

Mad Folk News

The Butt Stops Here (But Not the Train)

By Emily Beebe

Tangent warning: I may occasionally use this space to fan embers that have the potential to combust into entertaining folk songs when given a little oxygen. Our collective experiences are an integral ingredient of the stone soup that is folk music. Also, this month's topic just could not be held in any longer.

A good joke is at its most delicious in the early morning as the sun slowly illuminates reality. Particularly on the 32nd of March. April Fools Day has been around for at least a few centuries and is joyfully celebrated in many countries around the world. In Scotland this holiday is called Hunt the Gowk day, Gowk being synonymous with cuckoo or fool. The Scots have a great sense of humor and are easy to entertain. Attaching a tail or 'kick me' sign to the derriere of an unsuspecting Gowk never gets old in the Highlands. This joke is so popular that the Scots added a second day to the April Fools holiday called Tailie day, dedicated to this singular prank.

Around our neck of the woods, April Fools' is a High Holy Holiday. The nearby village of Cooksville is the Peter Pan of Porter Township, Rock County. Cooksville was established in 1842 on speculation that the new railroad would be routed through the town. When the railroad ran off and eloped with Evansville, Cooksville was left weeping in its brickyards, clutching a bouquet of wilting wild geraniums. It remains an attractive homeplace for recluses, farmers, tinkerers, artists, historians, educators, and curmudgeons. Nicknamed 'The Town That Time Forgot', the village of around 60 people still contains a collection of handsome Yankee-style mid-nineteenth century homes as well as a healthy population of outhouses, which are a great source of pride in the neighborhood.

The Cooksville General Store did not get running water until 2010, when the Freemasons who own the property installed the first ever flush toilet in the building. The turn-out for the Cooksville

toilet warming party was historic. 80% of the population of Porter township turned up with their folding chairs to sit in the shallow gravel lot in front of the store adjacent to highway 138. There was an accordionist squeezing out country polkas on the front porch. Every once in a while, three or four people would get up and take a lap through the store, open the door to the john, jiggle the handle, then graze from the table groaning with cakes and pies provided by the village bakers. Those were heady days indeed.

The Outhouses of Rock County have also been a great focus of pranks. In decades past, the neighborhood teenagers delighted in dragging the outhouses away, barring the door with a stick, or tipping them over when people were inside. One resident got his revenge when he moved his outhouse back four feet, so under cover of darkness the prankster found himself wallowing in the third circle of Hell. Luckily, no lawyers or child welfare agents were living in Cooksville at the time.

A few decades later, a neighbor who had returned from an impressionable trip through the American West, erected a large teepee in his yard to host campfire music sessions. Clashing with the Greek revival architecture, it caught the morning light like an Egyptian pyramid, to the delight and amusement of some of the more antisocial residents. That year, April First dawned on a majestically T.P'd teepee, the Scott flag flapping in the spring breeze.

Eventually the Beebe place was paid an April visit by the Cooksville Welcome Honey Wagon, who left a large outhouse squatting in the middle of our driveway. It is still not clear whose loss was our gain. We were accepted as Cooksvillians after that, which gives us full license to freely wallow in our eccentricities.

Chris pranked me beautifully one year. We used to keep a flock of about thirty chickens, which I would tend every morning before dawn when I would leave for work. The snow was still pretty deep that year and the coop was surrounded

by some pretty swampy areas where the fields drained into the woods behind the building. The chicken feed was in a varmint-proof bin near the coop in the driest area of the yard. Next to it, Chris had set up a live trap to catch a problematic raccoon. He got up before me that April 1st, and warned me to be careful because we caught something in the live trap and it was pretty angry. I had remarked just the day before that the skunks were awake and feeling romantic, because the air coming off the marsh smelled like English Channel #5. Naturally, I asked if we caught a skunk. Chris looked me in the eyes, saying nothing.

I arrived at work that day soaking wet from the knees down to avoid walking near that live trap in the dark. It wasn't until our son called after school to ask why there was a teddy bear in the live trap next to the chicken coop that I reached back to peel off the kick-me sign.

Addendum to this writing: The background and my memory over this by Chris Beebe.

I had taken advantage of her keen olfactory senses and how dark the morning was, told her, "While you were showering, I went out and used a large wooden board to block any skunk-spray it might shoot, approached slowly with me behind the wall. I rested the board against the side of the cage, but you ought to give it great birth to avoid any activity. It's probably agitated! I wouldn't shine a light at it."

I had actually gone out while she showered, placed a toy Panda in the cage and leaned a large board against the side she might easily see. From a distance the 'skunk' could be seen as sun was rising, and I watched through the windows how she walked way around the cage, slopped through the softer ground, a round-about path to the chicken feed, keeping a great distance from the agitated varmint as warned.

My Highway Home

© 2022 Joe Jencks, Turtle Bear Music

Sibelius and Hope

There are no adequate words to express the anxiety that we are all experiencing on some level, at this moment in time. We're still in a Pandemic, but no one has to wear a mask anymore. We're not at war per se, but we're not at peace either. We're not past winter, but we're definitely ready for spring. Interpret that on as many levels as you like.

As many of you do, I have friends who are Ukrainian and Ukrainian American. I have friends who have traveled extensively or lived in Ukraine and Russia. I have colleagues and friends in Europe for whom the impact of present-time global geo-politics and an ongoing refugee crisis are very real. And I have friends who are doing all they can to provide for human needs with swiftness and compassion.

And we are aware of the humanitarian crisis in Europe, because it gets all the news. It is everywhere. And it should be in our minds and consciousness. We should be as attentive and informed as we are able. That said, there are still humanitarian crisis closer to home. There are still people without adequate shelter in our own towns and cities. Victims of ongoing racial injustice, domestic violence, refugees of political, economic, environmental, and public health concerns that still need to be solved, are with us right here and right now.

I had a bit of a meltdown last a couple weeks ago. I think I had consumed too much information about the world for me to process adequately. It came out as tears and despair. I would give a lot to know how to be most useful at this moment in history. And I keep coming back to music as what I have to give. That, and a good meal if you are near enough for me to cook for you. I do that pretty well too. But how can I be of service to people so far away, for whom life is now irrevocably changed? How do I serve those nearest who are also struggling?

This Is My Song, is one of my favorite hymns. I have been singing it in my head and out loud for days. The music is the melody of Finlandia, written by the extraordinary Finnish composer Jean Sibelius. Wikipedia says Finlandia was composed for the Press Celebrations of 1899, a covert protest against increasing censorship from the Russian Empire. In order to avoid Russian censorship, Finlandia had to be performed under alternative names at various musical concerts.

Most of the piece is taken up with rousing

and at times turbulent music, depicting the national struggle of the Finnish people at that time. Towards the end however, a calm comes over the symphony and one of the most astonishing melodies I have ever heard emerges and brings us into a place of hopeful serenity. Often incorrectly attributed as a Folk melody, the hymn Finlandia is all Sibelius. And it is amazing. You have no doubt heard it before, perhaps without even realizing what it was.

In 1933, Lloyd Stone, a US public-school teacher was living and working in Hawaii. He wrote among other things, poetry for children and he wrote the words to This Is My Song. Set to the melody Sibelius had penned a nearly two generations earlier, it is an entreatment for world peace, and a plea for all of us to see in each other our shared humanity, value, and inherent worth and dignity. During the Great Depression and without knowing it, on the very leading edge of a world war, Lloyd Stone wrote an anthem for the ages.

Around 1937-1938 theologian and poet Georgia Harkness was teaching at Mount Holyoke, and penned the third verse in direct response to the many people and nations globally who were falling under the weight of advancing fascism. She wrote a third stanza to Stone's poetry inspired by the many young women and men devoting themselves to finding ways to be helpful through the Wesleyan Service Guild, the American Friends Service Committee, and other organizations that were working hard to provide humanitarian relief to the innocent caught in the cross-fire, literally and figuratively.

As I am back out on tour, I keep singing this song in concert halls, clubs, spiritual communities, and just for my own serenity. Everywhere, people resonate with these words, this melody, these earnest pleas for peace and humanity. Sibelius was a magician. And his ability to move us with music alone is an immense gift. But Stone's words in combination, are so needed in this moment.

These words, set to the stunning melody written by Jean Sibelius in 1899 have such a long history and herstory of pride, resistance, fortitude, humanity, and hope.

***This is my song, Oh God of all the nations
A song of peace for lands afar and mine
This is my home, the country where my heart is
Here are my hopes, my dreams, my sacred***

shrine

***But other hearts in other lands are beating
With hopes and dreams as true and high as mine***

***My country's skies are bluer than the ocean
And sunlight beams on cloverleaf and pine
But other lands have sunlight too and clover***

***And skies are everywhere as blue as mine
Oh hear my song, oh God of all the nations
A song of peace for their land and for mine***

May truth and freedom come to every nation

may peace abound where strife has raged so long

that each may seek to love and build together

***a world united, righting every wrong
a world united in its love for freedom
proclaiming peace together in one song***

May it be so. May we be a part of building a world where peace is a reality. May we also not get so lost in the global concerns that we forget that there are those in need, among us every day. There are injustices here and now where you and I reside, that require our focus, attention, and compassion. Holding great need, near and far feels like a careful balancing act. But I know we are up for it. And with beautiful songs in our hearts, and on our lips, and in our ears, we will rise to the occasion whatever it may be. How can we keep from singing?

~ Joe Jencks (3-14-22)

Joe Jencks is 22-year veteran of the international Folk scene, an award winning songwriter and vocalist, and a contributing writer to numerous publications. For more information please visit: www.joejencks.com.

*Joe Jencks also hosts a monthly radio show called **My Highway Home** on the new Folk Music network – **Folk Music Notebook**. MHH features interviews with people Joe meets in his travels and music by many artists from the big tent that is Folk Music. Tune in on the second Sunday of each month at 5:00 PM CT. Rebroadcast at 10:00 PM CT on the same night and again the following Wednesday at 11:00 AM CT.*

Listen in online via:
www.folkmusicnotebook.com

GHOST STORIES - THE WHITMORE SISTERS

2022 - RED HOUSE RECORDS



Review by Kiki Schueler

With touring on hold due to the pandemic, Bonnie Whitmore's 2020 trip to LA to visit her sister Eleanor was meant to be a vacation, but her brother-in-law Chris Masterson knew better. "You guys are going to make a record," he predicted. Ever since graduating from their childhood band with their father (Daddy & the Divas), they have maintained separate musical identities. Bonnie as a solo artist, and Eleanor as half of the Mastersons and a member of Steve Earle's backing band the Dukes. In the past they contributed to each other's records, but Ghost Stories is their first as a team. And it is excellent. Expertly produced by Masterson, who also played all kinds of guitars, the record also features Jamie Douglass on drums on all tracks. Bonnie played bass while Eleanor played violin, strings, piano and tenor guitar. They are both accomplished musicians, but the magic here is in those blood harmonies. You've probably heard the term before, but in case you haven't, it refers to what it sounds like when close relatives, especially siblings, sing together. As the children of a classically trained opera singer, it should come as no surprise that the Whitmore voices are special.

After music, the second requirement of being a Whitmore is a love of flying, and every member of the family has their pilot's license. For those of

us who will never climb into the cockpit, opening track "Learn to Fly" is its musical equivalent. "The sound of the engine, full throttle revvin', no time to look behind. Palms may be sweaty, center it, steady. Pull back, it's time to fly." The vocals swoop and soar, while the Mellotron (courtesy of Tyler Chester) purrs like a Piper Cub. If you are looking for ghosts, the first materializes in the next song. "The Ballad of Sissy and Porter" pays tribute to their friend Chris Porter who was killed in a car accident in 2016. Dirk Powell's accordion paired with Eleanor's fiddle imbues the song with a Cajun lightheartedness as the sisters trade lines. "Wherever Porter's living I hope he's well," they sing, a wish for the hereafter. The poignant "Greek Tragedy," said to be in memory of Justin Townes Earle, opens "Can't touch the ground, oblivion makes no sound," and ends "Good bye, sweet dreams." The title track evokes anyone who has gone too soon, "I wish I had known you, it haunts me just the same. I will remember, I will say your names." The layered string parts are a haunting hymn. From the same funeral book comes "Friends We Leave Behind," which measures a life by the people it touches. On the other hand, the lively "Ricky" is an intervention for a friend who's still here, but may not be for long if he doesn't slow down.

Not to worry, the entire record is not made up of "bummer jams," despite Bonnie's claim. On the surface, "Hurtin' for a Let-down" sounds like a classic country weeper, but it turns the cliché upside down by claiming "I didn't want this to work out, any fool could see how it's written in the cards now." Two covers join the sisters' nine originals. The first

"Big Heart Sick Mind" was given to them by the terrific songwriter Aaron Lee Tasjan. The clap-along melody zips by in two and a half minutes, a poppy sugar rush that leaves you wondering what exactly they are talking about. The second, "On the Wings of a Nightingale," was written by Paul McCartney for the Everly Brothers (blood harmonies again). It translates beautifully to the Whitmore Sisters. No surprise there, everything about Ghost Stories is beautiful.

Mad Folk News is published monthly by the Madison Folk Music Society, a non-profit, volunteer-led society dedicated to fostering folk music in the Madison area.

Contact us at madfolk@charter.net. Learn about concerts, membership, scholarships, and volunteer opportunities at www.madfolk.org.

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Peter Berryman

Headline: **NEUROSCIENTISTS IDENTIFY POPULATION OF NEURONS IN THE BRAIN THAT RESPOND TO SINGING BUT NOT OTHER TYPES OF MUSIC**

Regarding a summary by Sarah McDonnell, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, in the MedicalXPress website, of an article in Current Biology.

Gosh. They sure are zeroing in on teeny tiny things these days.

The lead author of this fascinating study is Sam Norman-Haignere, assistant professor of neuroscience at the University of Rochester Medical Center. This was a follow-up to a study done in 2015, also by Sam Norman-Haignere and his team, using fMRI to scan assorted brains as their owners listened to 165 different sounds.

“fMRI” stands for “Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging.” It’s different from a regular MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) in the same way a video is different from a snapshot. I have no idea why the “f” is in lower case.

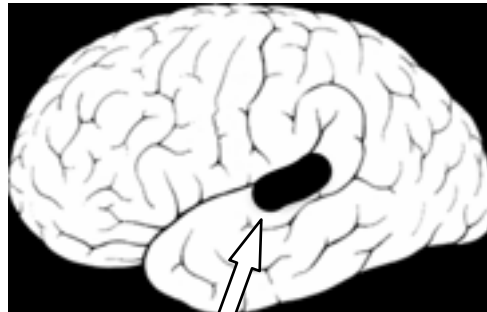
MRI’s and fMRI’s both detect areas of activity by measuring blood flow, which increases in parts of the brain that are doing something. fMRI’s not only do that but can tell if the activities are in some sort of flux, switching from one spot to another.

From this first fMRI study they were able to determine, back in 2015, among other things, one group of neurons that lit up when any kind of music was played, and a different group that lit up when exposed to language. This was accomplished in tests using 165 sounds which included various kinds of speech and music, along with dogs barking and pencils being sharpened, people slipping on globs of jelly, bombs ticking. I’m making these up, but they did incorporate all sorts of sounds.

So then just recently, the same group of neuroscientists managed to get their hands on whatever gadgets are necessary to do something called “electrocorticography” (ECoG) (I have no idea why the “o” is lower case). With ECoG, they actually

stick electrodes inside the brain, and run a wire up to the lightning rod on the castle tower... No no no. Seriously, this procedure can only be done to patients who are about to have brain surgery anyway, and who are perfectly willing to participate in the study. Electrodes ARE placed in the brain, and the patients perform certain tasks including listening to those same 165 sounds from the 2015 study. It was tricky lining up participants who were willing (I almost said “open-minded”) enough to join in, and who happened to be going in for brain surgery, but the team managed to acquire data from 15 participants over a number of years.

The results agree with the earlier study, but are much more specific, and as the title of the study indicates, revealed, with the help of “a novel statistical analysis,” that a certain specific gaggle of neurons in the auditory cortex **ONLY RESPONDED TO SINGING!!!** NOT to instrumental music and NOT to speech. Isn’t that weird? Really makes you want to know more. Like, what about humming? What about rapping? Or “scat singing?” (Wiki says, “In scat singing, the singer improvises melodies and rhythms using the voice as an instrument rather than a speaking medium.”)



Auditory Cortex

By combining the broader scans of the fMRI from 2015 and the finer focus readings of the ECoG, they were able to more precisely determine the LOCATION of the neurons that responded to song and found them to be snuggled between those aforementioned music activated and speech activated groupings of neurons, all hanging out together at the tip top of the temporal lobe. With the left-facing brain superimposed on a map of the US, this would be at about Kansas City.

You think back and wonder how this revelation has manifested itself in your own musical life. My mind drifts back to when I was

in my teens, listening to bluegrass music for the first time. I remember feeling a jangle when someone started singing, and I didn’t like it. To me, it just did not fit. I could almost feel an annoying “clunk” in my head, when the vocal chimed in. Little did I know the “clunk” was a neural light switch being flipped. Ironically, I’ve apparently flipped the switch back, as I’ve spent my life as a lyricist.

Incidentally, I also read somewhere, fairly recently, that musicians hear music in the LANGUAGE part of their brains, not the music part like most people. I have searched the wide web and can not find this article, but I’m sure I read it. Fascinating to me because NOW what bothers me is BACKGROUND MUSIC, which registers to me as someone talking while the action is going on. I am REALLY screwed up. Maybe I can get a consumer model EDoG on Amazon.

As these sorts of studies continue to reveal increasingly minute detail with all the new equipment on the market, it is more and more amazing to me how much they show the brain to be specifically organized.

Fifteen years from now, will they use new machines to find that there is a tiny subgroup of neurons flashing only when there is a Gm7th chord or a bad rhyme? Does folk music light up a different area than polka? What happens when a song has an instrumental break: do the song neurons go dark and the music neurons start blinking? Each new study tends to reaffirm that what matters in the brain regarding perception is location, location, location. Who knew?

I recommend reading the original full Current Biology article (link below) which has more detail and additional interesting thoughts on this study.

Link for the original study results: “A Neural Population Selective for Song in Human Auditory Cortex” in Current Biology:

[https://www.cell.com/current-biology/fulltext/S0960-9822\(22\)00131-2](https://www.cell.com/current-biology/fulltext/S0960-9822(22)00131-2)

Link for the article referred to in this Whither Zither:

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2022-02-neuroscientists-population-neurons-brain-music.html>

The Mad Folk Refrigerator Cover

April 2022

Gigs

Kiki's Righteous House of Music

Invitation & Advance RSVP required.

For full details or to request an invitation, contact Kiki at righteousmusicmgmt@gmail.com

- Thursday, April 28th @ 8pm (doors at 7) The Figs -- \$20
- Tuesday, April 29th @ 8pm (doors at 7) Wesley Stace - \$20
- Friday, May 6th @ 8pm (doors at 7) Walter Salas Humara - \$15
- Saturday, May 28th @ 8pm (doors at 7) Ben de la Cour - \$10

Our House

Invitation & Advance RSVP required.

For full details or to request an invitation, contact Dave & Anne at annedave@chorus.net - 608-256-2958 or 335-7909

- Friday, June, 17th @ 6:30 pm - Patchouli - \$20
- Friday, July 8th @ 6:30 pm - Ellis Paul - \$20
- Saturday, August 13th @ 6:30 pm - Danni Nicholls - \$20
- Friday, September 9th @ 6:30 pm - Luke Jackson - \$20
- Thursday, October 13th @ 6:30 pm - Martyn Joseph - \$20

Venues

FOLKLORE VILLAGE

3210 Cty Hwy BB
Dodgeville, WI
folklore-village.org
608-924-4000

Folklore Village

- Tue, Apr 5th, Virtual Open Mic - @7pm
- Sun, Apr 30th, Maypole Social - \$8 adults/\$6 seniors & teens/\$4 kids/under 5 Free/Family Admission capped at \$20
- Tue, May 3rd Virtual Open Mic - @7pm
- May 13th-15th, English Country Dance & Music Weekend
- May 21st - Aslak Lie Barn Raising - 5:30 picnic / 7pm dance - Preregistration required!
- May 30th - Gladdening the Garden Workbee

café carpe

18 S. Water St.
Ft. Atkinson, WI
cafecarpe.com
920-563-9391

Cafe Carpe

All shows at 8:30pm unless indicated otherwise.
Please call 920-563-9391 to reserve.

- Fri, Apr 8th, An Evening w/ Sam Baker - \$20
- Sat, Apr 9th, Todd Albright - \$15
- Thu, Apr 4th, Mark Hembree Band - \$13
- Sat, Apr 23rd, Jeff Stehr / Mark Soriano / Eliza Hanson - \$12
- Tue, Apr 26th, Mark Hummel's Blues Survivors - \$30
- Thu, Apr 28th, Song Circle w/ Tricia Alexander - \$5
- Sat, May 21st, My Politic - \$12

NORTH STREET CABARET

610 North St
Madison, WI
northstreetcabaret.com

- Fri, Apr 8th, An Evening w/ Sam Baker - \$20
- Sat, Apr 9th, Todd Albright - \$15
- Thu, Apr 4th, Mark Hembree Band - \$13
- Sat, Apr 23rd, Jeff Stehr / Mark Soriano / Eliza Hanson - \$12
- Tue, Apr 26th, Mark Hummel's Blues Survivors - \$30
- Thu, Apr 28th, Song Circle w/ Tricia Alexander - \$5
- Sat, May 21st, My Politic - \$12

Irish Cultural & Heritage Center
2133 W Wisconsin Ave
Milwaukee, WI -- ichc.net
414-345-8800

w/ Student ID All Shows are \$10 Advance and d.o.s.

- Sat, April 9th - Josh Okeefe - 7:30pm -- \$25
- Sat, April 16th - Trian - 7:30pm -- \$25 - \$30 adv/\$35 - \$40 d.o.s.

Wild Hog in the Woods
953 Jenifer St.
wildhoginthewoods.org

• Fri, April 1st - Matt DeBlass - Virtual Concert @7:30pm

Misc

Sugar Maple Concert Series: The Mark Hembree Band
Feb 27th - North Street Cabaret - @8 pm - \$8 adv / \$15 d.o.s.
Tickets at www.sugarmaplefest.org

Old Time Jam

Monthly - 3rd Sunday of every month, 4 to 6pm

EVP West 3809 Mineral Point Road

Coodinator: Al Wilson

cell: 608-572-0634

adwilson@pediatrics.wisc.edu

Madison Area Ukulele Initiative -- Singalongs 3rd Sunday 11am - 1:30pm
- for location visit www.MAUImadison.com

On the Air



wpr.org

Simply Folk on Wisconsin Public Radio w/ Dan Robinson, Host

Sun 5:00-8:00pm

Concerts recorded in Wisconsin, music and dance of people the world over. For playlists, calendars, station listings, and more, visit www.wpr.org/simplyfolk.



wortfm.org

WORT 89.9 FM community radio

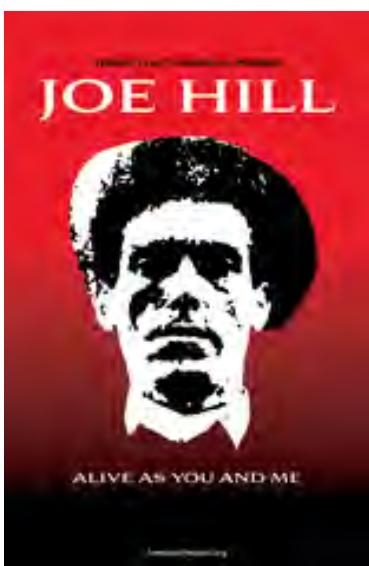
- Weekdays 9:00am - noon - "On the Horizon" w/ Ford Blackwell, Paul Novak, Gloria Hays & Helena White
- Mon - Global Revolutions (folk from the world over) w/ Dan Talmo & Martin Alvarado
- Tue - Another Green Morning w/ Brian Hirsch
- Wed - Back to the Country (country music on a theme) w/ Bill Malone
- Thur - Hejira (folk and international) w/ Gloria Hays, George Dreckmann, Jeff Spitzer-Resnick & Paul Novak
- Fri - Mud Acres (bluegrass and acoustic) w/ Chris Powers



WVMO The Voice of Monona - Promoting the best in Good Music - Roots Music - Americana Music Plus Community Members Hosted Shows Streaming Live and on your mobile device through tunein radio

Stuart Stotts

Weekly new song Facebook Live event. Song Premiere on Tuesday (SPOT) at 11AM - facebook.com/stuart.stotts



Joe Hill: Alive As You and Me Thursday, April 7th 7:30 pm at the Dark Horse Artbar, 756 East Washington, Madison

An evening of songs, stories and solidarity in celebration of the life and times of Wobbly organizer and songwriter Joe Hill, killed by firing squad by the State of Utah in 1915 at the demand of the copper bosses. Singer/actor/tall ship captain Tom Kastle will tell Joe's story - a story that resonates with today's struggle to organize the unorganized. Talk back and Q&A after the show. Free admission - proof of vaccination required. (608) 223-9571 and fermatstheater.org



"WHEN IS MY RENEWAL DUE?"

(Hint: It is NOT the date on the mailing label!)

The date shown on the mailing label is NOT your membership expiration date! There has been some confusion lately, and we apologize for that. The date is just the date the labels were printed, as new cost-saving postal procedures do not allow us to include expiration dates there anymore. When it is time to renew, we will send you a personal notice by mail or email. At that point you will be able to either mail a check or renew online at www.madfolk.org. If you have questions about your membership in the meantime, send email to info@madfolk.org. Thanks for your membership and support of Mad Folk!

Way #1 – online

Visit www.madfolk.org and click on "Join MFMS"

Way #2 – unplugged

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Scholarship fund donation (optional) \$ _____

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