

2020 Blue Ridge Old Time Class/Mini-class Descriptions

Advanced Fiddle Class: David Bragger and Susan Platz,

David and Susan are excited to present their favorite intensive fiddle workshop at Mars Hill. Students will be learning a variety of old-time fiddle tunes in great depth, broken down phrase-by-phrase. And, yes, all of the **bowing** will be clearly demonstrated and taught in this course. It's David and Susan's specialty since old-time fiddling is almost entirely about the bowing!

For each tune, they will also be teaching harmony parts that emphasize fundamental chords, bowing rhythms and seconding techniques. Additionally, these techniques will be clearly taught independently of a particular tune, so fiddlers can apply them to any tune, anywhere. Expect to learn many great tunes with bowing, harmony parts and the ultimate fiddle seconding toolkit!

Fiddle Blues and Rags: Mick Kinney

Since the 1800s, Ragtime and blues has been part of fiddling. Studying one measure at a time, you will have some great pieces to include in your collection. We'll begin with tunes in familiar keys and scales so you can get into some raggy rhythms right away. As we progress, we will cover some improvisations within the blues, and the harmony behind the old-time rags. Our material will range from classic American composers W.C. Handy and Scott Joplin, to Jug Band and street style fiddlers. Suggested for intermediate to advancing fiddle or mandolin.

Intermediate Fiddle: Rachel Eddy

This fiddle workshop will focus primarily on how to help your fiddling sound old-timey and more driving. It will be geared toward learning how to use bow pulses, bowing phrases, and note combinations to give fiddle tunes a shape. In learning these things we will also explore ways to be more consistent players, and how important that is in terms of leadership in jams. This will not be a repertoire heavy class, but rather using a handful of tunes that utilize certain helpful techniques, and really working hard to know them before you leave. There will be lots of playing time, as fingers on strings is the best way to take home what you learn!

Early Intermediate Fiddle: Tricia Spencer

This class will provide the basic foundations of fiddling: playing in tune with good rhythm, intonation, and producing a good tone. We'll learn by ear, identifying the "bones" (simplest melody) of a tune and fleshing it out by recognizing and applying various bowing patterns. We'll experiment with chords for fiddle that can be useful for seconding and learn how to "get into a jam" without initially knowing a tune. We will also talk about the dos and don'ts of jamming with others. Most tunes taught will be in standard tuning, but we will likely learn a few tunes in cross A or G tuning. Tunes will be taught by ear. A recording device is strongly recommended. Students need a good functional fiddle that is easily tuned and a tuner.

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Advanced Banjo: Riley Baugus

Often people ask, "I'm not an advanced player, do I belong in this class?", and the answer is YES!

"Advanced" is the appropriate level class for those players who consider themselves upper intermediate, or advanced. Those who already possess advanced skills want to improve those skills and further their knowledge of the instrument and learn even more technique and tunes. Those players who consider themselves "intermediate" players, are exactly the students that need to move to the advanced level, in order to learn the skills and speed that make you an "advanced" player.

In this class we'll focus on large amounts of technique, put in context by the tunes we'll learn. We'll start our class by examining the "Basic Rhythm" of clawhammer banjo. The focus of the tunes will be in the Round Peak style of North Carolina but will include looks at other areas of the Blue Ridge as well. We will slow down the tunes, piece by piece, segment by segment, learning lots of techniques along the way that will improve your playing, your listening skills and will help to increase the amount of confidence and fun you have while playing the banjo.

Please bring a working banjo, extra strings, some device for recording sound and/or video, or staved paper for taking tab if that's a method you use for remembering tunes.

Intermediate Banjo: Hilary Dirlam

How do you translate a fiddle tune into "banjo language?" Once you're ready to move into playing in a group, you're faced with this challenge. In this banjo class we'll look in depth at various approaches to playing banjo with the fiddle. These approaches include rhythmic backup (including chords and occasional harmony notes), sketching the melody, and playing note-for-note with the fiddler. Beginning with listening to a fiddle tune (we'll have live fiddler with a new tune every day) we can explore ways for the banjo to enhance and have fun with the tune. To be in this class you need a solid grasp of clawhammer banjo basics, including common tunings, basic chords, hammer-ons and pull-offs. You should be able to play several tunes comfortably in a couple of tunings. There may be a little tab used in this class, but a recording device and paper and pencil will be much more useful. Any questions? Email me at silvervajra@gmail.com

Early Intermediate Banjo: Robby Robertson

The Early Intermediate Banjo Class is for the picker who is wondering, "OK, what's next?" You've already got the basic clawhammer lick under your belt and know a few tunes and want to learn even more. We'll work on old-time tunes in G and C tunings, and at the same time, we'll learn some cool new licks like hammer-ons, pull-offs and slides. Bring a playable banjo, an electronic tuner (or a good ear) and if you have one, a portable recorder. We'll learn to play the banjo the old-timey way – by listening and practicing.

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Advanced Old-time Guitar: Evan Kinney

Starting with the basic folk chords you know, we will concentrate on getting a powerful tone and clear strum on the off beat. We'll build on that by connecting one chord to the other with traditional bass runs, then on to more complex movements by great backing guitarists such as Riley Puckett, Melvin Dupree, and Jim Baxter. During the week you will pick up useful concepts such as circle of fifths and chromatic steps as we study some Rags, Blues, songs and novelty tunes of the old time repertoire.

Intermediate Guitar: Kellie Allen

This guitar class is for folks who can play the basic chords of G, C, D, and A at a moderate-to-fast tempo and who are looking to improve their skills for playing guitar with old-time music to accompany a fiddler or an old-time song. We will work on developing good rhythm in your right hand, hearing chord changes, alternating bass notes, bass runs, playing in waltz time, and using a capo. If there is time and interest, we will learn how to employ more complex bass runs, and even play in one or two other keys (such as F and Bb) without a capo. It is recommended that you familiarize yourself with the Nashville numbering system for referring to chords. Along with your guitar, please bring a recording device and an electronic tuner. Let's have some guitar fun!

Early Intermediate Guitar: Susie Coleman

A New Approach to Old-Time Guitar focuses on using the simplicity of alternating bass to help you become a powerful, reliable and confident old-time rhythm guitarist, featuring effective exercises to build strength and muscle memory in both hands. In addition to learning multiple fiddle tunes every session, students will study arrangement and timing basics, kickoffs, simple bass note runs, how to identify chord patterns by ear, how to navigate both square and crooked tunes, and a comprehensive overview of the Nashville Number System. Course includes a copy of the Pegram Jam Chord Chart Book, a fiddle tune reference for old-time rhythm players. We will work with first-position open chords only. Students should be familiar with most common major and minor chord shapes, be able to strum smoothly and have developed sufficient callouses and hand strength to play for a couple hours at a time.

Rhythm and Repertoire: Sammy Lind and Nadine Landry

Interested in expanding your repertoire on fiddle or banjo? Want to work on your rhythm guitar, learn tricks to hear chord changes and gradually add bass runs to your tool box? Sammy and Nadine will spend the week playing tunes and teaching gems from regions of Appalachia and less common areas of the Midwest. There is a lot of syncopation in old time fiddling rhythm, so an emphasis will be put on bowing. Many tunings will be used, so get ready to cross tune those fiddles! And since there's not only tunes in this world, Sammy will show some tricks and pointers on how to add chords and harmony to a song session.

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To make the most out of this class, we recommend that you already know how to play a few tunes on your chosen melody instrument at a medium/fast tempo. Rhythm players, a knowledge of your basic guitar chords (A, C, D, E, F, G) will be useful, especially if you can change from one to another pretty effortlessly. Chords progressions such as the “Missouri Turnaround” will be demonstrated and used throughout the week and overall, a “less is more” philosophy on back up will be the focus. Since all the tunes will be taught by ear, bringing a audio/video recording device can be useful for personal use later.

Banjo and guitar players, bring a capo!

Beginning Mountain Dulcimer: Margaret Wright

Margaret will focus on Beginner and New Player level dulcimer students. The focus will be fretboard familiarity, rhythmic, musical strumming techniques, and tune acquisition in the keys of D, G and A. All subjects will be presented within the framework of fun, old-time tune material. This class is totally “hands-on!” Tunes will be taught by rote with ear training and muscle memory encouraged. However, tablature will be available. Be sure that your dulcimer is playable (don’t just take it down off a wall and make assumptions!) Have it checked for string height and any buzzes. A capo will be needed and an electronic tuner. Your dulcimer should have a 6 ½ fret, but please do not add 1 ½ (unless it is already there.) Bring a set of extra strings and a device for recording. If you are not sure about your skill level, you may contact Margaret. margaretwright@yahoo.com

Intermediate/Advanced Dulcimer: Don Pedi

This class for intermediate players and above will feature playing techniques for old-time music on the mountain dulcimer.

We will learn traditional tunes, songs and hymns, playing by ear, various noting techniques, different tunings, dulcimer history, and more.

Intermediate/Advanced Mandolin: Pete Vigour

The mandolin has been a standard instrument in American traditional music for generations, gaining great popularity with the introduction of a wonderful line of instruments produced by the Gibson Company in the early 20th century. The mandolin can do it all— melody, chords, song accompaniment, and percussive rhythmic backup, and is perfectly suited for playing fiddle tunes and accompanying songs from the Carter Family, Blue Sky Boys, and other early country music performers. Pete will be assisted by his wife, mandolinist Ellen Vigour. Pete and Ellen will include tunes they learned personally from Kenny Hall, Everett Lilly, central Virginia’s Bobby and Lovell Coleman, and other great players. Tunes will be presented

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specifically to clarify pick direction, opening the door to playing rags and other syncopated styles. Mandola, octave mandolin, and mandocello players welcome!

Old-Time Duets: Kari Sickenberger and Laurelyn Dossett

In this class with Laurelyn and Kari, we will explore harmonies from the old time and country traditions, discover secrets that make them shine, and perhaps uncover some of our own! No singing experience required, just a curiosity about your voice and how it can blend with another. Be prepared to sing a lot and have fun!

Mini-Courses: Require an additional fee of \$89 each except Shaped note singing at 3pm. This one class is free. All courses are 50 minutes each. This gives attendees time to go to their next course if they choose more than one.

1:00pm

Banjo

Mick Kinney/Rag & Blues Banjo: Many fiddle tunes have origins in ragtime and blues, and here's a way to play along with those melodies and songs. With 5 string banjos tuned to your regular open G and old time double C, you will learn the essential fingering shapes that can move around for any key. We will also cover some raggy rhythm strokes and plucking for that vintage syncopated sound.

Fiddle

David Bragger and Susan Platz/Rare fiddle tunes from an ex-slave, Alonzo Janes: Here's your chance to learn some exceptional fiddle tunes passed down to David Bragger originating from ex-slave fiddler Alonzo Janes. As with all workshops presented by David Bragger & Susan Platz, they will break the tunes down phrase-by-phrase and clearly illustrate all the bowing!

Guitar

Susie Coleman/Beginning guitar: In our class, students will learn how to hold a guitar and a pick, and a little about the instrument itself. We'll talk about how to tune and care for your guitar. We'll cover the most commonly used open guitar chords and try some basic strum patterns. We'll talk about how to practice efficiently. And we'll learn to play a few of the best-known old-time tunes. All students will receive a complimentary spiral-bound copy of "Acoustic Guitar: Meet the Rhythm Machine," a reference guide with related commentary, diagrams and charts,

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plus some simple songs to practice with to help the beginning strummer get off on the right foot. We will work with first-position open chords only. Things you might bring: Guitar with fresh strings; a tuner of any type; a flat pick; a capo; pen or pencil; a recording device if desired. iPhones, iPads, etc. are welcome.

Singing

Sammy Lind & Nadine Landry/Harmony Singing: We will break down the discipline of singing two and three-part harmony songs and will provide terminology, guidelines and experience in hearing and feeling intervals. No experience necessary, all levels, vocal ranges and genders welcome! It is such a beautiful feeling to sing in harmony with other people, come give it a try!

Ukulele

Charlie and Nancy Hartness/Advancing Ukulele: If you're familiar with the basic chord families in C, D, G, A, and F, and want to confidently accompany string band ensembles and singing, this mini-class is for you. We will strum in that sweet rhythmic groove that brings a smile to everyone's face, adapting our uke styles to fit with other players as we sing, whistle or hum. Welcome to the musical land without drudgery---Ukeville!

Please bring a tuner, a uke in good playing condition, tuned GCEA, (no low g strings or baritone ukes), and a pen or pencil. We'll bring handouts. A recording device is handy.

2:00pm

Banjo

Evan Kinney/Beginning Banjo: Starting with the basic claw hammer stroke, you'll be able to play along with fiddle tunes the first day. From there we will focus on accompaniment while learning some simple session and jam tunes. Bring your banjo and if possible a tuner. Recording devices are welcomed and encouraged.

Rachel Eddy/How to Translate Fiddle into Banjo: This class will examine how to listen to a fiddle tune from the perspective of a banjo player, and learn how to sketch a map of that tune. Once the map is laid out, we will then work through several licks that can be used to fill in the gaps and create your own version of the tune. These exercises should encourage confidence for learning tunes in jams and from recordings, and help in understanding the banjo's role within the music. I will use both fiddle and banjo to teach the class!

Bass

Amy Buckingham/Beginning Bass: The upright bass is the bedrock of good old time music. No matter whether you play another instrument or you are a beginning musician, this class will get your feet wet. We will learn some "bass-ics", such as how to play in the keys of D, G and A and how to follow guitar players' chords. A recording device may be helpful. Oh, and a bass would be helpful as well, but isn't required if you know how to share.

Fiddle

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Tricia Spencer/Midwestern Fiddling: Tricia Spencer will teach the Midwestern fiddle style her family has been playing for generations. This style of fiddling is great for square dances or sessions. When the class has some tunes under their belt, the fiddle class will combine with Howard's guitar class to create that roaring sound! All music will be learned by ear so a recording device is encouraged.

Guitar

Howard Rains/Midwest Guitar Backup: Howard Rains will teach the classic "old time accompaniment pattern" to back up Midwestern (and other) fiddle tunes. Bass runs and the boom-heavy sound will be taught. The guitar class will then combine with Tricia's Midwest Fiddle class to play the tunes together. All music will be learned by ear so a recording device is encouraged.

3:00pm

Banjo

Riley Baugus/Solo Tunes for Clawhammer Banjo: There are many tunes for the clawhammer banjo that are best suited to being played alone, without a fiddler or a band. That will be our focus in this class. We'll look at some of the "odd" tunings for clawhammer banjo, and the tunes we play in them. Usually when you're in a band setting, you don't have time to retune to some of the tunings that aren't considered to be "standard", but there's always that time when you're sitting by yourself, in a meadow, or by a fireplace, or maybe just in your kitchen or living room, and you'd like to play some tunes on the banjo that you don't usually get to play. Those tunes and tunings are what this class is going to be all about.

Please feel free to record, video, or tab any or all these tunes.

Bass

Kellie Allen/Intermediate/Advanced Bass: As a prerequisite for taking this course, students must be able to play bass up to a moderate speed on old-time tunes. In this course, above all else, the emphasis will be on providing solid bass rhythm in an old-time string band setting. We will move beyond the "ones and fives" bass style by exploring bass runs to move from chord to chord in a given song or tune. We will learn about playing in two positions on the neck in the common old-time keys, and we will cover some tricks for playing in the less common old-time keys, such as F and Bb. This course is for those willing to play upright, acoustic bass. Please bring a recording device. Kellie Allen otkellie@gmail.com

Dance

Emolyn Liden/Flatfooting: "Have you ever been listening to an old-time jam and wanted to get up and dance but didn't know just how to do it? In this Flat Foot Dance class we'll dig in to the wonderful traditional steps from dancers that have come before us and touch on various dance styles to create a style all your own. We'll learn a variety of steps to add to your "dance vocabulary" to have ready for freestyle dancing and we'll also discuss how to

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combine steps in a sequence to match the melody of tunes so that you'll become a percussive "addition" to the overall sound - a musician in your own right. Flatfooting is about letting go, laying-down rhythm, and adding to the music while letting your personality shine. The steps will be taught in a very approachable way; starting with the basics for beginners and adding layers of rhythm for more intermediate dancers. Throughout the class we will be striving to polish those traditional steps, add new challenges, and define your individual styles."

Fiddle

Ellen Vigour/Fiddle from Scratch: This mini-class is for folks who love the fiddle and really want to learn how to play. No prior experience is needed, just come ready to learn. This class is also for those musicians who have some experience with the fiddle or other instruments, but want to develop some new fiddling skills. Together, we will learn some wonderful, simple traditional tunes and basic bowing techniques. Getting started on the fiddle is easy and fun. Come and join in.

Mandolin

Bob Buckingham/Window dressings: Take your mandolin playing to the next level by learning to play little figures to fill between verses, embellish breaks, dress up introductions and endings. We will delve into using double stops, arpeggios, and scales to bring new life to your mandolin playing.

Singing

Laura Boosinger/Shaped Note Singing: Join us for a cappella shaped-note singing. We will be singing from The Christian Harmony, a seven-shape book traditionally used in Western North Carolina.

Morning Yoga: During breakfast M-F Redway in Pittman Dining Hall

Liz Harzoff : Gentle Yoga: This gentle morning yoga practice will help you prepare for a day and night of classes and jams. Designed to help you stretch, relax, and center, we will warm up, move through several yoga postures, cool down, and end with savasana (a pose that allows you to integrate the benefits of your practice). Please wear clothes in which you can easily move. Bring something on which you can lay on the floor-a bath towel or yoga mat will work. Some yoga mats will be available, but the number is limited.