

Session 1: April 16-18

Instructors: Tom Paxton, Jon Weisberger, Alice Gerrard, Joe Troop, Crys Matthews, Cathy Fink

Friday, 4/16

10:00 am – meet and greet, staff and class intros

11:00-12:30pm – Songwriting Process w/ Jon Weisberger

For many songwriters, starting is easier than finishing. Yet there are some approaches to the process that can make it smoother - or, at least, less stressful! We'll look at ways to make "song maps" that can help guide writers in moving from an *idea* for a song to a *song*.

1:00-2:30pm New-Old Songs (Songwriting in the tradition) w/Alice Gerrard

Where does your inspiration come from? What kinds of sounds are you trying to get?

Songwriting is generally informed, melodically I believe, by all the sounds you love, and have absorbed and internalized through the years. Mine is generally rooted in traditional Southern-based music (which in turn is a distillation of mainly African American and European American traditional music). And that includes blues, gospel, country—everyone from people you may never have heard of like Texas Gladden or Vera Hall to The Staples Singers, Aretha Franklin and George Jones—from old-time unaccompanied style to more country sounds—at least, that's where I tend to start out. I like the idea of reaching back for sounds. I'll sing a bunch of songs and discuss what gives them a traditional feel.

4:00-5:30 – Writing An Anthem/Making it Accessible w/Crys Matthews

It can be a challenge to say what we want to say in a way that calls out injustice while also calling the listener in. We'll talk about ways to organize your message, and craft a protest song in a way that inspires.

7pm-8:30pm – **Song Swaps**

Saturday, 4/17

10-11:30am – Priming the Pump, Courting the Muse w/Cathy Fink

Writing warm ups, prompts and ideas to get you started and keep you writing including creating your own writing assignments.

12:30-2pm – Telling the Story in a Song w/Joe Troop

We're going to take a deep dive into the process of writing two complicated story songs and boiling them down to the essence of something deliverable, "A Plea to the US Government to Fully Fund the Postal Service" and "The Rise of Dreama Caldwell." Both of these songs were to serve a purpose, and both were effective. They not only had pragmatic, quantifiable results, but also touched real people's lives and garnered relevant media attention. I drew from my own experience to write the post office song, whereas with the song about Dreama, I was able to speak lengthily with her while writing in order to assure historical accuracy. They were very

different song-writing experiences, each with pivotal "ah ha!" moments. Determination to discover the perfect word is a common theme in my search. When it happens, I feel a great sense of accomplishment. I'll talk about the mystical experiences I had with each of these songs.

3:00-4:30pm – Editing Your Song w/Tom Paxton

Step by step, Tom will talk about the details that help you make your song better. He'll demonstrate examples of editing his own songs, talk about what he looks for as an editor, and will take a song or two from participants to demonstrate editing possibilities.

5-6pm – Hangout with Breakout Rooms, Meet your Fellow Participants

7:30pm – Staff Concert

9:15pm – Song Swaps

Sunday, 4/18

10:00- 11:30am – Turning A Six Word Story Into A Song w/Cathy Fink

We'll be writing in class, starting with six word stories, turning them into 50 word stories and then turning them into songs, or parts of songs.

12:30-2pm – Play Well With Others, Co-Writing w/Jon Weisberger

When it works well, co-writing can produce songs that are more impactful than what any of the individual writers might have been able to create on their own. How does it work? What qualities make for a good co-writer, and for a good co-writing session? What makes a good one even better? We'll look at strategies and tactics for making the most out of co-writing.

*Students interested in teaming up to try co-writing between sessions 1 and 2 may also sign up for coaching sessions with Jon M-Th, April 19-22)

2-3pm – Prepare for Participant Showcase

3-5pm – Participant Showcase

April 19-22:

Some instructors will be available for one-on-one sessions (or in Jon's case, co-write team sessions) for an additional fee

Session 2: April 23-25

Instructors: Mark Simos, Tom Paxton, Cathy Fink, Jon Weisberger, Claire Lynch
Friday, 4/23

10:00 am – meet and greet, staff and class intros

11:00-12:30pm – Dissecting the Perfect Song –Cathy, Mark, Jon, Tom, Claire -panel

The panel will take classic perfect songs in different genres, using various exercises to dissect and learn the techniques of great songwriters. With the templates and lessons of those songs, we'll jumpstart new songs.

1-2:30pm – Creating melodies w/Mark Simos

Why are some song melodies, especially those of older traditional songs, so seemingly simple yet so evocative, singable, memorable? Starting with examples of great song melodies, we'll learn some deep structural principles of melodic design: how melodies can be interwoven with lyrics, rhythm, and song form to support the song's meaning and emotion. These principles will lead us to challenges: games and exercises for writing, and helpful tools for revising, compelling melodies.

4-5:30pm – The Use Of Metaphor To Enrich Your Song – Claire Lynch

Metaphor has been said to be the "lifeblood of all art". In this workshop, we'll see how it can be used in all types of songs from Country to comical. We'll focus on observing metaphor, understanding it and then using it in our songwriting to convey a deeper, more colorful level of understanding.

7pm-8:30pm – Song Swaps

Saturday 4/24

10:00-11:30am – Tom Paxton, Interviewed by Cathy Fink with Q&A

With Lifetime Achievement Awards from the GRAMMYs, ASCAP, Folk Alliance, and BBC Radio, Tom has created an enormous catalogue of well-loved and well-recorded songs while continuing to write songs into his 80's. He's had covers by Willie Nelson, Placido Domingo, Porter Wagoner, Dolly Parton, Earl Scruggs, Bobby Vinton, Glen Campbell, Charley Pride, Hank Snow, Chet Atkins, Judy Collins, Pete Seeger and many more. Tom's own discography includes 63 CD's. We'll dig into his process, his career, and the stories behind the songs and recordings.

12:30-2pm – The Business of Songwriting w/Jon Weisberger

It's widely believed that income from "roots music" songwriting is negligible, but that's not necessarily the case - and whether you're wanting to make that income part of your business plan, or just want to protect your rights as a creator, understanding the business of songwriting is a must. We'll review the basics of copyright, music publishing, licensing, the most common kinds of royalties as they apply to our corner of the music world. Then there is pitching your song, or getting others to record it and the elbow grease and luck involved.

3:00-4:30 – Advice From The Experts w/ Claire Lynch

This class will give you a glimpse into tried and true observations by many great writers from Joseph Pulitzer to Joni Mitchell and how they can be applied to crafting our own songs. I'll also talk about how I've used these observations, and of course, add a few of my own.

5-6pm – Hangout with Breakout Rooms, Meet your Fellow Participants

7:30pm – Staff Concert

9:15pm – Song Swaps

Sunday, 4/25

10:00- 11:30am - Editing Your Song w/Tom Paxton

Building on Session 1’s workshop in editing, Tom will talk about the details that help you make your song better. Participants will be encouraged to submit songs in advance and have Tom use them as examples to discuss editing. You must be comfortable with having this done for the class and time will limit how many songs can be discussed.

12:30-2pm – The Truth About Three Chords w/Mark Simos

Finding chords and progressions that support our song’s story and emotion—or help us find new stories to sing about—isn’t just about knowing more, or fancier, chords. We’ll explore new ways to use even simple sets of familiar chords, by attending to: how we move between chords, the rhythms of chord changes, and ways chords form their own “rhyming” patterns. We’ll draw lessons from some great example songs, and learn a fun game for creating fresh progressions—the infamous Simos “Hank Williams in Hell” exercise!

2-3pm – Prepare for Participant Showcase

3-5pm – Participant Showcase