

MUSIC

DANCE, STORYTELLING, AND

COMMUNITY



Holler Choir Performs for the Americana/Folk Concert Series, November 22nd

ARTICLE BY DORI SMITH

November's Americana/Folk Concert Series performer, Holler Choir, comes to us out of Asheville, NC. Their debut record, "Songs Before They Write Themselves," released in 2024 followed up a 5-song EP that established the band in the Southeast and beyond. See Holler Choir 8 p.m. November 22 at the Columbus Mennonite Church, 35 Oakland Park Avenue, as part of the Americana/Folk Concert Series. You can find out more about Holler Choir at their website, hollerchoir.com

Holler Choir features a distinctly Appalachian, and old-time sound that combines haunting harmonies, stirring string compositions, and heart-wrenching ballads that defy any specific genre. They are composed of singer/guitarist Clint Roberts, clawhammer banjo player Helena Rose, upright bassist Joey Brown, and mandolinist Jackson Grimm.

They put their own unique twist on a blend of old-timey Americana, indie rock, country, and bluegrass, combining the

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Over the river, and through the wood,
to Grandfather's house away!
We would not stop for doll or top,
for 'tis Thanksgiving Day.

-Lydia Maria Child, 1844

Holler Choir, from pg 1



Photo courtesy of Holler Choir

classic with the modern, building up a catalog of songs which range from gentle ballads to foot-stomping dance music. Much of Holler Choir's music began with Roberts' songwriting, later joined by Grimm's creative touch. You'll notice as you listen, though, that there often seems to have a sad sort of air to it. According to an interview Rogers did with Kara Martinez Bachman of The Bluegrass Standard, Roberts describes his music "more introspective than what you'll typically find in bluegrass," because he wants to put that modern, distinctive twist to make the music his own. He adds that "the most sincere thing is combining the past and present."

They are certainly bringing their music roaring into the present. According to their website, "the band's inception began when recording Robert's 2022 solo release 'Mountain Air.'" This was a 5-song EP which brought together all the musicians in the current band under producer Michael Ashworth of the Steep Canyon Rangers.

This extended play album was received with wild acclaim and led to the release of a full album, "Songs Before They Write Themselves." This album was also produced by Ashworth, recorded in the historic Echo Mountain Studio's Church Room, engineered by Jason Richmond (Avett Brothers, Rising Appalachia) and mastered by Grammy-award-winning sound engineer Kim Rosen. The music has a modern, powerful sound while hearkening back to old time Appalachian folk and bluegrass.

Roberts is not the only talented artist involved in Holler Choir. Grimm is also a respected band leader, teacher, and singer/songwriter. He has performed by himself, and in groups Holler Choir, Susto Stringband, Old Sap, Hannah Kaminer, and The Wistfuls. His music writing echos the lonesome sounds of old Appalachian folk joined to pop music for a more modern feel. He studied traditional music at Warren Wilson College and won the 2025 LEAF songwriting competition. He has shared the stage and opened for artists such as Molly Tuttle, Sierra Ferrell, Shadowgrass, the Wilder Flower, Arlo Guthrie, Nathan Evans Fox, and recent CFMS Concert Series performer Ordinary Elephant.

Although Roberts and Grimm had been playing in the Asheville music scene for many years together, they only really got to know each other about three years ago. In performing casually together, they discovered that their styles were compatible. When Roberts went to record "Mountain Air" with his own music, he brought Grimm, among others, in.

One of those others is Helena Rose, a supremely skilled banjo player. She has been playing since the age of 8 and started in the Haywood County Junior Appalachian Musician's Program. She is a passionate musician, singing solo concerts from age 16 at local breweries. She released her first single in August, 2020.

While Holler Choir records music, they are also very active on the tour scene. Their manager, John Fields, worked with the National Folk Festival (NFF) when it was in North Carolina. He subsequently worked with the North Carolina Folk Festival (NCFF) which grew out of the NFF and has contacts with folk organizations throughout the region. This has allowed Holler Choir to participate in other festivals, including our own Central Ohio Folk Festival, Americanfest '24, and Summertime Sounds in Greensboro, NC with special guest Maura Shawn-Scanlin.

The band often performs with guest performers. Musicians such as Nicholas Williams, Rose Hotel, Spencer Thomas, Bridger Dunnigan, Norbert McGgettigan, and Ryan Stigman have been some of the great performers to join their voices and instruments with Holler Choir. The most significant partnership Holler Choir has made has probably been with Susto. When Susto frontman Justin Osborne met the members of Holler Choir via open mic events, he and Roberts realized the potential of collaborating and came together to form Susto Stringband. They perform frequently together, doing about half of their events as Susto Stringband

and half of their events as Holler Choir. Susto Stringband has released one album, written mostly by Justin Osborne, and is working on a second.

Holler Choir is also active in giving back to their community such as playing for a benefit concert to help out the Western NC community after Hurricane Helene. They are currently booked to perform in Axton, VA; South Pines, NC, Columbus, GA; Cat's Cradle in Carrboro, NC; and of course here in Columbus, OH on November 22!

THE COLUMBUS FOLK MUSIC SOCIETY PRESENTS...



SINGER-SONGWRITER COMPETITION

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Remembering Martin: A Musical Legacy

Reflections on Friendship, Music, and Community

BY DAN CLARKE

INTRODUCTION

Whenever I think back to our lively jam sessions at the coffee house in 2014, Martin Hartzendorf's presence is one of the first things that comes to mind. Those evenings were filled with laughter, music, and the warm camaraderie that only a shared love of playing could bring. Martin was always there, either tuning up an instrument or greeting fellow musicians with his infectious smile. He didn't just participate—he elevated every gathering, making each session uniquely memorable.

EARLY MEMORIES

One of my fondest memories is Martin's sheer enthusiasm for music. He was never content to stick to just one instrument; instead, he'd rotate between guitar, banjo, and sometimes even a harmonica. The joy on his face when he played was genuine—it lit up the whole room, and you couldn't help but get swept up in his energy. Each song seemed to be a new adventure for him, and he encouraged all of us to explore, improvise, and have fun. Martin's smile was the heart of our jam sessions; it made everyone feel welcome, no matter their skill level or instrument of choice.

TRANSITION

Things inevitably changed as the years passed. When Martin decided to move into a retirement home, it was bittersweet for all of us. Carl helping him sort through his collection of instruments—each one held a story, a memory of a night spent playing together. He parted with some, but kept his favorites, determined to keep music alive

wherever he went. Our group felt the absence of his steady rhythm and encouraging spirit, but we knew this was a new chapter for him.

CLAREMONT RETIREMENT HOME

Not long after, a few of us reunited with Martin at the Claremont retirement home, where he'd already found a way to gather people for regular music sessions. True to form, Martin brought his energy and enthusiasm, helping to build a new community around music. He welcomed residents—some seasoned players, others just curious—into the circle, always patient and quick to offer a smile or a tip.

MUSICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Martin had a knack for picking songs that brought out the best in everyone. Whether leading us through a classic folk tune or introducing something fresh, he inspired confidence and creativity. His presence in the group grew closer, finding joy in shared melodies and spontaneous harmonies. He made it easy for people to join in, fostering an environment where music truly was for everyone.

FAREWELL

Now, with Martin no longer with us at the sessions, there's an undeniable emptiness—his absence is felt in the pauses between songs and the quiet moments before we begin. Yet, his influence endures in the way we play together in the openness and encouragement he instilled in all of us. The songs we choose,

the way we welcome newcomers, the laughter that follows a flubbed note—all of it echoes Martin's spirit.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

Martin's musical legacy is more than the instruments he played or the songs he led; it's the community he built, the friendships he strengthened, and the joy he shared. For those of us lucky enough to know him, his impact will always be a part of our group, reminding us to play. Here's to Martin—thank you for the music, the memories, and the inspiration.

The Martin Hartzendorf Memorial Giveaway

At CFMS' November 22 Americana/Folk Concert Series concert, many items generously donated by Martin will be given away! On his passing, Martin donated 3 guitars to CFMS that are being put to good use bringing music to others. But Martin also donated dozens of CDs including blues and folk music, Celtic music, in addition to books and assorted other items that will be offered for free at November's concert. Come and see if there's something for you!

Celebrate Thanksgiving Spirit with Bill Cohen's "Songs of Gratitude"



Friends. Family. Freedom. Food. Music. Pets. Laughter. Nature. And dozens of other things. Despite political turmoil and a divided nation, we have so much to be thankful for.

So, join Bill Cohen and friends from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. on Friday November 28 as he sings a unique concert of songs that express gratitude for all that we have. It's his 12th year for this Thanksgiving-themed concert, and once again, it takes place at Maple Grove Methodist Church, 7 W. Henderson. Free parking is available in the parking lot just south of the church. It's accessible from Aldrich Road, one street south of Henderson, off of North High Street.

Playing piano and guitar, Bill will sing songs linked to a wide variety of folks --- Bing Crosby, Phil Ochs, Louis Armstrong, and Don McLean; even Johnny Appleseed, Jiminy Cricket, and the TV show, "Golden Girls."

On several songs, Ann Fisher will add beautiful flute accompaniment, David Maywhoor will add percussion, and Joe Lambert and Joanne Blum will add soothing vocal harmonies.

\$15 per person donations are suggested at the door, but all contributions, large and small, will be welcomed. All proceeds will be sent to the International Medical Alliance of Tennessee. That's the group that Bill's wife Randi goes with to the Dominican Republic (D.R.) every February. The all-volunteer group of doctors, nurses, and medical students provides free medical care to impoverished, disenfranchised Haitian workers who live and work just inside the D.R. border. Randi serves as the group's interpreter, bridging the language gap between the Spanish-speaking patients and the English-speaking medical workers.

Nov. 16 Festival Fundraiser Presents John Prine Songs Performed by the Dirty Windows

INTERVIEW BY JEFF PUTNAM WITH TWO BAND MEMBERS, ED TATUM & RENILDA MARSHALL

On Sunday, November 16, the Dirty Windows, the local folk music group formed as a tribute to the late John Prine, will present a 90-minute show on the Music Hall Stage at Natalie's in Grandview. The performance is a fundraiser for the 2026 Central Ohio Folk Festival to be held at the new Bank Run Metro Park south of Columbus on June 6 and 7. Doors open at 1:30 for the 2:30 show at Natalie's. Tickets (\$15 + tkt fee) can be bought online in advance at Natalie's website:

<https://nataliesgrandview.com/events/dirty-windows/>. Seating is limited, pre-purchase recommended.

Jeff Putnam: This will be the group's third fundraiser tribute show. What is it about Prine's music that generates this kind of enthusiasm and excitement, enough to draw music lovers to three straight fundraisers featuring his music?

Renilda Marshall: Prine truly was just a regular guy, and his songs deal with the joys and trials we all experience. But he viewed life through a unique lens and had a gift for writing his songs from that view.

Ed Tatum: His lyrical simplicity that could yet still convey some deep emotions; his humor and tongue in cheek irreverence that brings a smile to your heart. John was a tremendous influence on a lot of our young singer-songwriters today. I've been listening to John Prine since the age of 16. His thoughtfulness and approach to humanity provides steady foundational principles for how we should interact with each other. And



Photo by Randi Cohen

after 50 years, his songs resonate as strongly then as they do now.

Jeff: Tell me about some of your favorite John Prine songs.

Renilda: "Bottomless Lake" is one of my favorites, along with "My Mexican Home." "I Just Want to Dance with You" is another.

Ed: "Souvenirs," cowritten with Steve Goodman and Sweet Revenge.

Jeff: Who are the Dirty Windows? What does each member bring to the group?

Renilda: I bring my bass to the group.

Ed: (laughing) She also brings a lovely vocal harmony and, despite our best efforts, makes sure we stay on tempo! I sing and play guitar. Mike Hale sings and plays guitar and mandolin. Brian Szuch plays melody leads on a number of instruments.



Welcome NEW Members

Chelsea Kane and Kris Turner
...and Welcome Back RENEWING Members!



Save the Date!

Americana/Folk Concert Series

Holler Choir
Saturday, November 22, 8pm
 6pm open jam / 7pm Open Mic (pre-sign-up) / 8pm Holler Choir
 Refreshments available. \$15 door donation / \$10 CFMS members
 Venue: Columbus Mennonite Church, 35 Oakland Park Ave, Columbus

Zoom Jam Sessions

Mondays and Thursdays
 10-11:30am. Please contact Jane for logon information:
vanaukj@gmail.com

In-Person Jams

Mondays
 7-9pm. 4th Ave Christian Church, 296 W. 4th Ave

Wednesdays
 6:30-8:30pm. Gillie Center, 2100 Morse Road

Saturdays
 9:30-11:30am through Nov. 22. Whetstone Community Center, 3923 N. High St. Looking for Saturday jams between Nov. 22 and mid-January? Please contact Jane VanAuken, vanaukj@gmail.com

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Dirty Windows, from pg. 6

Jeff: What can the audience expect from your November show?

Renilda: Songs that will make you laugh, songs that will make you think, and songs that point out life's absurdities. You'll think to yourself, "Yeah, I know exactly what that guy means."

Ed: We have all been playing these tunes for years and they consistently bring joy as well as thoughtfulness. It never gets old and is always fun to share the song with others. I always feel good after listening to John Prine. I'm sure the audience will too.

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Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

General Age Range – Born: 1930s-40s 1950s-60s 1970s-80s 1990s-2010s

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