 1 of *Billy in the Lowground*.)

Watch the bowing on this one. It starts with long strokes, then uses the single shuffle or Georgia bow, depending

on your style. This tune sounds lovely with frailing banjo accompaniment. The notes in parentheses in measure 14 are "ghosted". This means that they are more rhythmic space-fillers than notes. This is usually done by not pressing the string all the way to the fingerboard. On open strings, as in this piece, ghosting is done with the bow, using less bow pressure and a shorter stroke for the notes in question.

Listen and learn this tune at slow and faster tempos.
www.fiddlers.org/tunes/AppleBlossom_70bpm.mid
www.fiddlers.org/tunes/AppleBlossom_90bpm.mid

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

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**Next Jam: February 7th
Zoom Gathering, Annual
Membership meeting and Jam**

See page 3 for info

**Damaged or Missing Issue? Call us,
or email to: [newsletter \[at\] scvfa.org](mailto:newsletter@scvfa.org)**



SCVFA is now participating with Amazon Smile. Sign in at smile.amazon.com, designate SCVFA as your preferred non-profit, and Amazon will donate a portion of your purchase to SCVFA.



SCVFA To-Do List for February

- Shop at smile.amazon.com to benefit SCVFA.
- Attend the virtual **Annual Membership Meeting** on February 7th 2:00pm. See login info page 3.
- Attend the Celebrity workshop with Paul Rangell and Emily Abbink on February 21st.
- Leave a generous Tip for the workshop musicians (Tip Jar) as you are able.
- Email selfies (or unselfies) to [newsletter \[at\] fiddlers.org](mailto:newsletter@fiddlers.org), no later than February 20th to be published in the March Rag.
- While at it, wear your SCVFA tee-shirt (see right column to get yours).
- Stay safe until vaccinated (and ever after!).

Show your pride
in SCVFA

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

