

# CULTURE

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## Spring fling: A vernal Vermont music preview

By Alan Lewis | Special to the *Vermont Guardian*

Vermonters learn early to waltz through a dreary winter, but the time has now come to dance to a vernal tune.

There could be a stately swaying to the music as the **Vermont Symphony Orchestra**, conducted by Jaime Laredo and featuring **Joseph Kalichstein**, lead off the spring season with “Pavane for a Dead Princess” by Ravel and other works at Burlington’s Flynn Center on March 10, and at the Paramount Theatre in Rutland on March 11. This is the first of two VSO spring-season Masterworks programs, showing what small-state resources powered by big-hearted passion for the music can do.

Burlington’s Flynn Center website boasts that **Merce Cunningham** “redefined the boundaries of movement and space.” Better be alert, then, when the **Merce Cunningham Dance Company** hits the Flynn on March 16.

**The Drunk Stuntmen**, favorites at Bradford’s Middle Earth Music Hall, have given their StuntVan a rest, while staying home and writing new material. The next Stuntmen tour gets jump-started at the Middle Earth on March 16, with **Fancy Trash** on the same bill. Session Americana, this winter, circulated a hilarious, if humble, newsletter about a lean turnout at one of its Boston shows. But band members likely will be crowing about a crowded room after the CD-release gig at the Middle Earth on March 24.

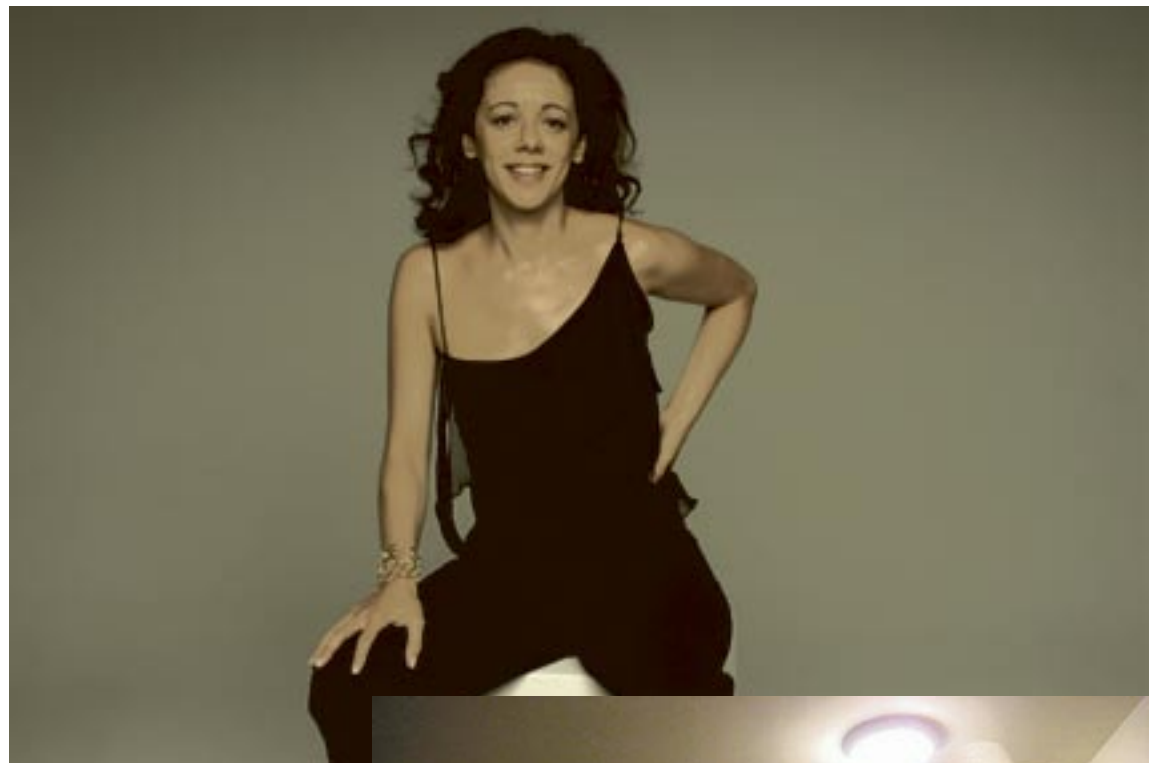
Vermont’s own **Social Band** — distinguished and fun rolled into one — has a compact string of concerts, exploring “the miracle of spring and of life” from March 24 to March 31 at such venues as the Richmond Public Library, the Lincoln United Church, and Unitarian churches in Montpelier and Burlington. Social Band’s repertoire now includes a new piece, “Jackson Heights,” by group member **Don Jamison**. If the programs are as good as the writing in Social Band’s e-mailed tour announcement, ardent concertgoers will want to be front and center for at least one of these shows.

Nightlife enthusiasts are offered a “luminous evening” with the joint efforts of great jazz vocalist **Luciana Souza** and the **Los Angeles Guitar Quartet**, which will celebrate “the adventurous qualities of the guitar with a dynamic virtuosity” at the Flynn Center on March 30. **Mary Chapin Carpenter** brings her popular magic to the Flynn the following evening.

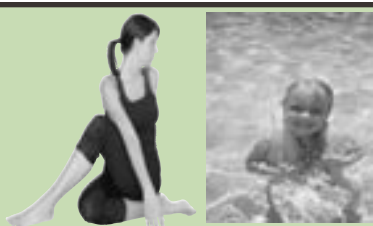
A memory comes vividly to mind of an enthusiastic **Lindsey Buckingham**, in a PBS broadcast, being the only musician on stage dressed Kingston Trio-style as he accompanied the actual members of that early groundbreaking group in a reunion concert. Buckingham has had countless great moments in popular music, and he may just make another at the Flynn Center on April 1.

**James Kochalka Superstar** is splitting what is billed as a family-friendly matinee with **The Zambonis** at Higher Ground, also on April 1. Superstar band member Creston Lea says Kochalka has serious history with children’s entertainment. “He has a kids’ book coming out from Random House next year,” said Lea.

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*Pictured: Luciana Souza (top) and the Los Angeles Guitar Quartet are at the Flynn on March 30, the Vermont Symphony Orchestra (bottom left) is all over the state in March, Dan Zanes (upper right) is at Higher Ground on May 20, and Bobby Watson (right) brings his quartet to the Flynn on April 14.*



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The Health & Fitness Guide will run throughout the winter and spring.

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April's hot start continues as the **Gordon Stone Band** and the **Jim Gilmour Band** team up at Higher Ground on April 4. Meanwhile, **Sarah Borges** and the **Broken Singles** take the stage at the Middle Earth on April 7. The *Boston Herald* reported the sweet news that she has signed to Sugar Hill Records. It is now official: Borges is on her way up.

**Guys and Dolls** should be loads of fun in a Flynn Center run, starting April 12.

**Russ Marks** sent news that the band "Amity Front [is] gearing up for their first regional tour outside of New England. ... The tour will include stops in Boston, New York, Providence, North Carolina and Michigan as well as others. Our Michigan dates are a homecoming of sorts for TAF's frontman, **Erik Alan**, and we are anticipating some big turnouts." **The Amity Front** is at the Middle Earth on April 6.

"One of the stellar jazz artists" is how *Jazz Review* describes **Bobby Watson**, who brings his quartet to FlynnSpace on April 14. The Flynn's show announcement calls Watson "a flexible player able to play swing, hard bop, and free jazz." **Hector on Stilts** is at The Church in Brattleboro on April 14. The venue's Hector posting speaks of "theatrical antics that are part discotheque, part glam rock and total unabashed fun."

The **Vermont Symphony's Masterworks V** ought to be a popular event with such programming as "The Sorcerer's Apprentice" by Dukas and Prokofiev's "Symphony No. 5." But the main attraction could be **David Kechley's** co-commissioned work, "Wakeful Visions/Moonless Dreams: Three Short Pieces for Orchestra." Hear it at the Flynn Center on May 5.

There is classical and there is classic, and ex-Del Fuegos frontman **Dan Zanes**, now as a high-energy children's entertainer, has transformed himself into the latter. Zanes and kids of all ages meet at Higher Ground on May 20.

The band **Rani Arbo and daisy mayhem** has a late-spring release event at the Middle Earth on May 25, for their *Big Old Life* CD. Arbo, when asked for a prose preview, said the disc is "Half originals, half covers — Leonard Cohen, Bob Dylan, and a few folks you've never heard of — with the usual fiddle, guitar, bass, and recycled percussion. Some old-time sounds, some gospel (mostly ag-



Rani Arbo and daisy mayhem will be at Middle Earth on May 25.

nostic), lots of good grooves, and the usual thick n' rich harmonies. Overall, very celebratory." *Gambling Eden*, Arbo's previous CD, is a real gem.

## In memorium

**Eric Von Schmidt** was a prolific illustrator. But many New Englanders knew him best as a musician who, with a gang of Putney School veterans and others, founded the mighty 50s and 60s Boston-Cambridge folk community centered on the legendary Club 47. Many of those who did not experience Von Schmidt firsthand still know him as 'Ric Von Schmidt from the famous intro to a great song he taught Bob Dylan, "Baby, Let Me Follow You Down." Folkies and rockers alike were saddened by Von Schmidt's death this winter.

Closer to home came the passing of Guilford's **Bill Gehman**. He was a co-founder, with Carol Levin, of the Chelsea House in West Brattleboro, a coffeehouse that made a genuinely huge contribution to southern Vermont music and dance culture through most of the 70s and into the 80s. He also once hosted a jazz broadcast on WTSA-FM. But Gehman's biggest impact may have been as a prolific, long-time recording engineer, from 60s Philadelphia Folk Festival tapes to a recent album by the Brattleboro-area Women's Chorus. Gehman placed great value on preserving nuggets of Vermont music history in the making, and he selflessly devoted much of his life to that favorite cause.

## Recordings to watch

**Creston Lea** of James Kochalka Superstar, after a gig in New York, brought back a tidbit

about one of the most remarkable and legendary studio tracks in Vermont rock history. "We saw **Mark Spencer**, who tells me that 'Be A Good Citizen,' from the lost **Pinhead** New York sessions, may be heard on his website ([www.markspencer.us](http://www.markspencer.us))."

"Did [Creston] mention that we've begun recording a little for our long-awaited third CD?" asked popular Vermont rocker **Missy Bly**. "We've been utilizing a fab new studio in Addison called Big Orange Studio — about 50 minutes from Burlington, but worth the trip."

Indeed he did mention it. And Lea, too, is enthusiastic about Big Orange. As for that third CD of Missy Bly the band, he explained, "I imagine it will be slow going, because that's our nature, but particularly because **Neil Cleary**, who has been playing drums with us [and] producing the recordings, moved to Boston in November. He's been playing with **Laura Cortese** and **Jimmy Ryan** and other Boston people, keeping up a busy touring schedule and also working on his own record with **Jim Roll** out in Michigan. So, we're trying to find time for him to come back and work with Missy some more. But the tunes we've got in the can sound great. It'll probably sound a little less Spartan than the last two, but not so different that you won't recognize Missy."

**Didi Stewart** once sang lead and wrote songs for the high-flying Boston all-female septet, **Girls Night Out**. Stewart, now on the Berklee College of Music faculty, has lately issued a solo CD titled *Vermont's Harmonyville*. "[T]he first time I passed through on my way to Manchester for a gig," she recalled, "I fell in love with the name of the town and swore then and there that I would name my next album after it. So

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