

2016 Schedule

Saro's Workshops

Southern Appalachian Ballads

In this workshop I'll teach ballads from Kentucky, West Virginia and North Carolina using the "knee-to-knee" (or "sing and repeat" method). I will put focus on rare, short ballads on topics ranging from the Civil War to "hangman's ballads" to boar hunting. I'll also include some ballads with uncommon outcomes from their more popular counterparts. We'll take some time to discuss how we make choices around what ballads we sing and what it means to make a song your own. Participants will receive lyrics sheets and recordings of the material taught.

Songs of Resilience & Resistance from Appalachia

In this presentation-style workshop I'll share photos, stories and songs from over 200 years of social and environmental movements in Appalachia. We'll look at ballads, hymns and folks songs that paint a picture of the Mountain South's experiences of slavery, miner's revolts, mountaintop removal, black lung, outmigration, the Civil Rights movement and more. Come expecting to learn a lot and sing along!

Women's Stories in Ballads (or the Fun & Complicated World of Ballad Singing as Therapy)

In this discussion-based workshop we'll share, examine and discuss ballads by, for and about women. We'll talk about the historic & contemporary purposes of ballads that reflect a variety of experiences for women (from masters of their own fate to pawns to murder victims). We'll focus particularly on the choices we make to sing, not sing, and alter these songs for our own therapy. All genders welcome at this workshop!

Jeff's Workshops

Singing Unaccompanied (aka "Making a Song Your Own")

This participatory session will help you get your songs across to any audience. We'll work on phrasing, control, pitch, style, performance technique and repertoire choice. Using traditional American singers as our guides we'll explore story telling through song. The workshop is open to all, beginners to experienced. Bring songs to sing, an open mind and a critical ear, we'll provide a forum for making the best choices.

Nor'easters

Songs of New England Sea songs, old and new world ballads, songs out of the north woods lumbercamps, popular songs that went into tradition—will all be explored in this session. We'll learn repertoire, and look at the difference in style between northern traditional singers and those of the Appalachians and lowlands South.

Kid's Songs

If you've ever wanted to sing with children—of any age—this is the chance to learn what works. Repertoire, approach, attitude—and more repertoire. Bring a favorite kid song or a song you sang at camp. We'll sing story songs, action songs, calming songs and maybe even a play-party game or two.

Bennett's Workshops

Worksong Improvisation: A Tradition of Spontaneous Invention

In this workshop we'll explore the balance between tradition and innovation, especially when innovation is an important part of the tradition. Using worksongs from Maine, Texas, Ghana and elsewhere, we'll investigate how the old-timers approached lyrical and melodic invention when songs would run for hours on end, we'll practice inventing lyrics ourselves, using simple techniques that can be used in your own garden, and we'll find ourselves pondering the age old question "what are the 'right' words?" in an entirely new way.

Old Songs in a Brave New World: Using Music as A Tool in Modern Society

What is the place for analog singing in the digital age? Based on Bennett's twenty years of musical labor in widely different contexts, we'll explore some common scenarios where worksongs still "make sense" and learn some constructive approaches for teaching and using them. Using songs from Maine, Switzerland, Tanzania, Ghana and Mongolia we'll see how and why people sing while working today and discuss a few considerations for helping people feel comfortable trying out music as useful tool.

Sense of Place in Song: Unpacking Landscape, Identity, Authenticity and Ownership

Where do songs come from and what do they do? Who owns them and why is it important? How is sense of place a musical quality? In this session we will explore the history of southern worksongs and their contexts, learning a few and using them as a frame to ask important questions about race, cultural appropriation, and the identity of the singer and their audience. As a contrast we'll also learn and sing some New England worksongs and tease apart how the place and cultural context affects the singer, the audience and the music itself. And we'll use the local food movement as an analog for a discussion of how we can deepen and enrich our own approach to music performance and enjoyment.