

Blue Ridge Old Time Music Week 2023

Morning Class Descriptions

Advanced Banjo Class – Brad Kolodner

In this workshop **Brad** will explore the versatile nature of old-time banjo and go “beyond the bum-ditty.” Kolodner walks the line between the rhythmic and melodic styles of clawhammer banjo playing with an emphasis on pushing the boundaries of clawhammer. Tunes in a variety of tunings will be taught as vehicles for exploring an array of techniques and ideas including but not limited to drop-thumb, playing back up, bass lines, going up the neck, learning by ear, incorporating variations and achieving good tone. Regardless of your skill level, you will walk out of the workshop with a fresh approach to clawhammer and practical tools to sharpen your skills.

Intermediate Banjo – Cathy Fink

Banjo tunes, fiddle tunes, song accompaniment and different tunings will form the repertoire portion of the Intermediate Banjo class. Add to that drills and skills for both right and left hands to improve your tone, intonation, timing and fluidity. We’ll get your drop thumb going and add a few embellishments. We will also work on how to learn a tune by ear, starting with the bones of the tune, then the chords, then the melody, and put it all together. We’ll increase your repertoire so you’re ready for more jam sessions and your confidence so you enjoy them more. While a few tabs will be included, most of the class is “by ear” and by demo. There will be time in class for both group practice and for you to try things on your own.

Rhythm & Repertoire with David Bragger & Susan Platz

David and Susan are excited to present some of their favorite tunes from Appalachia to Arizona in this Rhythm & Repertoire class! Having taught together in the UCLA Old-Time String Band class for nearly a decade, David and Susan have an exciting and effective approach for teaching tunes and covering a lot of ground within a short time. Tunes will be taught by ear and presented with phrase-by-phrase instruction as needed. All fiddle bowing will be clearly demonstrated, and they will also address rhythm and technique for banjo and guitar. Bring your phones or recording devices -- David and Susan will record a concise recap of each tune with notes, bowing, and chords so that you’ll have everything you need to remember the tune later! Join us for some fun tune-catching in an exciting stringband experience!

Rhythm and Repertoire Class - Judy Hyman & Jeff Claus

We’re excited to have the opportunity in this class to share, teach, talk about, and play with you some of our favorite tunes. We’re drawn to tunes for lots of reasons (e.g., the groove, the melody, great rhythmic bowing and flow, a droney tuning, bluesy inflections, history, and more). And then, in the process of learning and coming to love some of them, we inevitably

make them our own. We think of a person's repertoire as an expression of their musical history, voice, and identity. Hopefully, in this class, people will find some new tunes and techniques they'd like to include in their own repertoire and carry forward in their own way.

We'll present tunes from different regions (mostly the southeastern U.S.) and source players (old and young, living and deceased). We'll also include one or two of Judy's originals. Some will be in standard tuning on the fiddle, and others will be in "open" tunings that make the music flow and ring in a way we love. We'll talk about how we found or created the tunes, why they appeal to us, and in the case of old ones, how they've likely changed in our hands. We'll also discuss some of the many ways players can develop their own repertoire and voice.

To introduce each tune, we'll briefly talk about it and play it for you. Then we'll teach it, starting with the melody, but also demonstrating some of the fiddle bowings, guitar chords, bass runs, and banjo uke techniques, trying to make these relevant to all instruments. We'll balance our time so we can move through a few tunes a day, while also giving you enough experience with each tune that you can continue your learning process after the week is over. Because the class welcomes all instruments, we'll focus a lot of our time on playing together as a group rather than offering detailed instrument-specific instruction. So, please come prepared to PLAY and have fun! Audio/video recording is, of course, welcome, and bringing a tuner and extra strings is encouraged.

Advanced Old-Time Guitar Techniques with Kellie Allen

This course is for those who have a solid foundation in backup guitar for old-time tunes and songs and would like to enhance their old-time backup style. We'll cover chord choices and philosophies for same, listening for chord changes, and how to use chords up the neck in the keys of A, D, G, C, F and Bb. While we will touch upon melody techniques, our focus will be on providing interesting and highly rhythmic backup playing. We'll work through the "circle of fifths" and ragtime turnarounds often found in old-time tunes. A major focus will be finding and using bass runs to connect chords and add texture to old-time ensemble playing, à la Riley Puckett, Roy Harvey, and other old-time guitar greats. Please bring a guitar, an electronic tuner and be ready to play.

Intermediate Guitar – Howard Rains

Howard will teach his approach to playing back-up guitar for the fiddle. Although his style is rooted in the midwestern back-up style, his approach is applicable to backing up all styles of American fiddling. He will discuss "Missouri Rules" as well as how he accompanies different regional styles. The importance of the boom-chuck and bass runs will be discussed as well as how to listen for different regional fiddle styles and how to make your playing fit within the style being played.

Harmony Singing – Suzannah Park

How do you find harmony, hold onto it, fit in the musical style and be creative? There are so many songs to sing and so many possible harmony notes. In this class we'll be jumping in, using our ears and making music together. We'll sing songs both old and new, in two, three and four part harmony from America and the British Isles. Parts will be taught by ear and we'll also go harmony hunting: learn some basic tools and tricks to make harmony singing more fun and available to all. No sight reading or music theory background is needed and all singing levels are welcome.

Dulcimer workshop – Karen Mueller

Come explore the wonderful world of the mountain dulcimer and its important place in old time music. Techniques taught will include melody and backup playing, chords and chord melody style arrangements, strumming, flatpicking and fingerpicking, and playing in several different modal tunings. Repertoire will focus on old time songs and fiddle tunes, traditional folk songs, and the music of Jean Ritchie. For all levels except new players.

Intermediate/Advanced Mandolin – Marcy Marxer

The mandolin is both a rhythm machine and a poignant lead instrument in old time music. From fiddle tunes to ragtime, waltzes to breakdowns, and songs, Marcy will teach both repertoire and technique. You're likely to laugh a lot, learn some new chords & tunes, and feel the power of the little instrument with eight strings.

Advanced Fiddle – Sophie Wellington

This class is perfect for fiddlers who wish to not only expand their repertoire and technique, but also deepen their personal style. Over the course of the week, we will work on deciphering and retaining tunes in a variety of methods (in "real time" in a jam setting as well as from source recordings). We will observe the difference between playing and practicing, and explore methods of how to productively do both in a self-taught environment. Bring your instrument, a recording device, note taking materials, and an open mind. Oh, and a tune you would like to work on in a masterclass setting. The goal of this class is to bring awareness to how we play and listen in different musical situations, and how to build awareness when attempting to do both simultaneously.

Early Intermediate Ensemble - All instruments (new!) – Rachel Eddy

This class is open to all instruments, and will be focused on helping early intermediate players improve their skills in making music with others. We will learn how to listen, lead, follow, and work in both large and smaller ensembles throughout the week. We will discuss and learn how to learn tunes, and how to fill the role of our chosen instrument in the context of an ensemble. Your playing does not have to be at an intermediate/advanced level, but it is

important that you have some command over your instrument, know how to tune it, and have at least a small handful of tunes in your back pocket.