



A Different Strummer

FOR THE CFMS SUMMER MUSICAL OPPORTUNITIES ABOUND!

by D. Boston

As mentioned in the June newsletter, there are a number of musical opportunities happening this summer for CFMS members to be involved in. To name a few: the **Ohio State Fair**; the **Franklin Co. Fair**; more jamming opportunities at **Run the Race** and the **July and August CFMS picnics** (open to all). If you just want to sit back and “hear the music,” we’ll also have another event co-sponsored by the CFMS and Mozart’s at **Mozart’s** in August (look for details in the August newsletter).

For the **Ohio State Fair** CFMS members will have the opportunity to jam again on Saturday, **August 2 from**



10 a.m. - 2 p.m. It will occur outside the pioneer cabin in the shady Natural Resources Park in the Southeast quadrant of the fairgrounds. Last year, we had quite a nice turnout of musicians/singers. You could tell the passersby and those who lingered

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against the fence listening to us enjoyed it, as you could see ready smiles break out across their faces. We will have sound amplification again this year. For agreeing to play for that time period, you’ll get free entrance passes for yourself and another family member as well as free parking passes.

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Some Basics and Tips

Keeping Your Guitar in Top Shape

by D. Boston

The book, *Tipbook Acoustic Guitar* contains many helpful hints on maintaining your guitar. The below reference article includes excerpts from *Tipbook* as well as tips from the Gibson website, www2.gibson.com, and from www.ringmusic.com. Starting with the *Tipbook*, we’ll examine the care of strings.

Your Strings

“To get your strings to last as long as they can, you should take a closer look at your guitar too. . . .the smoother the frets are, the longer your strings can last. Rough spots can be smoothed, *very carefully*, with some ultra-fine steel wool.

Nut and saddle

“Excessive string wear can be the result of sharp edges at the nut or the saddle. It may pay to check these

parts, especially if a certain string keeps breaking in the same place. As before, fine steel wool, or some ultra-fine sandpaper, will usually be all you need to smooth things down.

Elasticity

“Even if you never play them, strings gradually lose their elasticity and their sound gets duller. Put on a new set, and the sound will suddenly be bright as can be.

Dust, dirt, grease

“Strings also lose their brightness because they are affected by airborne dust, dirt, grease, smoke, and moisture, as well as by whatever your fingers leave on them. Wound strings are especially sensitive to this kind of pollution, because they retain everything so well in their grooves. A

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ELECTION OF CFMS OFFICERS

Election of the new officers and trustees for the **Columbus Folk Music Society** took place on June 29, 2014 at the annual General Meeting.

Unfortunately, the results weren’t available before the deadline for the July newsletter, but you can find them on the website at: www.columbusfolkmusicsociety.org/leadership.html

* * * *

A big thank you to outgoing members who have served and a “welcome” to the newly elected and/or re-elected persons!

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guideline: when wound strings start losing their color, they are past their best. They may not break for another year, two years or more, but a new set will dramatically improve the sound of your instrument.

Cleaner and drier

“An easy way to keep your strings as dry and clean as possible is to wash your hands and dry them well before playing, and to clean and dry the strings afterwards. Any type of lint-free cloth works well – an old T-shirt or a dishtowel, for instance. Clean the underside of the strings and the fingerboard, as you go along. Simply pull the cloth between the strings and the fingerboard, and run it up and down the neck a couple of times.”¹

Jason Fowler in his blog on the website www.ringmusic.com says that “the crisp, bell-like tone of new guitar strings is unfortunately, for many. . . short-lived. This may be due to lack of a proper string cleaning procedure, excessive humidity, or naturally acidic sweat, all of which cause the alloys used in string manufacturing to oxidize. This results in a ‘plonk’ instead of a ‘zing’.”

He recommends that before playing, you “apply a dime-size drop of sanitizer and rub your hands together briskly. The sanitizer will not only kill whatever bacteria are hiding out in your palms but will also evaporate harmful oils which will dull strings. I recommend using this method over washing hands in soap and water because this tends to soften both the left hand calluses and right hand fingernails, two possible deleterious side effects.” He also says his personal favorite cloth for wiping down strings is a cotton diaper, which make great polishing cloths as well.

String cleaner

The *Tipbook* continues, “If you have particularly sweaty fingers, a special string cleaner may help. These cleaners remove the dirt from the grooves of your wound strings. They're not expensive – just a couple

of dollars buys you a bottle that'll last a long time.

Smoother strings

“Other products make your strings feel a little smoother, and they often help to repel dirt as well. Each manufacturer dreams up its own product name, such as Finger-ease or Fast fret. Various string makers apply coatings to their strings for the same purpose.”²

Your Guitar

The *Tipbook* says: “A crack at the top, a loose brace, a buzzing sound that you can't trace, a bridge that comes loose. . . all good reasons to go see a technician.

Action

“The action of your guitar will probably need adjusting when you change to heavier or lighter strings; heavier strings exert more tension, often raising the action, and vice versa. The solution is to either lower or replace the saddle or the nut, or both. Most steel-string guitars have an adjustable truss rod that can be used to change the action. Adjusting this rod is a job best left to a technician, and it's safest to visit one for any other job that requires tools other than the ones you need to change your strings.”

Cleaning

The *Tipbook* claims “nobody seems to really agree on the best way to clean guitars: there is no ‘best way,’ but there are plenty of tips” and that “most guitar cleaners should be kept away from strings; what's good for your strings may not be so good for your strings.”³

An article on Gibson's website www2.gibson.com entitled “Rag-time : How to Clean Your Guitar for Better Tone” says: “The best – and least expensive – way to improve your guitar's appearance, as well as its tone, is to administer a thorough cleaning.”

Gibson recommends “clean your guitar each time you change the strings. With your strings off, you

have much better access to your fretboard. Plus, you don't want your strings to come into contact with any oils, polishes or damp cloths that you may use during the cleaning process. Play it safe by removing only two or three strings at a time so that you don't cause the neck tension to go out of whack.”

The fingerboard

The *Tipbook* continues, “when wiping your strings after playing, you can easily clean the fingerboard as well. If you always do that, you probably won't need to use any of the special fingerboard cleaners that are available. A soft toothbrush may be used to clean the fingerboard where it meets the frets and the nut.”⁴

For a more thorough cleaning, Gibson recommends that the fretboard be cleaned once or twice a year. “That's because it's important not to mess too much with the natural moisture the fretboard picks up from oils on your fingers.” Clean it with a soft, damp cloth (wrung out as much as you possibly can) and “work the cloth down the fretboard, making sure to use different portions of the cloth so that you're not just transferring dirt from one fret to another. . . . If your fretboard has accumulated some significant grime, you may need to follow your rag cleaning with a very light brushing with some extra fine #000 or #0000 steel wool. Please note that tiny steel wool particles can stick to the magnets in your pickups. It's best to cover up your pickups when cleaning with steel wool.” If you notice your fretboard has dried out or developed hairline cracks, “you can rub one or two drops of oil (mineral, almond or linseed oil) into the fretboard to condition it. Make sure to wipe off excess oil with a soft, dry rag.”

The *Tipbook* cautions that using “light steel wool, liquid, or any other household products to clean dirty fingerboards. . . are never risk-free. Steel wool can easily damage more than it cleans, and household

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detergents may be too abrasive or leave residues. The most important advice? Ask a technician for advice, and bring along your guitar when you do. That way you can also choose to have it cleaned for you.

The body

“Cleaning the body is mainly a matter of lightly and frequently wiping it with a dry or slightly moist lint-free cloth.”⁵

The Gibson website adds that if a dry cloth is not doing the trick, you may use a damp cloth that has been well wrung out and “several times a year, you may want to use a polish after you’ve done your cleaning . . . [and] whatever you do, don’t use furniture polish on your guitar. These oils can permanently alter the resonance of your guitar, as the wood experiences

a change in density when it soaks up these polishing agents.”

Varnish, varnish, and varnish

The *Tipbook* continues, “use a dedicated guitar cleaner if you are aiming to seriously clean the body, remove fingerprints and stains, and possibly even restore the finish to its original luster. Please note that special finishes may require special cleaners. What’s good for one finish, another can’t take. Bodies that are finished with oil or wax also require their ‘own’ cleaners. Once again, when in doubt, ask your technician for advice, and if necessary, bring your guitar along.

Special cleaners

“Special guitar cleaners, with names such as guitar polish, guitar juice or guitar gloss, work fine on most instruments. Some products may be meant to clean only woodwork, while

others are supposed to restore its original luster too. Read the instructions beforehand, then pick one, and read the instructions once more before applying it.”⁶

Gibson adds some recommendations for vintage guitars. “The finish on older guitars is often significantly thinner, yielding a better tone. However, this means that vintage guitars are more vulnerable to the waxes, oils and silicates in polishing products. Vintage finishes are also more likely to be “checked.” You want to avoid working any polish or water into these cracks. Instead, try placing your face close to your guitar and breathing warm, moist air onto the dirty spots. Then immediately wipe down your guitar. If you’re particularly unsure about how to handle an old finish, ask your technician.”

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SUMMERTIME BRINGS BUGS AND BUGS BRING . . .WELL, *BUG MUSIC*

Article by D. Boston

David Rothenburg is a professor of philosophy and music at the New Jersey Institute of Technology and has written a number of books on music and nature, including: *Survival of the Beautiful*, *Why Birds Sing*, and *Thousand Mile Song* [an examination of the songs of whales, belugas and orcas]. *Why Birds Sing* was turned into a feature-length TV documentary by the BBC (the link is at end of this article). A musician himself, Rothenburg has more recently written a book entitled: *Bug Music: How Insects Gave Us Rhythm and Noise*. Author John Marzluff says of the book, “*Bug Music* is a cool groove of biology, music and human culture from an interspecies musician and scholar fully in tune with nature. It is engaging, wide-ranging, and profound in suggesting that the thrum of insects is a primordial musical beat.” Marzluff adds, “This book is for everyone who has ever marveled at nature or delighted in the

sounds of her insect choirs, and especially for those who have done neither.”¹

The following article contains a number of excerpts from Rothenburg’s book. While you may not be inclined to read the entire book, you might find the links at the end of the article interesting and you



might come away having a new musical appreciation for the multitudes of summer sounds and rhythms that surround us.

In his book, *Bug Music*, Rothenburg examines alternately the

sound world of katydids, tree frogs, leaf hoppers, crickets and a few others, along with the 13-year and 17-year cycle cicadas (an examination which, by the way, proves to involve a rather patient process).

He writes, “We are calmed by the familiarity of the quiet, simple cricket tune not only because it stands for autumn moving into winter, or the warmth of a hearth as the out-of-doors gets cold and November brown. The music of insects is one based on texture, and on rhythm, not flamboyance in melody and grand virtuosity. It is not dull or too simple, but nuanced in timbre and texture.”²

He continues, “The most loved and praised of human music is often the simplest kind. Aspects of our favorite kinds of music are already present within insect aesthetics, to levels of subtlety that we ought to

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SAVE THE DATE . . .

☀ The **Saturday Music Jam** at the **Worthington Farmers' Market 9:30 - 11:30 a.m. every Saturday** (unless its raining). Held at the southeast quad on Worthington Square, all are welcome to come play. Every Saturday through Fall Festival in October. It's good to bring a chair.

☀ **Sunday, July 13, 2 - 4:30 p.m. – CFMS Jam at the Franklin Co. Fair** (at the gazebo in the historic village). For passes/further information, contact: tomnagel@wowway.com.

☀ **Saturday, July 26, 2:00 p.m. – Jam at Run the Race after-school program.** Location for this event: 2500 Gardner Rd., Galloway, 43119.

☀ **Sunday, July 27, 1:30 p.m. – the 2nd CFMS summer picnic.** Location will be announced via e-mail or

find out the details on our events calendar at: <http://www.columbusfolkmusicsociety.org/events.html>. All are welcome to the picnic and jam whether a member or not. If you don't wish to bring a potluck dish, just bring along a snack lunch (as well as lawn chairs).

☀ **Saturday, August 2, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. – CFMS Jam at Ohio State Fair** (in front of the pioneer cabin in the Natural Resources Park). (Free entrance and parking for those willing to play; see article on pg. 1 for details).



If it fits, I sits

FOLLOWING OUR OWN. . .

Sunday, July 6: The Hardtackers –12 Noon - 2 p.m. Lunch Concert at The Pub at Polaris. 1554 Polaris Parkway, Columbus, Ohio 43240. 614-781-7829

Thursday, July 10: Grassahol – 7 - 9 p.m. at the **Central Ohio Bluegrass Association Summer Festival.** Hartford Fairgrounds, 14028 Fairgrounds Road

Hartford Village (Croton), Ohio. Entrance fee.

Friday, July 11: Grassahol – Noon - 1 p.m. "Summer Fridays at the Statehouse," downtown Columbus. Free event and open to the public. See: <http://www.ohiostatehouse.org/news/ohio-statehouse-announces-2014-summer-fridays-at-the-statehouse-season>.

Friday, July 18: Grassahol – 7 - 9 p.m. at **Byrnes' Pub**, 1248 West 3rd Ave. - Columbus, OH. Free.

Sunday, July 27: Social Action Song Swap (hosted by Joanie Calem) – 1-3 p.m. Northwood High Building, 2231 N. High Street, Rm. 100, Columbus. Questions? Call 614-208-6731.

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For passes please contact: dboston2@columbus.rr.com. A map of the fairgrounds can be found here: www.ohiostatefair.com/index.php/general-info-34/getting-here/fair-maps.

Any interested folks can also jam at the **Franklin Co. Fair on Sunday, July 13 from 2 - 4:30 p.m.** We'll play at the gazebo in the historic village. For passes and additional information, contact: Tom Nagel at: tomnagel@wowway.com.

Save the date for the **July and August CFMS picnics**. They are on Sunday afternoons on **July 27** and **August 24**. Further details for the July picnic will be sent out via e-mail.

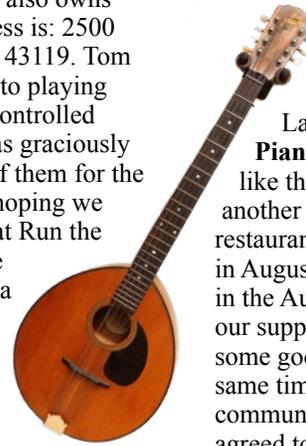
The 3rd CFMS jamming opportunity for the **Run the Race**

after-school program will be held on **Saturday, July 26 at 2:00 p.m.** This time it will occur at a farmhouse in Galloway, where the kids spend Saturday afternoons enjoying the outdoors. Run the Race also owns this property. The address is: 2500 Gardner Rd., Galloway 43119. Tom Nagel, who in addition to playing banjo, also flies radio-controlled airplanes as a hobby, has graciously offered to bring some of them for the kids to try out. We are hoping we can get the two events at Run the Race to coincide, so the jammers can play, take a little break, enjoy the plane flying and then jam a little more. So consider coming out and joining in the activities. For additional details or to let us know you'll be coming out, please contact Diane

at dboston2@columbus.rr.com.

Don't forget the jam at the **Worthington Farmer's Market every Saturday morning from 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.** at the southeast quad on the green at Worthington Square.

Last, but not least, **Mozart's Piano & Bakery Cafe** would like the CFMS to co-sponsor another music event at their restaurant. This will occur sometime in August. Please look for the details in the August newsletter. Let's show our support for Mozart's and enjoy some good food and music at the same time. Always willing to do community outreach, Mozart's has agreed to do this to support a greater appreciation for folk music in Central Ohio.



Ohio State Fair - 2013 Photo L.McDonald



CFMS July picnic 2013 Photo L.McDonald



Run the Race in May Photo A. Mittenbergs

That's one of the beautiful things about it: you play music and others can't help but join in!

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Tuning machines

The *Tipbook* continues, “open tuning machines can be lubricated with light machine oil. Twice a year will do, using a tiny, tiny drop only. Don't apply the oil directly, but rather dip a match in the oil, then apply it to the tuner. Turn it a couple of times, and you're done. As an alternative, you may use some silicone based slot spray. Again, a tiny bit will do for months. Sealed tuning machines are self-lubricating.

Dust

“A small brush, or a toothbrush as mentioned earlier, will come in handy when removing dust and dirt from the smallest corners and edges. A vacuum cleaner's smallest fitting can be used to remove dust from within the body. Preferably do that when replacing strings; that will give you more room to get inside.

Dry Air

“When air humidity is high, wood tends to expand. When the air gets too dry, it'll shrink. Sudden humidity changes and low air humidity are among a guitar's worst enemies. If the wood gets too dry, the braces or the bridge may come loose, the top may crack, or frets (which don't shrink) may jut out from the sides of the neck (which does).”⁷

Jason Fowler adds to the list: “Too much or too little humidity can upset the moisture balance in your guitar causing a host of undesirable effects including loss of tone, action too high or too low, wood shrinkage or

expansion, finish checking, finish roughness, top distortions, cracks, etc.” Fortunately there are some pretty simple remedies.

Hygrometers

The *Tipbook* relays, “when it comes to air humidity, guitars and people are quite similar: both like it to be around 50% to 60%. You can check the level of air humidity with a hygrometer, available for some fifteen dollars or more.

Guitar humidifiers

“Central heating and air conditioning are two of the main causes of dry air. There are all kinds of small affordable humidifiers that can be used inside the guitar case; some are designed to be installed in the sound hole of the instrument. Also, there are cases that have built-in humidifiers, or even a hygrometer or thermometer.”⁸

Fowler adds: “These units [guitar humidifiers] only do what they are supposed to do when the guitar is stored in its case. If you like to keep your guitar out then you are going to have to invest in a room humidifier and a hygrometer in order to monitor the room where the guitar is kept. You can discontinue these humidification procedures as soon as it warms up outside and you start opening windows and turning off your heat at home.”

The *Tipbook* continues, “a central humidifier (if your heating system allows for one) or a portable one can be of benefit.

Time to Adjust

“If its extremely cold outside, and you take your instrument someplace where it's warm, or vice versa, allow your guitar some time to adjust to the new surroundings before unpacking it. Take it out after fifteen minutes [minimally], or as much longer as you can. The more gradually things change, the better your instrument will like it.

Tips: Never store your guitar in direct sunlight, near heaters or fireplaces, or anywhere else where it may get too hot or too cold. If you hang it from a wall at home, preferably choose an inside wall.”⁹

Fowler adds: “Cool damp basements are out too since as they tend to be too humid. Also, never travel about with your guitar in the trunk of your guitar, winter or summer – the extremes of temperatures in a car's trunk can cause severe damage to a fragile acoustic guitar.”

Solid Tops

The *Tipbook* says, “guitars made with laminated tops are less sensitive to all of the above than guitars with solid tops – but take care of those as well.

“*Sounds a little excessive?* According to experts, about ninety percent of all acoustic guitar problems are related to changes in air humidity or temperature.”¹⁰

Notes

^{1, 2} *Tipbook Acoustic Guitar; The Complete Guide*, by Hugo Pinksterboer, pp. 94-95.

^{3 thru 10} *Tipbook Acoustic Guitar; The Complete Guide*, pp. 136-140.



Answer to June's Mystery Photo

Well, its the little fellow on the left. And if you haven't guessed by now, his name is Tom Nagel. Here's how he describes it:

“The photo was taken by my mother (because if it had been my dad, there would have been a finger over the lens) in the back yard of my childhood home on Marvin Ave. in North College Hill. NCH, as it is called, was a northern suburb of Cincinnati at the time. Now it is Hamilton County's version of Obetz, but without the Zucchini Festival. I am playing the accordion and my younger brother Terry has a music box. Terry went on to be an actual musician. Neither of us went on to be Tyrolean.”

The Columbus Folk Music Society

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Next Issue in August

We're on the web!

www.columbusfolkmusicsociety.org

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In an effort to be both fiscally and environmentally responsible, we will send a full-color, interactive newsletter via e-mail unless you request a hard copy be mailed to you.

I enjoy the annual Central Ohio Folk Festival (early May): Lots 5 4 3 2 1 Not (please circle one)