

FEATURE ARTICLE:

Can I Have A Witness?

By Greg Trafidlo

Lyricist Norman Gimbel said, “A song can be written a thousand ways.”

Finding the best point of view can, and should, be a challenge for songwriters. The general perspectives are obvious: first person (“If You Could Read My Mind” or “I Need You”); third person (“Lying Eyes” or Ode To Billy Joe”); second person (“Climb Every Mountain” or “Pick Yourself Up”). It is up to us to choose the strongest approach to solidly deliver the song’s message. In fact, it’s a good idea to try to write the same song from different viewpoints.

Once you do, the bigger question arises: which character or perspective is better to tell the story? Sometimes the least likely witness has the most interesting observation of the incident. I seriously doubt that John Prine is an “old women named after my mother” or that Paul Simon really hung out with Julio down by the school yard.

Lawrence Durrell wrote a series of books called “The Alexandria Quartet” -- four books about the same incident seen through the eyes of the four people involved. That’s four witnesses equally as important, four separate personalities, voices and perspectives; not an easy task.

Take a Civil War song, for example. Is there a best perspective from which to tell the story of the Battle of Gettysburg? Many points of view could be valid: a general, a private, a shopkeeper, the mayor, a gravedigger, the statue on a monument, a small boy playing soldier in the field, a horse. Considering the thousands of Civil War songs, our task is to find the most interesting new approach.

Kate Long’s “Who Will Watch The Home place” (IBMA Song of the Year for Laurie Lewis) was well thought out in terms of perspective. It’s the story of a foreclosure of a farm. The teller is not just leaving the property, but the memories of the physical and emotional connections as well. At one point, she is compelled to touch all her grandfather’s tools in the shed. Kate painstakingly pondered who could best tell the story. She constructed a spider web with potential tellers. The story could have been told by the home place itself, the farm implements, her

Next SVSA meeting

The next meeting of the SVSA will be held

Wed., March 25

at Third Street Coffeehouse in Roanoke, VA. Doors will open at 7 p.m.; meeting begins promptly at 7:30 and will last until the last song critique is finished, or 10:30 p.m., whichever comes first. Members may submit one song for critique (on cassette or CD) and should provide at least 12 copies of the lyrics. Critiques are limited to members only but non-members and guests are encouraged to sit in on the discussions and exercises.

grandfather, the banker, or the mailman delivering the bad news.

Your song may be your truth, but are you the best person to tell it? Writing from a new perspective, even from an opposing viewpoint, is a challenge worth attempting. Take a look at some of your existing songs and put yourself in a different teller's shoes. You may find a stronger approach.

Minutes from the last meeting:

The February 2009 SVSA meeting was held February 25 at the Third Street Coffee House. Eleven members and one guest were in attendance. Six great songs were critiqued and the group was treated to a fine presentation on the "Art of Performance" by Greg Traftidlo. Three members paid their yearly dues. All in all, a very good night!

Message From The President

Hey there, fellow songwriters and music lovers! Spring is in the air and it'll be nice to get out of the house and take advantage of the increasingly warmer weather. Indeed, spring is in the air -- and music, as always, is in the air as well. It'll soon be time to start those annual spring cleaning chores and that includes a musical spring cleaning as well. It's a great time to toss out all those tired and worn-out song ideas and to come up with some fresh new ones. It's a great time to finish up some of those lingering old projects and make room to take some bold new steps in your songwriting adventures. Regarding the SVSA, I encourage you to rededicate yourselves to attending the monthly meetings and to keeping up with the various SVSA activities via this newsletter. It's your newsletter and your contributions are always welcome. Your input is vital. If something of a musical nature that may be of interest to SVSA-ers comes up in your world, please let all of us in on it. Blow your own horn if you must -- here's a great place in which to do it! — David Simpkins

Paid SVSA members are invited to perform at the SVSA Songwriters Night to be held at Third Street Coffeehouse in Roanoke, Virginia. The performance will be from 7:30 p.m. to 10 p.m. Friday, May 29. Proceeds will go to the SVSA. If you'd like to be part of this popular event, let SVSA President David Simpkins know by May 22.

Contest: The Sandra James Songwriting contest is offering a \$1,000 first prize for writing a song "evocative of Sandra's ideals": peace, environmental protection, and education for all. Sandra was a singer-songwriter who succumbed to cancer nearly three years ago. The contest was charged by her estate to convey the message that together we can make a better world. There will be an opportunity for the winner and four finalists to record their songs on a CD that will be sold through the Sandra James website. The contest is accepting entries through March 31. For samples of Sandra's music and contest details, go to: <http://www.sandrajames.com/>. Winners will be announced on May 1.

About Classifieds:

SVSA Music News free classifieds may be submitted by paid members only. Nonmembers may submit classifieds at \$10 per listing per month. All classifieds must be music-related.

Members, e-mail your classifieds to Kathy Acosta by the second Tuesday of the month or mail them to Kathy Acosta, 125 Polk St., Radford VA 24141 by the second Tuesday of the month. Non-members send your classifieds (and your payment) by the second Tuesday of the month to Greg Trafidlo, 4050 Bluebird Lane, Salem, VA 24153-8011.

About Announcements:

SVSA members may list music-related announcements in the SVSA Music News. E-mail them to svsa@davidsimpkins.com by the second Tuesday of the month or mail them to Kathy Acosta, 125 Polk St., Radford, VA 24141 by the second Tuesday of the month. Announcements from members will be e-mailed to members as soon as they are received and, if still timely, published in an upcoming issue of the SVSA Music News. Announcements from non-members will be held for publication in an upcoming issue of the SVSA Music News.

About articles and other written contributions:

SVSA members write feature articles for the SVSA Music News throughout the year. Members can submit other articles and features at any time. Non-members may also submit articles and other written contributions but their inclusion will be subject to time and space constraints. All articles may be edited for space considerations and will be edited, as time allows, for spelling and grammar. Remember -- it'll have YOUR name on it, so do it up right before you submit it for publication. E-mail submissions by the second Tuesday of the month to svsa@davidsimpkins.com or mail to Kathy Acosta, 125 Polk St., Radford, VA 24141.

About Members' Gig Listings:

SVSA members may submit their upcoming performance schedules for publication in the SVSA Music News. The submissions will be printed as submitted; the more information you provide, the more likely the response. Please follow this format:

Date of Gig
Member's Name
Name of Venue, Time
Additional Information

E-mail gig listings by the second Tuesday of the month to svsa@davidsimpkins.com, or mail to Kathy Acosta, 125 Polk St., Radford, VA 24141.

SVSA DISCLAIMER

The ideas and opinions contained in this newsletter are intended to be helpful to songwriters. The companies and organizations mentioned are believed to be legitimate; however, SVSA does not endorse any products or services and offers no guaranteed success based on the content. We are always looking for articles about SVSA members and articles of interest to the songwriting community. Send articles and information to the Editor, Kathy Acosta, at 125 Polk St., Radford, VA 24141, or svsa@davidsimpkins.com. SVSA is a non-profit organization.

SVSA Board Members:

David Simpkins – President
Britt Mistele - Vice President
Charlie Divers – Secretary
Greg Trafidlo – Treasurer
Kathy Acosta - Newsletter Editor

SVSA
P.O. Box 698
Salem, VA 24153

SVSA Performing Members' Gigs

David Simpkins' gigs:

Saturday, April 18

Earth Day, Roanoke, Virginia

Friday, May 1

First Friday Coffeehouse
Martinsburg, West Virginia. With Greg Trafidlo,
Mike Pearrell, and Kathy Acosta

Saturday, May 16

Farmers Market, Radford, Virginia

Friday, May 29

SVSA Songwriters in the Round, Third Street
Coffeehouse, Roanoke, Virginia

Saturday, June 20

Farmers Market, Radford, Virginia

Saturday, July 18

Farmers Market, Radford, Virginia

Saturday, Aug 15

Farmers Market, Radford, Virginia

Friday, September 18

Glencoe Museum, Radford, Virginia

Saturday, September 19

Farmers Market, Radford, Virginia

Saturday, October 17

Farmers Market, Radford, Virginia

Mary Gordon Hall's gigs:

Sunday, March 29

"Live to Tell" Benefit Concert

With Ed Kelley, Chuck Brodsky, Dana and Sue
Robinson, Jimmy Landry and Chris Rosser
4:00 p.m., The White Horse, Black Mountain,
North Carolina. Benefit concert to honor the
Donin family of Maggie Valley, NC, who lost
their home and all belongings to a landslide in
January. The proceeds will go toward helping
the Donins get back on their feet, as well as
toward legal fees and education in the name
of Project Safe Slopes. For more information,
see [http://www.projectsafeslopes.org/
LiveToTellBenefitConcert.html](http://www.projectsafeslopes.org/LiveToTellBenefitConcert.html).

Marian McConnell's gigs:

Friday, March 20

Marian will sit in on a few songs with Randy
Walker and City of Statues, Third Street
Coffeehouse, Roanoke, Virginia

Saturday, April 4

Marian and Robyn Dobbins, Blue Ridge Eagle
Winery, Eagle Rock, Virginia, 2-5 p.m.

Randy Walker's gigs:

Friday, March 20

Randy Walker and City of Statues
Third Street Coffeehouse
Randy Walker, Lisa Angell, Chris Cothran and

special guest Marian McConnell present an
evening of old favorites plus some new stuff.
Open Mic starts at 7 p.m.; the main act starts
around 8 p.m. Third Street and Mountain Ave.,
Roanoke, Virginia.

Bill Payne's gigs:

Date	Venue
3.28.09	Annie Moore's Irish Pub
4.24.09	Doreen's Gourmet
5.02.09	Shenandoah River Songfest
6.10.09	Bud's Sports Bar Chattanooga, TN
6.11.09	T-Bones Cafe Chattanooga, TN
6.12.09	Riverbend Festival Chattanooga, TN
6.19.09	Nashville Songwriters Festival
6.20.09	Nashville Songwriters Festival
6.21.09	Nashville Songwriters Festival
7.11.09	Doreen's Gourmet

Barbara Martin's gigs:

Saturday, March 21

7:30 pm, Barbara Martin Quartet with Liz
Barnes, piano, Bob Bowen, bass, Phil Riddle,
drums and classic blues and ragtime trio,
Women in Blues and Jazz, Fine Arts Center, Blue
Ridge Community College, Weyers Cave, VA.

Sunday, March 29

3-5 pm, Barbara Martin and Mac Walter, Women
in Blues and Jazz, Cokesbury Concert Series,
Historic Cokesbury Church, Town Square,
Onancock, VA

Friday, April 10

5:30-7:30 pm, Barbara Martin Trio, Liz Barnes,
piano, Lew Morrison, bass, Cross Keys
Vineyards, 6011 East Timber Ridge Rd., Mt.
Crawford, VA 540-234-0505
www.crosskeysvineyards.com

Friday, April 17

Barbara Martin & Mac Walter, The Westminster-
Canterbury Bistro Concert Series, 300
Westminster-Canterbury Drive off Route 522,
just south of Route 37 Winchester, VA 22603
\$10 at the door, open to the public, helping
the Fellowship Fund. Phone 540 665-0156 for
directions

Friday, May 1

5-7 pm, Barbara Martin and Mac Walter,
Academy of Fine Arts, 600 Main St., Lynchburg,
VA

Saturday, May 2

10 am-12 pm, Barbara Martin and Mac Walter,
Creative Guitar Playing Workshop, Stone Soup
Books Café, 908 W. Main St., Waynesboro, VA
22980 540-943-0084 www.stonesoupbooks.net.
Learn the licks and the tricks that will make
your playing stand out. All levels welcome and
bring a guitar. \$40

Third Street Coffeehouse

is located in Trinity United
Methodist Church at the
corner of Third St. and
Mountain Avenue in Old
Southwest Roanoke. The
coffeehouse is open 7:00-
10:00 every Friday night,
offering live music and
socializing in a smoke-free,
alcohol-free environment.
Open Mic starts at 7:00; sign
up at the door. Main act starts
around 8:00 until 10:00 pm.
No cover charge; we pass the
hat for musicians. Supervised
children are welcome. Drinks,
snacks and desserts are sold.
Established 1987.

Upcoming at Third Street Coffeehouse

Mar 20 - City of Statues

Mar 27 - Clinton Collins &
The Creek Boys

Apr 3 - Brooke Campbell

Apr 10 - Mark Spangler

Apr 17 - Frank Dieter

Apr 24 - David & Ann
Ledgerwood

May 1 - LaLaLand (Steve
Langston and Friends)

May 8 - Robert Matter

May 15 - Preston Maddox

May 22 - Danielle Miraglia

May 29 - SVSA
Songwriters in the Round

June 5 - Donna Pearson

June 19 - Paul Rucker

June 26 - Three Old
Guys with Guitars

July 10 - Bob Grubel,
Sharon Feury and
Friends

SVSA Members' Recordings

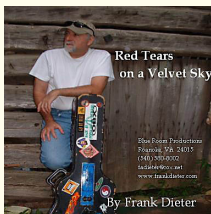
Steve Clark

DOG JOGGIN' — Eleven sweet and true amusing tunes by Steve Clark, plus one each by fellow SVSA songwriters Mike Pearrell ("Justine") and Greg Trafidlo ("Simple as Dirt").



Frank Dieter

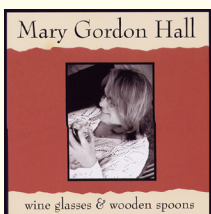
RED TEARS ON A VELVET SKY — A new collection of home studio demos. Except for "Saturday Night," which was recorded in 1976, all songs are new.



ROUGH CUTS FROM THE BLUE ROOM — Demos that represent examples from the blues, jazz, folk, adult contemporary, New Age, and instrumental genres that Frank covers.

Mary Gordon Hall

WINE GLASSES & WOODEN SPOONS — Heartfelt and witty contemporary folk from this Charlottesville-area singer-songwriter. With a slew of Charlottesville musicians, and Sloan Wainwright and SVSA's Greg Trafidlo singing on one track.



The La La Land Band

HOUSE BLEND — Fourteen songs with creative melodies, sophisticated harmonies, and philosophically and emotionally charged lyrics from Steve Langston and his wife La Wanda Jenkins.



Barbara Martin

KALEIDOSCOPE — Barbara's first solo CD since 1999 is her jazziest yet. This disc is all original with co-writes with California jazz composer, Joel Evans, guitarist extraordinaire, Mac Walter and Barbara's long-time co-writer, Greg Trafidlo. Top notch performances from pianist, John Cocuzzi, bassist, Steve Wolf, saxaphonist, Bruce Swaim, guitarist Mac Walter and vocalist, Barbara Martin, make this CD special.



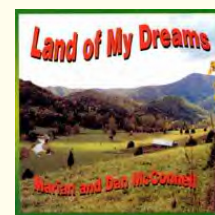
FROM RAGTIME TO ROCK AND ROLL — A children's CD. See barbaramartinmusic.com

TOUCH THE SKY — Swinging acoustic blues and jazz from Barb Martin and Mac Walter.

A DIFFERENT VIEW — Classic blues of the 1920s, early jazz and "slice-of-life" songs that ring with truth, wit, and experience.

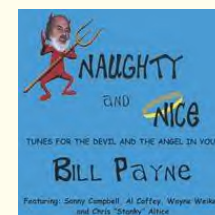
Marian and Dan McConnell

LAND OF MY DREAMS — Takes the listener along on an excursion in the Blue Ridge Mountains in Virginia through 14 original folk songs with celtic and country/rock underpinnings.



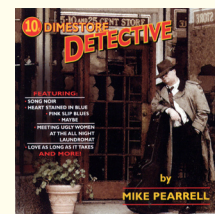
Bill Payne

NAUGHTY AND NICE — A vein of humor runs through Bill's acoustic country and blues-influenced CD. Features eleven original songs recorded at Catawba Sound Studio. Available online at CD Baby and at billpaynemusic.net.



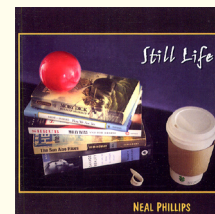
Mike Pearrell

DIMESTORE DETECTIVE — Mike's first solo CD features 14 original compositions. Produced by Greg Trafidlo; guest SVSA musicians include Greg, Britt Mistele, Steve Langston and more. Available at Mike's shows.



Neal Phillips

STILL LIFE — Strong songwriting, excellent multi-instrumental musicianship, and eclectic insight (and a clever swipe at TPTB). For more information, see <http://phillipsmusic.net/neal/>.



MAGICAL FOREST — Great folk songwriting. Buy it from Neal at his or Trifolka's gigs.

LOVEGROVE STREET — Intelligent, original acoustic folk featuring well-crafted songs and a wry sense of humor. Buy it at CD Baby.

SVSA Members' Recordings

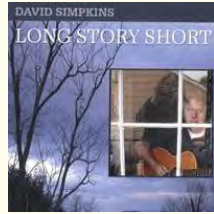
Pole, Trafidlo & Phillips

FOXFIRE — Dirty Linen magazine called this “a charming recording.” Contact Greg Trafidlo at kirasongs@aol.com, or (540) 384-7770.



David Simpkins

LONG STORY SHORT — David's first solo CD falls into the Americana genre — a blend of rock, folk, blues, and country. The CD offers 12 original Americana tunes. “Long Story Short” has been won critical praise.



Trifolkal

TAO FROM THE MOUNTAIN — Tight harmonies, warmth, and witty songwriting from Laura Pole, Greg Trafidlo & Neal Phillips. Features classics such as “Shenandoah” as well as original tunes including “Appalachian Rap” and “The Starbucks of County Down.” See ordering info above.



Greg Trafidlo

FOLK SINGULAR — Greg's third solo CD reflects the diversity of his songwriting and production skills. With several SVSA members. See www.trifolkal.com.



CO-WRITERS IN DISGUISE — Contemporary folk/country with an emphasis on well-crafted lyrics and humor. Several SVSA members appear on the CD.



OLD DOG – NEW TRACKS — Songs that range from silly to sublime, drawing you in with warmth, wit, and humor. Songs include “I Got Stuck Behind Buford,” “Big as Life,” “Time is a Mountain,” and “The Tumbler.” Buy it from CD Baby or contact Greg at kirasongs@aol.com.

