



Fiddler's Rag

Vol. 39, Number 3
Celebrating 38 years

Santa Clara Valley Fiddlers Association
www.scvfa.org or www.Fiddlers.org

March 2011
Next Jam: **March 6**

President's Message

by Richard Brooks



We have two very special guests on March 6: **Sarah Kirton**, fiddler extraordinaire and this month's KidFiddle workshop instructor, and **Jon Li**, owner of Kamimoto String Instruments and a great SCVFA supporter. See below for details about their special events.

Last month we had a blast trying out equipment borrowed from Dave Williams and Pete Showman. Several folks mentioned that it sounded pretty good. If you have suggestions for replacement sound equipment, please speak with Pete. It was a special treat having mandolinist Avery Ellisman visit us from San Diego. He produces the Julian Family Fiddle Camp happening April 14-17 in Julian, CA (near San Diego); www.fiddlefamilycamp.com.

Sarah Kirton - our Featured Performer

We are so fortunate to have SCVFA member Sarah Kirton perform for us on her 9 string Hardanger and standard fiddles and teach our KidFiddle workshop. She plays many styles including traditional American old-time and Scandinavian (Norwegian and Swedish). Her KidFiddle workshop will focus on teaching old-time tunes using her regular 4 string fiddle.

Jon Li - our Special Guest and Great Supporter

Kamimoto String Instruments (San Jose) is a wonderful supporter of our activities. Jon Li, the current owner, and Hideo Kamimoto, the former owner, have been advertising in our Fiddler's Rag for many years. Jon was also a generous sponsor of our 9th annual Youth Fiddle Contest in November 2010.

Jon will give a demonstration of how to rehair bows and show us the correct way to put on strings. He will also display selected instruments. This will take place around 3:00 PM after Sarah's workshop and before her concert.

Generous Donors Deserve Our Deep Gratitude

We are very fortunate to have members and friends who believe in our commitment to the community and the value we bring them. Several have made special donations that will help us to purchase replacement

Sarah Kirton

Featured Performer

on

Norwegian Hardanger
and standard fiddles at 3:30

KidFiddle workshop at 2:00

Cost \$5; youths under 17 years.



Jon Li (Kamimoto)

DEMONSTRATES (at 3:00 PM)

Bow Rehairing and the correct way to put on strings

equipment and to continue our special programs like KidFiddle and our Youth Fiddle Contest.

Please thank the donors whose names are listed on page 2. They deserve our deepest gratitude.

(Continued on page 2)

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President's Message, continued from Page 1

We are continuing to work with State Farm Insurance on our claim and to make changes to our policy. Believe me, it is a lot of work.

Everyone Deserves to Enjoy Our Jam

Who wants to spend most of the day at the check-in desk? Janet, Dinah, and Charlotte often do just that. They deserve to enjoy the music and outdoors too. Just 30 minutes of your time around 3 PM would help.

Congratulations to Pete Hicks

On Saturday, January 29, I was asked to co-present the award for the best local mandolinist at the Bluegrass on Broadway (BoB) festival. A regular Fiddler's Rag contributor, Pete Hicks won two NCBS awards - co-winner with Ed Neff on mandolin and co-winner of best fiddler with Paul Shelasky.

The BoB festival was held in downtown Redwood City and was sponsored by the Northern California Bluegrass Society (NCBS). The NCBS is our partner and supporter with a monthly ad.

Change in Membership Form and Dues

Our membership dues have been \$15 a year for at least a decade. The board will likely vote to increase the dues (amount is undecided). Renew now or wait to contribute a little more later.

Other Events? Suggestions? Volunteers?

What other events would you like us to have? Would you like another band scramble? Are you able to help us accomplish these things? We need your help.



John Durbin, Bob Palasek, and Pete Showman

To our generous donors, we offer a big **Thank You!**
(listed alphabetically)

- ♥ Ann Whitesell
- ♥ Bill Avellino
- ♥ California Bluegrass Association
- ♥ Dave Magram & Cathy Loughman
- ♥ Jim and Rosalie Dinkey
- ♥ Karen Misenhimer
- ♥ Maria Nadauld
- ♥ Marylou Brooks
- ♥ Paul and Laura Barnett
- ♥ Richard Pizzorno
- ♥ Susan Muston

You can also support us with your donations and receive a CD or DVD as our gift. The 8 CDs are listed at <http://www.scvfa.org/SCVFA CDs 1-8.pdf>. The DVD shown below has twin fiddling by Arthur Kee and Jack Sadler. These gifts are available at every jam.

- Richard Brooks

This fantastic DVD can be yours for a \$15 donation.



- Menu 1.....Richard Brooks' Intro
- Menu 2.....Arthur Kee's Intro
- Menu 3-1...Silver Bells
- Menu 3-2...Ashokan Farewell
- Menu 3-3...In the Garden
- Menu 3-4...Lady Be Good
- Menu 3-5...Josephine's Waltz
- Menu 3-6...Danny Boy
- Menu 3-7...Twinkle Little Star
- Menu 4.....Encore 1: Golden Slippers
- Menu 5.....Encore 2: I Ain't Got Nobody

Musicians (left to right)

- Arthur Kee (fiddle)
- Jack Sadler (fiddle, voc)
- John Lytle (guitar)
- Jim True (guitar)
- Norio Kawato (guitar)

Produced 10-2010 by
Richard Brooks, President
Santa Clara Valley
Fiddlers Association
www.scvfa.org

SCVFA Happenings

SCVFA Membership Changeover

Pete Showman, Membership Secretary

Under the new Bylaws approved in February, we will be changing from family memberships to individual memberships grouped by household.

The membership change will be done in stages:

1. To start, we'll generally assume that whoever is named on the current mailing labels will continue as individual members.
2. When you renew, please *tell us whether any people are to be added or removed under the new system*. If possible, *please send us a new member-information form*. The new form can be downloaded from our website; use the link at www.fiddlers.org/join. The household's dues will depend on the number of members you sign up.

Questions? Give me a call at (408) 255-0297 or email me: membership@scvfa.org

Membership Dues

SCVFA dues have not changed since 1998, while our costs have continued to increase. The Trustees will decide in March whether and how much to increase dues, and when.

Also, under our new Bylaws we will be changing from our old family-dues arrangement (the same amount, regardless of the number of people in the family) to individual dues. The first person in a household will pay the new "regular" dues amount, and each additional member in the same household will pay a small additional dues amount, also to be set.

We'll report the specifics in the April issue. At least through March, members can renew at the old rate.

PA System Update

For the February jam we used a mix of our remaining equipment and items loaned to us, mostly by Dave Williams – thanks! It gave us a chance to try out some different equipment. We'll do the same in March.

Besides replacing the stolen gear, we're also looking at ways to reduce PA set-up time and simplify transportation. If you have suggestions, or would like to participate, please contact Pete Showman: email to membership@scvfa.org, or phone (408) 255-0297.

February Membership Meeting

The annual SCVFA membership meeting was held at the February jam. A quorum of member-families was present. The members took three actions, all approved unanimously:

- Re-elected Pete Showman to Trustee seat 1
- Elected Gordon Gibson to Trustee seat 2
- Approved the Bylaws revision that was adopted in December by the Trustees. The new bylaws took effect at the conclusion of the jam.

President Richard Brooks gave a brief "state of the association" presentation, and noted that last year we

- purchased the domain name fiddlers.org
- held our 9th Youth Fiddle Contest (and got some great publicity in the San Jose Mercury-News)
- lost some of our PA system to theft in December.

Our financial health is OK, thanks in part to generous donations to support the Contest and to help offset the theft loss. However as operating expenses continue to increase, we think a dues increase will be needed soon.

Membership secretary Pete Showman reported that our membership increased during the past year, and stands at just over 160 families.



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BLUEGRASS SOCIETY**

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Since 1982 the Northern California Bluegrass Society has promoted bluegrass and old time music in the San Francisco Bay and Monterey Bay areas. This highly active club has nurtured the development of bands and venues. The NCBS hosts the Good Old Fashioned Bluegrass Festival each August, an event that solely features California bands. We sponsor festivals, concerts and jams all over the area. Members receive the Bluegrass By the Bay magazine each month. Please join us!

Chord Substitutions, Inversions, And Alterations

by Gorden Gibson

Strumming chords on a guitar is fun, especially in a group. Bluegrass music, with roots in tunes from the United Kingdom, is particularly fun. But after strumming the same three chords over and over, it becomes routine and cries for something more exciting. Here are three ways to add more thrills to chord strumming: chord substitution (CS), chord inversions (CI) and chord alterations (CA).

First, chord substitution (CS) is the use of another related chord in place of the original chord. There are many ways to substitute chords, but in general the purpose is to make the music more stimulating for the performer and the audience with new sounds. CS can be as simple as using a G6, G9, G13 chord in place of a G major chord, which is called *direct substitution*. Also, it can also be as complex as replacing a G7 chord with a Db7 chord, called *tritone chord substitution*. Care must be used at times that no dissonant tonal coloring is made against the melody. This article will explain some of the many ways to change chords.

Direct Substitution: At times a major chord variant may be substituted for the same-letter major chord. For example, a G major chord may be replaced by a G6, G9 or G13 chord. By the same token, minor chords may be replaced by other same-letter minor chords. For example, an Fm chord could be replaced by an Fm6, Fm9, etc. Also, a minor chord may sometimes be substituted for a major chord of the same letter name, or vice-versa. For example, if the original chord is E, you may be able to use an Em, Em6 or Em9.

Tritone Chord Substitution: At times a dominant-7 chord could be replaced by a chord whose root is three whole tones above the original root note (i.e., the flatted 5th). Using the G7 chord as an example, three whole tones above is Db. That means that the G7 chord can sometimes be replaced by a Db7 chord. Another example would be an Eb7 for an A7.

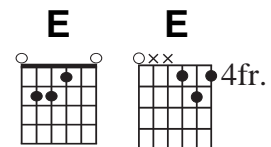
Tritone chord substitution works in reverse too. Substituting a G7 chord for a Db7 chord works as well as substituting a Db7 chord for a G7 chord. A Tritone Chord Substitution Chart can be found at this URL: www.apassion4jazz.net/tritone.html.

Relative Major/Minor Substitution: At times a major chord may be replaced by its *relative minor* chord. For example a C major chord could be replaced by an A

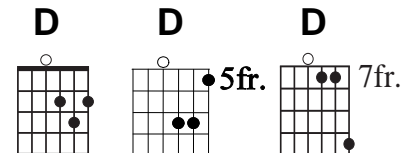
minor chord. Again, care must be taken that no dissonant tonal coloring is made against the melody. If it sounds strange, try a different substitution.

Chord Inversion: Chords can be inverted so that the root isn't the lowest note, which may give a chord a slightly new or unusual sound – and may make it easier to play. When you play a chord such that the third of the chord is the lowest string, it is called first inversion. Likewise, when the fifth of the chord is on the lowest string, it is called a second inversion. One simple way to invert chords is to simply strum the first few, last few, or middle few strings on the guitar. For example, if you strum a G chord on strings 5-1, you have pitches B, D, G, B, and G - a first inversion. If you strum strings 4-1, you have pitches D, G, B and G - a second inversion. You may also switch strumming between the first three strings (3-1) with the last three strings (6-4) to add new sounds and excitement to any chord that uses all six strings.

Chord Alterations: Another way to change the sound of a chord while keeping its harmony is to play the chord on different positions of the guitar fret board, using higher octaves of one or more pitches of the chord. For example, the E chord can be played on the 1st and on the 4th positions, with strings 5 and 4 muted when in the 4th position:



The D chord can also be played on the 2nd, 5th and 7th position as follows:



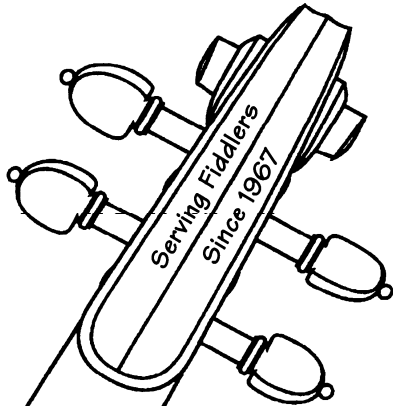
I've tried using all of the above ways and more to change the sound of chords. Most of the time it works. I suggest you start with a simple chord alteration until your confidence builds up. Then, go on to chord inversions and chord substitutions. I was astonished at how the blending of new notes created beautiful harmonies just by changing chords, and you will be too.

Gorden Gibson is SCVFA's newest Trustee. He teaches guitar to adults and children part time at several San Jose locations.

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More Practice Tips for Bowing

Joe Weed

As I mentioned last month, bowing presents a greater challenge to good fiddle playing than does the left hand. I suggested playing slow scales in front of a mirror, watching to see that you keep the bow in one spot on the string as well as perpendicular to the string.

Now I'll offer a few bowing exercises that you can do when you practice fiddle. These will help you develop the muscles and the control that your right hand, fingers and arm need to make the bow work properly. Do these for just a short time, and early in your practice session, so the playing you do after these exercises can benefit from them.

Strengthen Your Fingers ...

Stand in an open doorway with your bow arm (forearm) held against the door jam. Keep the bow on the A or E string and use just your fingers to move the bow up and down on the string while keeping your hand and arm stationary. At first, this will be very difficult, and you might drop your bow, so keep a towel or blanket covering the floor below. Over the course of a few days, you'll probably notice an increase in the range of motion that you can bow with just your fingers. They'll strengthen, and you'll become better able to adapt the shape of your hand to the changing position of your bow.

... and Your Wrist

Next, standing in the same position, move your wrist as well as your fingers to play on the A and/or E strings. Keep your right forearm stationary, lightly pressed against the door jam. As when you practiced moving just your fingers, this will be difficult at first, but will help you to experience a wider

motion in your hand as you move the bow in a straight line on the fiddle.

Learn to Use the Whole Bow

Many fiddlers unwittingly restrict their palette of tonal colors and volume by using only the tip of their bow. While it's easy to get a light sound for reels, hornpipes and jigs near the tip, learning to use the bow over its entire range can provide a much deeper and richer set of sounds. In fact, by playing with the lower part of the bow, and thereby using its own weight to help produce the sound, you can get more volume without pressing down heavily on the bow.

This requires (slowly) practicing fiddle tunes and scales, while using the mirror to make sure that the bow stays in the lower 1/3 to 1/2. Use your upper arm and shoulder to lift the weight of the bow as you work, so it won't scratch and scrape as you change directions. Stop to rest periodically.

These exercises should develop some of the finer muscles important for bowing, and familiarize you with parts of your body that you might not be accustomed to using. They'll allow you to get some "bio feedback" as you play, once you're able to relax with them. Remember to add them into a practice session, but don't let them take over!

Joe Weed records acoustic music at his Highland Studios near Los Gatos, California. He has released six albums of his own, produced many projects for independent artists and labels, and does sound tracks for film, TV and museums. He recently produced "Pa's Fiddle," a collection of 19th-century American music played by "Pa" Charles Ingalls, father of Laura Ingalls Wilder, the author of the "Little House on the Prairie" book series. Reach Joe by calling (408) 353-3353, by email at joe@highlandpublishing.com, or by visiting joeweel.com.

Remembering J.P. Fraley

By Dave Barton

J.P. Fraley passed away Feb. 17, 2011. He was possibly the best loved fiddler of all those who performed music in the American old-timey style.

Those of us who had met him at various fiddle camps, including the Festival of American Fiddle Tunes (Port Townsend, WA), will not soon forget his soulful playing, especially as experienced live and from just a few feet away. I now regret that I never attended Fraley's music camp, Mountain Music Gathering.

There are some wonderful music samples on YouTube of J.P. with Shetlands fiddler Aly Bain. (See our Links page, fiddlers.org/links – or search for their names on YouTube.) One clip is J.P. playing Wild Rose of the Mountain, accompanied by Aly and JP's wife Annadeene. A discussion of Kentucky fiddling follows. The other is J.P. playing his version of Miller's Reel, accompanied by Annadeene.



Some Postings from the Fiddle-L Email List

Well known fiddler Betty Vornbrock wrote:

“Well, J.P. picked a beautiful evening to say goodbye. As the full moon was rising, about 6 pm

tonight, the sweetest fiddler on the planet passed away peacefully, at his home up Hogshead Hollow. If you're listening, J.P., may you hear the lovely strains of your favorite waltzes as many of us no doubt will play for you tonight.

“Thank you for your gifts of friendship and music through the years. You will not be forgotten.”

Other fiddlers' posts on Fiddle-L

“Not only was he the sweetest fiddle, he was a very sweet man. ... he was our Guest of Honor at the 1999 Florida Old Time Music Championship. It was a great honor for me to meet him.

“I had been listening to his fiddling since his Wild Rose of the Mountain LP came out, and I played him on my radio show since the very beginning. ... Rest in Peace.”

- Jim Strickland, host of “Mr. Ethnic's Old Time Music Show,” WMNF, Tampa, FL, wmnf.org

“He never met a stranger, and he always caught your best tune.”

- Robert Buckingham

“RIP, J.P. I hope you're jamming with others who went on before you. My condolences to friends and family.”

- Bob Loomis (of Concord, CA)

Dave Barton is a long-time member who helps keep us informed about happenings in the fiddling world.



Above: Sam Morocco, Jean Avram, Dave Barton and Jim True at our “true acoustic” January jam: no PA system.

Above right: Norio Kawato and Chip Curry rock out at the February jam.

Right: George Bradshaw, Mike Bell and Charley Oveland try out the loaner mikes in February.



All photos: Richard Brooks

Wild Rose of the Mountain

From J.P. Fraley

Old Time
(Kentucky)

$\text{♩} = 88$ A mixolydian

A

7

B

12

17

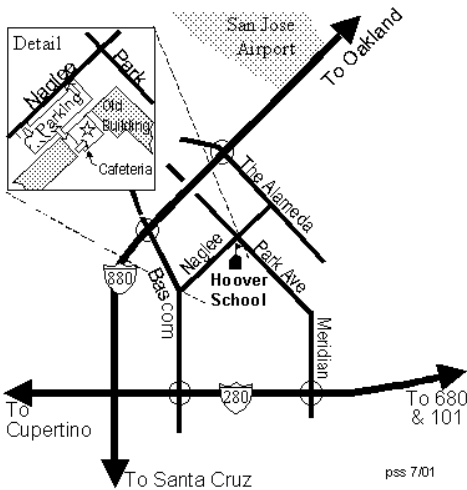
A nice "crooked" tune — that is, a tune with extra beats (four 3/2 measures, 22 beats per part). Play it with a little swing. ABC transcription based on J.P. Fraley's playing in an Aly Bain video posted on YouTube, and the Fiddler's Fakebook.

Pete Showman 2/23/11

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

SCVFA Jam on the first Sunday of each month.
 Location: Hoover Middle School, 1635 Park Ave.,
 San Jose. The school is at the corner of Naglee and
 Park. Cafeteria parking is on the Naglee side

Next Jam: Sunday Mar. 6, 1-5 pm,
Hoover Middle School.
KidFiddle 2 pm, Special Performance 3 pm



Damaged or Missing Issue? Call us,
or email to: newsletter at scvfa.org

March 2011 Calendar

☞ **Be sure to verify performers, times & dates before driving to an event, especially near holidays.** ☞

————— Weekly & Biweekly Events —————

- 3/17-20 -- St. Patrick's may affect Irish session schedules.
- 3/1+ **Irish Slow Session, Stephen's Green Pub**, 223 Castro St., MV. Tues. 7:30-9pm. www.sfpipersclub.org. (Pub info only: 650-964-9151) +3/8, 15, 22, 29.
- 3/1+ **Bluegrass at Sam's BBQ**, 1110 S. Bascom Ave., Campbell, 6-9pm. www.samsbbq.com or (408) 297-9151. Bands every Tues. & Wed. +3/2, 8, 9, 15, 16, 22, 23, 29, 30.
- 3/2+ **Peninsula Banjo Band** Wednesdays 7pm. Cabrito's Mexican Bistro, 685 E. El Camino Real, SV. Info: (408) 993-2263, www.peninsulabanjoband.org. +3/9, 16, 23, 30.
- 3/2+ **Bluegrass Jam at Fandango Pizza**, 3163 Middlefield Rd, Palo Alto every Wed. 7:30-9. www.fandangopizza.com +3/9, 16, 23, 30.
- 3/3+ **South Bay Folks Acoustic Open Mike, Mission City Coffee Roasting Co.**, 2221 The Alameda, Santa Clara; 7-10 every Thu.; signups at 6:45. www.SouthBayFolks.org; café info only: 408-261-2221. +3/10, 17, 24, 31.
- 3/4+ **Bluegrass and Country at Mission Pizza** in Fremont, 7-10. Info: (510) 651-6858, www.missionpizza.com. Most Fri. & Sat. +3/5, 11, 12, 18, 19, 25, 26.
- 3/6+ **Irish Session, O'Flaherty's Irish Pub**, 25 N. San Pedro St., San Jose, Sun. 5-8pm. No children. Pub: (408) 947-8007. Moderated session. +3/13, 3/20, 3/27.
- 3/7+ **Old-Time Jam** at Fandango Pizza (see above); Mondays

7-9. Info: showman.org/jams/oti
 +3/14, 3/21, 3/28.

————— Monthly and Special Events —————

- 3/6 **SCVFA Jam & Open Mike: Hoover School** (see map), 1st Sundays, 1-5pm. www.scvfa.org; Richard Brooks. \$6 members / \$8 non-memb.; kids free.
- 3/13 Daylight Saving begins EARLIER now. Lose an hour.
- 3/18-19 CSOTFA **Calif. State Fiddle Contest, Oroville**. See www.csotfa.net (not .org). (contact info omitted)
- 3/27 **SCVFA Board Meeting**, call Richard Brooks for info.
- 3/20 **Sunnyvale Bluegrass Jam**, 3rd Sundays 1-5: Heritage Park Building, Sunnyvale Community Center (550 E. Remington). \$5. Info: <http://tinyurl.com/CABluegrassJams>
- 3/27 **CSOTFA Dist. 9 Jam**: 19806 Wisteria Ave., **Castro Valley**, 1:30 - 5pm, fourth Sun. www.csotfa9.org.
- 3/27 **Santa Cruz Bluegrass & Old Time Jam**, 4th Sun. 1-5: Oceanview Park, Santa Cruz. Info: tinyurl.com/SCjam [groups.google.com/group/santacruzjam]

————— Coming Up —————

- 4/10 **SF Fest. of Mandolins** www.croatianamericanweb.org.
- 5/26-30 **May Strawberry**, Sonora. Info: (209) 984-8630,
- 6/12-15 **CBA Music Camp**, Grass Vly. www.cbamusiccamp.org
- 7/3-10 Festival of Amer. **Fiddle Tunes, Port Townsend, WA**
 Sign up early! Info: (360) 385-3102; www.centrum.org.