

## MUSIC

DANCE, STORYTELLING, AND

COMMUNITY



## Columbus Artist Moe Reen Returns for Americana/Folk Concert Series September 27

INTERVIEW BY JIM MCHIE

Moe Reen who braved the elements to perform at the Central Ohio Folk Festival earlier this year will again perform Saturday, September 27<sup>th</sup> at 8 p.m. at the Columbus Mennonite Church, 35 Oakland Park Avenue, as part of the Americana/Folk Concert Series.

**Jim McHie:** You've been described as drawing from a rich well of folk traditions. Could you talk about the musical environment you grew up in? What kinds of music were being played or sung around you, and how do you think that foundational exposure shaped your instinctive understanding of music?

**Moe Reen:** Catholic hymns stand out as the most prominent early musical influence in my upbringing. My parents weren't particularly musical, but my mom has a great singing voice and played an old nylon string guitar for a sort of Sunday-school liturgy she ran. I have a particular fondness for the hymns that came out in the 70s—they often sound a lot like a John Denver tune. Singing those hymns instilled a love of singing with others, and also shaped my later love for country—I was immediately drawn to the old country gospel albums, and artists like the Louvin Brothers.

## A Different Strummer Newsletter Highlights

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*Photo Courtesy of Sam Brooks*

**Jim:** Being from the Columbus area, still living here in Central Ohio, how has the city influenced your music, your perspective, or your connection to the folk music community here?

**Moe:** Once I returned to Columbus after a three-year stint in Chicago (I'm a proud PhD dropout), my music blossomed. There is a really wonderful community of folk-country musicians here, and I was lucky to almost immediately fall into that community after moving home. While I've sang in choirs and played in school orchestras, I had never played in a band or even casually jammed with others. Playing songs in community—old standards, and my own—have both expanded my horizons and deepened my roots.

**Jim:** Can you describe your experience performing at COFF this year? Were you able to experience any other part of COFF, or like many people did the weather put a cramp in things?

**Moe:** I loved performing at COFF! Even with the rain affecting attendance, it was evident

what a great community it fosters. I didn't stay terribly long after my sets—I got rained on pretty hard, and needed to warm up. I did get to see Cross-Eyed Possum's set, though, which was really awesome.

**Jim:** Tell us a little bit about your diverse musical influences and how you incorporate, blend, and update (or honor the original sound of) their work in your lyrics and arrangement.

**Moe:** I love country and folk, but I also love music on the fringes of those genres, like Judee Sill. She has this really dense, lyrical mysticism, which I tend towards in songs like "Warp & Woof" and "It's a Song." I also love the rambling, fast-talking wit of Roger Miller, who I subconsciously channeled for my song, "Clean Up Man." On Scribbled Line, half of the tunes take after a country-politan, Nashville-sound instrumentation, but often replacing upright piano for the dreamy, bell-like quality of a Rhodes piano. The other half are more informed by string-band music, combined with a rough-around-the-edges approach to production. That bit of grit is something I love in my favorite contemporary alt-country musicians: Chris Acker, the Lostines, Nick Shoulders, among others.

**Jim:** You've shared that your early musical foundation came from your Catholic upbringing and singing in church choirs during high school and college acapella groups. Do you find that these influences still affect your sound?

**Moe:** Absolutely! I think those influences will be even more apparent in my next

album. I'm hoping to incorporate more background vocal arrangements, and I have a few tunes that are based around a few beloved hymns.

**Jim:** On *Grow Again*, you worked with West Taylor (drums), Alex Estada (pedal steel), Nate Little (keys), and George Welling (upright), many of whom are part of Columbus's own Space Canoe Records community. How have these local collaborations shaped your recording process and creative support system?

**Moe:** Today, my band consists of West Taylor (drums), Julia Crow (upright bass), Alex Estrada (pedal steel), Carson Geissler (fiddle), and Nate Little (keys). I consider each of them to be co-producers in my album. While I write the songs, we organically develop the arrangement together. We play the tunes a lot and see what sticks. They're always down to try out a new song with me. Risk taking in song feels easy with such wonderful collaborators—I trust them deeply.

**Jim:** Your debut EP dropped in 2024, followed by your full-length album, *Scribbled Line*, in June 2025. What new artistic directions or themes emerged in your album that you didn't explore on the EP?

**Moe:** One big difference was the way we recorded these songs. For the EP, all songs were recorded at Oranjudio studio. We recorded about half of the songs for the album there again, but all acoustic songs were recorded in my friend's basement studio. We cut these songs live, standing in a circle, just how we practice. There was so much ease recording that way.

**Jim:** You performed at the Central Ohio Folk Festival this summer and are returning for our Concert Series September 27. What's the difference between festival sets and solo concerts, and what can Columbus audiences expect at your upcoming show?

**Moe:** There will definitely be more chatting at this one! During a festival set, I try to pack in as much music as I can into a limited 45-minute set, which doesn't leave much room for talking. When we have more time, as we do with this upcoming show, I love to tell the stories behind songs and to joke around with the audience. I'll also be debuting a few new songs, in early stages of arrangement with the band.



Photo Courtesy of Michael Furman

*“I loved performing at COFF! Even with the rain...it was evident what a great community it fosters. ”*

-Moe Reen

# Greetings from the CFMS Concert Committee!

BY TERRY SHARKEY

Last year at this time I was writing a preview for the year to come. At that point, I was looking forward to a local group on the schedule (The Redbuds) and an international duo I first heard about on PBS (Larry & Joe). The past few months have brought on some changes and a fun learning curve for me. Many thanks to Diane Boston, Marian Harris, and Greg Denby who welcomed me to this committee in 2024. Diane and Greg pulled back recently to focus on getting the Central Ohio Folk Festival to Bank Run Metro park. In turn, I agreed to chair the committee for our Americana / Folk concerts. Marian and I have continued to look for performers along with a new committee member - Lewis Tracy. It has been a pleasure to get to know Marian over the past year and get acquainted with Lewis recently, so I figured you'd like to know more about them too!

If you're a longtime CFMS member, you might know that Marian Harris has a history working in government—even as a State Representative for Ohio! From her early role as an aide for the US Senate to her own election, Marian has had a knack for connecting people. When the CFMS wanted to reach out to other parts of Columbus, it felt natural for her to build a connection with The Reeb Center. The Reeb Center ([reebcenter.org](http://reebcenter.org)) on Columbus' South Side has been an excellent partner, fostered by Marian and Chelsea Jones (Reeb Director of Programs). Because of them, we've had the opportunity to provide summer concerts. The CFMS Jammers have also played and mingled during Reeb's Friday Cafe where people can get a meal and learn about the many social service organizations operating within the center. Additional thanks to members Jane Van Auken, Linda McDonald, and Steve Ing who joined on Fridays and invited neighborhood residents to our concerts. We couldn't do it without you! If you bump into Lewis Tracy at one of our shows or, like I did, at the Central Ohio Folk Festival, you'll see he knows his stuff! His wife Susan is a coworker of mine and suggested him for our committee. His love of music started with performing in the high school band and working at the Ojai Music Festival in his hometown of Ojai, California.

Thankfully, Lewis agreed to join us and immediately shared suggestions! It has been fun to receive his impressions and guidance. When pressed about a favorite show, Lewis mentioned seeing the Punch Brothers, Watchhouse, and Sarah Jarosz all on the Green Mountain Festival stage. Favorite festival suggestion? Big Ears in Knoxville, Tennessee where you can hear folk music one moment, a string quartet later, jazz, or even rock.

I should also mention two extra CFMS members who lent their ears. Rosalie Hendon and Lea Anne Kangas helped by listening and providing extra input. Rosalie has been attending CFMS monthly concerts and often brings friends. Her exposure to multiple shows lent to giving feedback about other performers. Lea Anne, a performer herself, has a background in music theory and composition. She even worked as a mastering engineer on projects for Bill Monroe, John McCutcheon, Tom Paxton, and numerous Smithsonian Folkways



Photo Courtesy of Terry Sharkey

Recordings! Lea Anne recently played our Reeb show with the Walhalla Ramblers. You can also catch her with Jenny & the StreetWalkers and the alternative rock band 13 Degrees Scorpio. Thank you Rosalie and Lea Anne!

All of this to let you know Marian, Lewis, and I are hard at work finding enjoyable performers for you to hear in the coming year. Do you have suggestions? Let me know at: [TerryCFMS@gmail.com](mailto:TerryCFMS@gmail.com)

Who am I looking forward to at this moment? Moe Reen ([moereen@weepymoereen](mailto:moereen@weepymoereen)) will mark our seasonal return to the Mennonite Church! If the rain kept you away from the Central Ohio Folk Festival you missed a great set from this young artist. They struck me with their great melodies and original song writing. Don't miss this show on September 27th!

## SAVE THE NEW DATE for CENTRAL OHIO FOLK FESTIVAL, June 6 & 7, 2026

### HELP US MOVE THE FESTIVAL FORWARD

We're looking for help to fill a couple of Central Ohio Folk Festival positions; we're predominantly volunteer, but the publicity position could involve some pay.

Do you like the local Columbus arts scene? We're looking for someone to find new, and/or to work with existing arts/music vendors and book them for our Festival Store area. Not a lot of time commitment and you can get creative in finding new and interesting vendors!

Are you interested in publicity and figuring out how we can reach more folks in new areas of Columbus and help us accomplish it? Variable time commitment. We have an existing team but are seeking to build it! If you like thinking outside of the box and are interested in helping us build the festival at both a new location and date (pay involved), please reach out!

# Brent Davis, New CFMS 2025 Board Member

INTERVIEW BY DORI SMITH

*Originally learning of CFMS at a Battelle Darby Creek festival years ago, Brent Davis joined CFMS shortly after and has volunteered for the better part of ten years. Recently he has been instrumental in helping prepare our grant applications to the Greater Columbus Arts Council to help fund the CFMS Concert Series.*

**Dori Smith:** What is some background information about you?

**Brent Davis:** I grew up in Springfield, Mo. beginning my musical journey at 14 when I traded my sister's clarinet for my first banjo, without her knowledge. In high school a friend and I played at parties and civic clubs. Our biggest gig was at the Shakey's Pizza Parlor. I did my undergraduate work in television production at the University of Georgia, and I got a master's in American Studies at the University of Alabama. We lived in Tuscaloosa for 20 years where I worked in public television and radio. We moved to Columbus in 2003 where I was a content director for WOSU Public Media, retiring three years ago. Projects included the Columbus Neighborhoods documentary series and I produced a documentary about the Lazarus department store.. I occasionally filled in as host of the Bluegrass Ramble. My wife, Susan, and I have one son. He's 32. He's a pretty good guitar player, having learned mostly from the internet. Susan and I sing in a choir at First Community Church.

**Smith:** What Instruments do you play?

**Davis:** My main instrument is the banjo, which I play in a local group called Wrygrass. We performed at the Folk Festival a couple of times, and we did one of the first CFMS concerts at The Reeb Center. I also play guitar, and bass guitar in a jazz group called Judas Prius. I'm the only member of that group who doesn't drive a Prius, which, I guess, makes me the Judas.

**Smith:** What led you to folk?

**Davis:** When I was a senior in high school, one of the first hometown public TV station shows I saw was a concert from Chicago about Woody Guthrie featuring Studs Terkel, Pete Seeger, and other musicians. That program led to my life-long enthusiasm for both folk music and public television!

**Smith:** What do you enjoy about folk music?

**Davis:** I like that you don't have to have a degree or specialized training to play it. Much of it is learned in-person, handed down, passed around and shared. Every culture has its own folk music, and it's fascinating to hear what's unique about it, and what it has in common with others.

**Smith:** Do you have any favorite artists?

**Davis:** Most of my listening has been to bluegrass. But there's a lot of folk music I love: Woody, Pete, Wainwright III, Dylan, Ochs, Baez, Dave Van Ronk, Sierra Ferrell, Bruce Molksky, Sarah Jarosz, The Holy Modal Rounders, Mike Seeger, Si Kahn, Rhiannon Giddens, Christine Lavin....and artists I've seen at CFMS events: Joe Troop, Nefesh Mountain, Bob Lucas, The Matchsellers, and Buffalo Rose.

**Smith:** What are your impressions about the CFMS?

**Davis:** I think it's a grassroots organization that hits above its weight when you consider its annual festival, the concert series, and the jammers. CFMS builds community, one song at a time.

**Smith:** What would you like to see for the future of the CFMS?

**Davis:** Continued but manageable growth attracting an ever growing and increasingly diverse audience, plus new and younger volunteers to work with the great folk who have been working on behalf of great folk music for so many years.



## Welcome NEW Members

James Engman

...and Welcome Back RENEWING Members!

## Save the Date!

### Americana/Folk Concert Series

#### **Moe Reen**

**Saturday, September 27, 8pm**

6pm open jam / 7pm Open Mic (pre-sign-up) / 8pm Moe Reen

Refreshments. \$15 door donation / \$10 CFMS members

Venue: Columbus Mennonite Church, 35 Oakland Park Ave, Columbus

### Zoom Jam Sessions

#### **Mondays and Thursdays**

10am -11:30 am. Please contact Jane for logon information:

[vanaukj@gmail.com](mailto:vanaukj@gmail.com)

### In-Person Jams

#### **Mondays (not on Labor Day)**

6-8pm. 4th Ave Christian Church, 296 W. 4th Ave

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

**Saturdays** 9:30-11:30am.

Whetstone Community Center, 3923 N. High St. off parking lot Sept 6 & 13. Starting Sept 20, register for free "Music Jamming with Others" class.

9 am-noon. Worthington Farmers Market, Southeast Village Green

## NEWSLETTER TEAM

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**CFMS Photos:** *L. McDonald*

## Concert for a Meaningful Labor Day

Let's put some meaning back into the Labor Day holiday singing the praises of the workers who make our lives richer doing their everyday jobs.

Join Bill Cohen as he sings songs made famous by a wide variety of folks: Woody Guthrie, Sam Cooke, Dolly Parton, Pete Seeger, Bruce Springsteen, Alabama, James Taylor, etc.

Powerful vocal harmonies will be added by veteran Columbus musicians Phil Hart and Teresa Schleifer.

Plus, we'll recall how, decades ago, labor unions won historic reforms that many of us take for granted today – the 8-hour workday, improved workplace safety, a guaranteed minimum wage, and an end to child labor.

**WHEN:** Sunday August 31 4 pm – 5:30 pm

**WHERE:** Columbus Mennonite Church  
35 Oakland Park Ave, Columbus

\$15 per person donations at the door asked, but all contributions, big and small, will be welcome. Musicians and sound crew will split proceeds with the Central Ohio Worker Center, which advocates for low-income and immigrant workers.

Questions? Call Bill at (614) 263-3851





## The Columbus Folk Music Society

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### BECOME A MEMBER OF THE COLUMBUS FOLK MUSIC SOCIETY

Date \_\_\_\_\_  New  Renew Preferred Newsletter Format:  Digital  Hard Copy **[NOTE: if you choose hard copy, we request an additional \$15 contribution over & above dues to cover postage & handling]**

Name(s) / Band Name (if applic) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

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

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ (Cell) \_\_\_\_\_ If Band, website \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail Address \_\_\_\_\_ Additional e-mail (if a household or band) \_\_\_\_\_

We are also a growing, vibrant community of volunteers; the awesome force behind our work! Please  at least 1 box.

<input type="checkbox"/> May folk festival	<input type="checkbox"/> General Help	<input type="checkbox"/> Organizational Skills	<input type="checkbox"/> Social Media
<input type="checkbox"/> CFMS concert events	<input type="checkbox"/> Graphic Design	<input type="checkbox"/> Professional Musician	<input type="checkbox"/> Web Design
<input type="checkbox"/> Cooking / Baking	<input type="checkbox"/> Leadership Skills	<input type="checkbox"/> Professional Instructor	<input type="checkbox"/> Writing / Newsletter
<input type="checkbox"/> Data Management	<input type="checkbox"/> Legal	Instruments: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Fundraising	<input type="checkbox"/> Musician	<input type="checkbox"/> Publicity	<input type="checkbox"/> None

**MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS ARE DUE ANNUALLY ON DECEMBER 31.  one of the membership levels listed below.**

<input type="checkbox"/> Individual \$20	<input type="checkbox"/> Band \$25	<input type="checkbox"/> Sponsor \$100	<input type="checkbox"/> Silver \$250
<input type="checkbox"/> Household \$25	<input type="checkbox"/> Good Friend \$50	<input type="checkbox"/> Patron \$200	<input type="checkbox"/> Life Member \$500

*I have included an additional \$15 (postage & handling) to have a printed version of newsletter mailed to me.*

**To join/renew by credit card**, visit CFMS' website: [columbusfolkmusicsociety.org](http://columbusfolkmusicsociety.org) (About Us/Join)

OR click here: <https://tinyurl.com/CFMS-Join>

**To join/renew by cash or check**, please mail completed membership form with payment to: *Columbus Folk Music Society, PO Box 20735, Columbus, OH 43220*. Membership amounts may be tax-deductible.

My place of work matches donations:

