

The Folk Song Society of Greater Boston

FSSGB FOLK LETTER

Dedicated to providing opportunities for everyone to make, enjoy & support folk music

Volume 54 Number 1

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Mid-Day Singing
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Look for more info on
our website:

www.fssgb.org

Email info@fssgb.org



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The Future of FSSGB

As a member of FSSGB, what would your life be like if FSSGB ceased to exist? This is a serious question I am asking you as President of the Folk Song Society of Greater Boston.

Your Board of Directors of FSSGB is seriously considering the dissolution of the organization after 67 years! This may be a surprise to you and you are wondering – “Why?” There are several reasons:

- Our membership is getting older and it may be time to gracefully cease operation.
- We find it difficult to broaden our volunteer base.
- Members of our current Board have served for many years and realize we need new Board members and Committee Chairs if the Society is to survive.

BUT Is dissolution the action the membership wants for their organization? For FSSGB to survive, the organization needs some current members to step up to help steer the ship.

One option is to continue with new volunteers found “internally” to FSSGB – aka current members who decide to volunteer their time and FSSGB is recharged with new blood. A second option is FSSGB transitions with either a merger with an existing organization or new volunteers are found from the outside community who want to take over FSSGB. Or, it could be some combination of these options.

Personally, I do have a bit more energy to give FSSGB and would like to see it continue. There are a couple of efforts underway to explore that option.

Ultimately, the official decision to dissolve or continue FSSGB will be made by the Board of Directors sometime this Spring with the possible plan to officially cease operation by the end of our current fiscal year.

I feel the future direction of FSSGB depends a lot on what our membership wants and if you (well, the collective “you”) are willing to do what it takes to implement that preference. If you are interested in a future of FSSGB other than dissolution, please send an email to future@fssgb.org stating how you are willing to help. That address will forward to me (Ed Council as President) and a couple of advisors I wish to consult as we move forward with THE decision on the future of the Folk Song Society of Greater Boston.

— Ed Council, President



The Folk Song Society of Greater Boston is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization of people who are actively interested in folk music: its traditional origins and sources, as well as its current expression. We are dedicated to providing opportunities for everyone to make, enjoy, and support this music. Membership in the Folk Song Society entitles you to reduced admission to FSSGB concerts, attendance to singing parties and special events, a free subscription to the Folk Letter, and regular announcements of FSSGB events.

To join or renew: send your name, address and phone number along with a check for \$10 student, \$20 single, \$30 double, \$35 family membership, or \$25 for organizations to FSSGB at PO Box 2941, Acton MA 01720. **You can also join or renew online** via our website. You can join or renew for up to 3 years at a time.

Daytime Music Parties

FSSGB offers daytime music parties to sing, play accompaniment, socialize and have fun making music with others at private homes or other locations in eastern Massachusetts. Daytime Music Parties are hosted two Fridays a month from 11:30am until roughly 2:30pm (scheduled to help those who travel avoid heavy traffic and nighttime driving.)

Interested folks should contact our sing coordinator (Don MacLeod - phone/text 617-283-8532) for singing party dates, locations and other pertinent information.

Folks planning to attend are asked to please RSVP at the earliest to help our hosts plan. Those providing contact information to our coordinator will receive music party invitations a week in advance of the scheduled date.

There is no charge for singing parties. Small snacks to share would be appreciated, but are optional.

Please contact Don if you would like to host in the future. Keep an eye on the website (www.fssgb.org) for updates as music parties occasionally get rescheduled or cancelled.

Upcoming dates - these are all Fridays at 11:30am ET:

- **January 2: Malden**
- **January 9: Cambridge**
- **January 23: Malden**

Additional dates will be on the website soon.



Folk Letter Deadlines

The deadline for getting articles and ads into the Folk Letter is always the 10th of the month preceding the month of publication:

March 10 for the April-May-June issue

We will continue to have combined issues for the foreseeable future.

Thanks for helping us by observing the publication deadlines.

Donations are always welcome for the FSSGB Collection at NEC!

The FSSGB library was moved a number of years ago to the Blumenthal Family Library at the New England Conservatory in Boston.

To make in-kind donations to the FSSGB Collection at NEC, please contact Hannah Spence at the Blumenthal Family Library to discuss what you have and to arrange drop off:

Hannah Spence, Head of Cataloging & Electronic Resource Management, Hannah.Spence@necmusic.edu, 617.585.1256

To make monetary donations in support of the FSSGB Collection at NEC, please make checks payable to "New England Conservatory," and include a note that the gift should be directed to the FSSGB Collection at NEC. Checks should be mailed to:

New England Conservatory, Office of Advancement, 290
Huntington Ave., Boston, MA 02115

Mike Agranoff House Concert

Sunday, February 15, 2026
 12:30pm concert, optional 11:30am potluck
 brunch
 \$20 at the door – N. Cambridge, MA
 Reservations required:
HouseConcerts@fssgb.org

If you've been around the folk scene, you couldn't miss seeing Mike. Tall, ginger beard, and always around where the music is. He's been on the scene for many many years, listening to the fine details of what makes this genre of music so special to the soul, so able to make us laugh and cry and think. And lucky for us all, he got serious about having fun at it.



Less a singer-songwriter than a singer-songfinder, Mike takes great delight in discovering the little-known hidden gems, polishing them with his own distinctive style, and bringing them to the light of day where they sparkle. He will shift from beautifully contemplative, to uproariously funny, to instrumentally brilliant, to powerfully emotional in the space of a few minutes. Equally at home in the contemporary and traditional camps of the Folk world, he is a fine musician and storyteller. His prime instrument is the guitar, upon which he shines with intricate fingerstyle arrangements of anything from Tin Pan Alley tunes of the '20s to fiddle tunes to his own music. He also plays concertina, piano, banjo, or sings acapella. The man will capture your attention, and then your heart.

Not only a performer, Mike is involved in presenting folk music as well. He is one of the prime movers of The Folk Project, New Jersey's oldest and strongest folk music organization. For over four decades he was chairman of that organization's Troubadour Acoustic Concert Series (née The Minstrel Coffeehouse), one of the longest lived and most respected folk venues in the country.

Annual FSSGB Members' Concert

Saturday, January 17, 2026, 4-6pm
 First Parish in Waltham
 50 Church St, Waltham (*NOT Watertown!*)
 \$10 for all, cash at the door
 (age 17 and under free)
Note: parking is tricky – see parking guidance on the website!

If you're a FSSGB member and you'd like to perform one song or spoken word piece, contact Lori Fassman at lori.fassman@gmail.com to sign up by January 10.

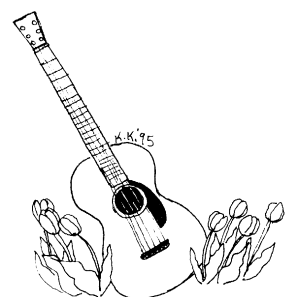
The annual FSSGB members' concert is always a popular event. Our members perform songs which range from traditional ballads to original compositions, and from instrumental to a cappella pieces. Some of the instruments that have been played at this concert in the past include violin, cello, banjo, mandolin, guitar, bass, keyboard and concertina. Some FSSGB members who have performed at this event have gone on to have successful performing careers, such as Elijah Wald, Mark Ryer, Fool's Errand and Merle Roesler.

Our hosts will be Lori Fassman and Paul Beck. They are long-time FSSGB members who are both past Presidents of FSSGB.

FSSGB members (including new members!) are invited to sign up to perform – one song or a spoken word piece. You may perform alone or with others. Some performers have been participating for years; others will do so for the first time. Children are most welcome. The program will feature professional musicians as well as living room folk enthusiasts. All are welcome. The Midweek Singers are an important part of the program as are the many members who show up especially for this event. The audience is always supportive and lively.

Proceeds from this show help keep the Society strong – we thank the performers and the audience for making this event possible.

Hope to see you there!



Two events—same day!

Piedmont Style Blues Guitar Workshop with Andy Cohen

Sunday, March 29, 1pm
Acton, MA

\$20 at the door (or \$35 for both the workshop and the Cohen, Ellis and Ellis house concert)
Reservations required:
HouseConcerts@fssgb.org

Andy Cohen is a virtuoso finger-style guitarist who has been described as "a walking, talking folk-blues-roots music encyclopedia." He grew up in a home with a piano and lots of Dixieland Jazz records. During the Sixties Folk Revival, he got hooked on the music of Big Bill Broonzy and the Jim Kweskin Jug Band. When Andy was 16, he heard South Carolina's Rev. Gary Davis perform and the effect on him was profound. He has devoted his life to studying, performing, and promoting traditional blues and folk music of the pre-World War II era. Andy has toured solo, as well as with Martin, Bogan and Armstrong, John Jackson, Rev. Gary Davis, Brother Daniel Womack, Rev. Dan Smith, Jim Brewer, and Honeyboy Edwards. He also worked extensively with Walt and Ethel Phelps, Big Joe Duskin, Pigmeat Jarrett, Etta Baker, Big Boy Henry, and James "Son" Thomas.

In the workshop, we will be going over a number of straightforward songs in the key of C: Freight Train, Louis Collins, Come Let Us March, Gary Davis's Candy Man, and if we get that far, I will teach Davis's Buck Dance, which is a little more complex than the others. You'll learn how to keep your thumb going, count while playing, And learn how to play a scale in major and minor sixths.

Cohen, Ellis and Ellis House Concert

Sunday, March 29, 2026, 4pm
Watertown, MA

\$20 at the door (\$35 for both the blues guitar workshop and the house concert)
Reservations required:
HouseConcerts@fssgb.org



Acclaimed acoustic performers Andy Cohen, Eleanor Ellis and William Lee Ellis return as a trio with this new album, *WHISTLIN' PAST THE GRAVEYARD*. Released on Cohen's Riverlark label, the ambitious project is a 21-track tour-de-force of old-time blues, gospel, ballads, ragtime, and country song that surpasses their previous high bar, the 1993 Marimac outing, *Preachin' in That Wilderness*.

All three musicians have established themselves as noted artists in the folk and blues worlds, both on stage and in the studio: Eleanor records for the Patuxent label, Andy for Earwig Music, and William for Yellow Dog, where his latest solo album, *Ghost Hymns*, earned a Blues Music Awards nomination for Acoustic Blues Album of the Year.

ANDY COHEN: "A singularly unique figure, Andy Cohen deserves some long overdue accolades." – ALL MUSIC GUIDE

ELEANOR ELLIS: "A celebrated master of the country and Piedmont blues, one of the most significant women in the acoustic genre... a torchbearer." – LIVING BLUES

WILLIAM LEE ELLIS: "A masterful genre-bender who sounds completely at home and thoroughly invested in whatever style he tackles." – ACOUSTIC GUITAR

Sara Grey and Kieron Means House Concert

Sunday, May 3, 2026, 2pm

Locations TBD

\$20 at the door (\$5 for students)

Reservations required: HouseConcerts@fssgb.org

Sara Grey is one of the most gifted and knowledgeable artists working in the field of traditional music. Sara's singing is both powerful and sweet, with a distinctive and lovely tremolo. It is a voice well suited to native American songs and ballads of Ireland and Scotland.

It is not Sara's lovely voice alone that makes her one of the most popular singers on the folk scene; on many of her songs Sara accompanies herself by frailing a five string banjo and, when playing dance tunes, it is obvious why she is regarded as one of the foremost exponents of the clawhammer style.

As well as singing and playing, Sara is well known for her storytelling – specializing in stories from New England where she grew up learning many of her stories from her father.

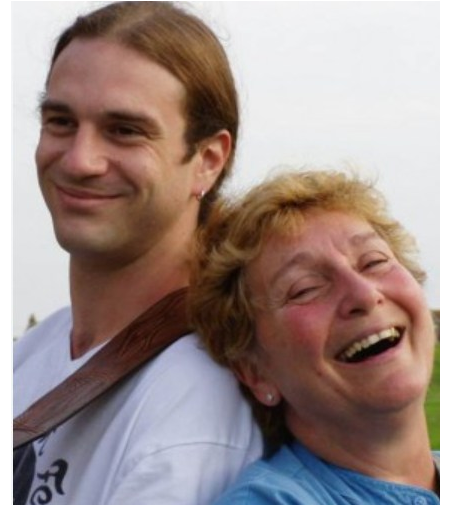
"She is one of a select band of performers who still breathe life into traditional ballads." Vic Smith, Folk Roots
 "Sara Grey has quietly and powerfully taken over the mantle of premier interpreter of American traditional music." Tor Jonassen, WRD

Sara grew up in New Hampshire but has lived in North Carolina, Ohio, Montana, New York, Pennsylvania, Arizona, Wales, Scotland and England. As a youngster in North Carolina she developed a love for old time songs and banjo music. She cites Kyle Creed as the chief influence on her understated, syncopated clawhammer banjo style. She has now been performing professionally for more than 30 years.

Kieron Means is a singer primarily of traditional songs but also of contemporary songs and guitar player of great merit. He has a great rapport with an audience and has an exceptional professionalism for a young performer. His voice is as smooth as silk, rich and mellow and he sings to his audience not in spite of them.

Kieron is the son of the traditional singer Sara Grey and music journalist Andrew Means, one time writer for Melody Maker. He was born in the United States and grew up in Britain gaining a great love of the music of both traditions as well as the contemporary scene. He has become a performer of traditional songs from the US and from the UK and many of the contemporary songs he sings he has written himself.

He has toured in the States and often performed with Sara Grey. In 2000 he has performed at Whitby and Wadebridge festivals where he was received with much acclaim. His first CD has received much praise with air play on Travelling Folk and Mr Anderson's Fine Tunes both on radio Scotland. An article on him will shortly be appearing in Folk Roots magazine.



THE FOLK SONG SOCIETY OF GREATER BOSTON
P.O. Box 2941, Acton, MA 01720, fssgb@fssgb.org, info@fssgb.org

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2025-2026 Officers & Coordinators

President	Ed Council, (508) 904-4539, elc@timberfield.com
Treasurer	Lori Fassman, (978) 264-9710, lori@fassman.com
Secretary/Clerk	Lori Fassman, (978) 264-9710, lori@fassman.com
Folk Letter	Lori Fassman, (978) 264-9710, lori@fassman.com
Memb. Renewals	Sallie and Bill Satterthwaite, (978) 369-2365, salliesatt@comcast.net , billsatt@icloud.com
Concert Food	Lori Fassman, (978) 264-9710, lori@fassman.com
Concert Sound	sound@fssgb.org (Chair role vacant)
Fall Getaway	Lori Fassman, (978) 264-9710, lori@fassman.com
Publicity	Lynn Feingold, (781) 227-7500, lynnfeingold0@gmail.com
Membership	membership@fssgb.org
Singing Parties	Don MacLeod, (617) 283-8532, don@oceanjams.com
Recording Sec	Lori Fassman, (978) 264-9710, lori@fassman.com
Trad. Swaps	Lynn Feingold, (781) 227-7500, lynnfeingold0@gmail.com
Volunteers	volunteers@fssgb.org
Webmaster	webmaster@fssgb.org

SEND NEWSLETTER ITEMS TO:

Lori Fassman
101 Charter Road
Acton, MA 01720-4210
folkletter@fssgb.org

FOLK LETTER DEADLINES are the seventh of the month for the following quarter's issue. Advertisements are \$15 for 1/4 page, \$20 for 1/3 page, \$40 for 2/3 page, \$30 for 1/2 page, and \$60 for a full page. Email us for more information (folkletter@fssgb.org)

BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

Ed Council, Lori Fassman, Lynn Feingold, Peter Hamlin, Mark Katz, Bill Lehrman, Suzanne Mrozak, Merle Roesler, John Shockey

PROGRAM COMMITTEE:

Chairs: Lynn Feingold, Ruth Perry, Lori Fassman.
Members: Isobel Abelson, Bill Lehrman, Suzanne Mrozak, Merle Roesler

*FSSGB is a 501c(3) non-profit organization.
Contributions are tax deductible to the extent
allowed by law.*

In Case of Snow!

It's that time of year! In case of inclement weather, please check with the host or hostess of any event to see if it's still going on and check our website (www.fssgb.org) for updates. We try hard to "have the show go on" under any circumstances, but sometimes have to cancel if there's a big storm. If you don't have access to the website or prefer human confirmation, you can call Lori at (978) 621-5814 (mobile) for information.



FSSGB Library: FSSGB's entire collection of printed materials resides at the New England Conservatory Library at 255 St. Botolph St., Boston, where it is available to the public for perusing onsite. The collection is known as Folk Song Society of Greater Boston (FSSGB) Collection at New England Conservatory. See the FSSGB website for information on how to access the materials and make donations.

The Folk Song Society of Greater Boston



THE FOLK LETTER
c/o FSSGB, Inc.
P.O. Box 2941
Acton, MA 01720
www.fssgb.org

UPCOMING EVENTS

www.fssgb.org

- Sat., Jan 17 **Annual FSSGB Members' Concert**, 4-6pm, First Parish in Waltham, 50 Church St, Waltham, \$10 at the door
- Sun., Feb. 15 **Mike Agranoff House Concert and Potluck Brunch***, 11:30am brunch, 12:30pm concert, N. Cambridge, \$20 a the door
- Sun., March 29 **Andy Cohen Guitar Workshop* (1pm, Acton) and Cohen, Ellis and Ellis House Concert* (4pm, Watertown)**, \$20 for each or \$35 for both events
- Sun., May 3 **Sara Grey and Kieron Means House Concert***, 2pm, location TBD, \$20 at the door (\$5 for students)
- Sun., May 31 **Bound for Glory (Woody Guthrie tribute show)**, 4pm, First Parish in Waltham, 50 Church St, Waltham, \$10 at the door

* Reservations required: HouseConcerts@fssgb.org

See www.fssgb.org for details about all events