



Rhythm Bones Player

A Newsletter of the Rhythm Bones Society

Volume 27, No. 3 2025

In This Issue:
Bones Fest XXIX
Highlights

How I Wrote The
Music Man by
Meredith Willson

Minutes of the
Board Meeting

Columns:
Executive Director

Editorial

Letters To The
Editor

Executive Director's Column

Another successful Bones Fest is in the books! A lot goes into putting together a quality fest. In fact I'm certain there are too many things for me to list, so I'll just mention two categories, our hosts and our members.

Our hosts did an incredible job across the board. They found an amazing venue in the Common Street Spiritual Center. The Morse Tavern proved to be a great spot for evening jamming. They did an excellent job putting together meaningful, interesting, and fun programming. We had snacks, refreshments and amazing BBQ! I'll let them tell their own stories in this newsletter, but again, a huge thank you to our co-hosts, Steve Brown and Bruno Giles.

Now for the members. It really is the RBS membership that makes something like Bones Fest XXIX unforgettable. After 15 years, it really does still seem like a family reunion, complete with plenty of laugh-

ter and old stories. And of course there were new faces too! Some I was aware of but just hadn't met, like Graham Hargrove and Hubby Jenkins. Others I was introduced to for the first time, confident that we just didn't know we were friends yet. This group is so amiable that we went out to lunch on Friday and came back with old time fiddler Alan Kaufman! Thanks to everyone in attendance for your energy and enthusiasm.

One unique part of this Bones Fest for me was the excursion to the Boston Museum of Fine Arts to see William Sydney Mount's iconic painting *The Bone Player*. It was easy to tell from the gathering in the hotel lobby on Saturday night that many of us weren't ready for the festival to end. This trip was a great way to extend those feelings (Continued on Page 6)

Bones Fest XXIX Highlights

Co-Host Bruno Giles says, "Here is my Bones Fest Recap."

It was a pleasure to Co-Host Bones Fest XXIX along with the inimitable Steve Brown in my hometown of Natick, MA. This was my 7th Bones Fest, and I enjoyed every one (Continued on Page 3)

Co-Host Stephen Brown says, "Here is my story of Bones Fest XXIX, this year the Jug Band International Festival."

With the sound of rhythm bones still pleasantly clacking in my ears, I reflect on what was my third time (Continued on Page 6)



Friday Group Photograph in Common St. Spiritual Center. From the left; Steve Wixson, Steve Brown, Teri Wolin, Kenny Wolin, Jim Runner, Graham Hargrove, Evan Lattimore, Trueman Muher-Irwin, Paul Sedgwick, Wally Jakubus, Ron Bruschi, Melissa Danforth, Bruce Strong, Emmett Danforth, Dennis Riedesel, Susan Riedesel, Lynn Fantelli, Marie Bruschi, Devin Giles, Bruno Giles, Jennifer Brown, Hubby Jenkins, Ernie Duffy, Skeffington Flynn, and Mary Gunderson King.

Editorial

During my flight from Chattanooga to Boston, I was trying to find the words to apologize for again not have a formal Treasurer's report. That got me thinking that it is (way over) time to step aside from being your Secretary/Treasurer, and so I will not run for this office for 2026. It will also be good for the Rhythm Bones Society as we need new people to help us find our future.

During my flight home between naps, I reflected on another great Bones Fest. There were many old friends and new friends like Evan Lattimore who provided transportation for several of us. Our Co-hosts, Bruno and Steve summarized their experience with stories that begin on Page 1.

Sandor Slomovits made two contributions to this issue. In a Letter To The Editor, Judy Shaw found San's old article on Bill Loyd and thanked us for recognizing him. And San found the article by Meridith Willson on Page 7.

Notice anything noteworthy about the rhythm bones in the photograph that Marie Bruschi took of the *The Bone Player* painting. If you see it, let me know so I can recognize you as observant in the next issue of the newsletter.



Letters To The Editor

Hey, Steve Wixson, thanks for the reply and how cool that your father taught you to play rhythm bones! My instructor was none less than Percy Danforth! I attended the Central Michigan Music

Festival and he was offering a workshop for novices to make their own rhythm bones and learn the basic techniques. It was a gas and we became friends back home in Ann Arbor. I'm guessing I found the Rhythm Bones Society when I googled Percy. Life sends you funny magic sometimes.

Cheers, *Judy Shaw*



Since my position on the Board was clarified through the reading of the By-laws during Bones Fest (with banjo accompaniment), I took the liberty of modifying my official hat to reflect this change. *Kenny Wolin*

I ran across your article featuring Bill Loyd of Milan, MI (<https://rhythmbones.org/documents/RBP/V7N1.pdf>). I wanted to reach out and let you know Mr. Loyd was my 4th grade teacher in 1983-1984, and he taught my class how to play rhythm bones! I still tell people about that experience to this day. Mr. Loyd is an incredible person and the greatest teacher I ever had. Just yesterday I spent the afternoon with a classmate and we reminisced about the wonderful experiences we had learning from Mr. Loyd.

Thank you for recognizing Mr. Loyd and highlighting his unique, wonderful approach to education. The world needs to know what an amazing teacher (and eventually, Principal) Mr. Loyd was and what a lasting impact he had on his students. I'll never forget him or the joy I found in being his student. Thanks, *Ryan*

Rhythm Bones Player

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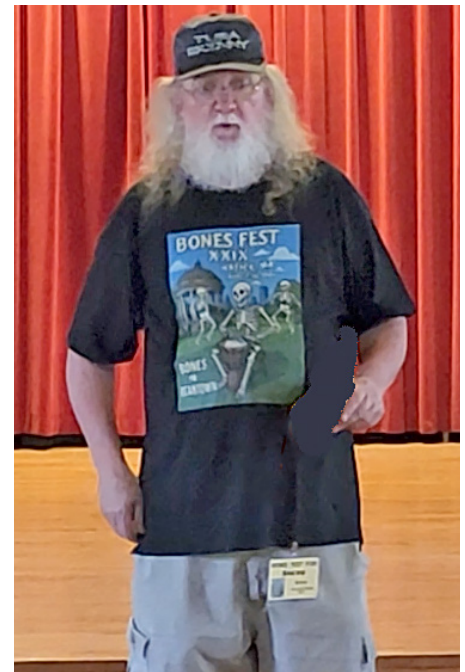
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The Rhythm Bones Players welcomes letters to the Editor and article on any aspect of bones playing. All material submitted for consideration is subject to editing and condensation.

Rhythm Bones Central web site: rhythmbones.com

O'Donnell [Note: The article mentioned was contributed by Sandor Slomovits.]



Co-Host Steve Brown welcomes folks to Bones Fest XXIX in the Common St Spiritual Center

(Bruno Giles continued from Page 1)
of them. The town was very welcoming of the ideas Steve and I presented to them, and helped to make it a successful event.

Thursday night—The Festival began with an energetic performance by the Jug Nuts band, who provided the night’s entertainment. The Jug Nuts are an entertaining bunch as they provided the attendees with kazoos, washboards, and other musical instruments and encouraged everyone to join the band. One such attendee who was delighted to take them up on their offer was none other than Hubby Jenkins, an accomplished bones player and a former member of the Carolina Chocolate Drops.



Friday morning introductions featured attendees sharing their “Bones” stories and demonstrating their individual styles. It was extra special for me, as I was able to coax my son, Devin, onto the stage for the first time and showcase his abilities. (Photograph by Evan Lattimore)



Friday afternoon, Kenny Wolin, Graham Hargrove, Hubby Jenkins, and Skeff Flynn taught workshops. Dave Curry conducted an “Intro to Drum Circles” Workshop, and participants successfully banged out three or four African and Middle Eastern rhythms. I could not attend the Irish session until the very end, as I was at the drum circle,

which was only attended by my regular crew of local drummers.

Saturday afternoon’s semi-planned,” let’s just wing it” flash mob at the Natick Farmers’ Market worked out surprisingly well. With Jonathon, Mary, and Paul suddenly playing lively music, the market attendees seemed both confused and entertained with the slow, methodical emergence of many rhythm bone players appearing from every direction. One by one, they materialized until they formed a semicircle facing the musicians and filling the Farmers Market with bone-rattling, cheerful music.

Steve Brown and Dean Robinson led a Beginner’s Workshop, sharing their expertise with new members.

Tennessee’s BBQ of Framingham provided a tasty meal and delivered it to the Common St Spiritual Center for all the participants to enjoy.



Saturday Night - All the performances for the evening show were fantastic. Dave Curry provided excellent sound work. Steve Brown has a recap of the show elsewhere in this issue. Because of illness, we all missed Sky and Jessie Bartlett at this year’s show. Sky is typically a standout performer.

Sunday morning’s visit to the Museum of Fine Arts was a perfect way to cap off Bones Fest XXIX. It all began with the impossible: my finding a free



parking spot in Boston. Don’t ask, I’ve been sworn to secrecy! After our crew of boneheads arrived, we set off on our quest to find the Holy Grail, William Sidney Mount’s painting of *The Bone Player*. Several museum staff members had to be recruited to guide us through a maze of beautiful artwork until we found Mount’s masterpiece.

After the participants gathered for individual and group photographs—without the use of flash—Skeff Flynn led an impromptu video performance of “Cornbread and Butterbeans.”

Music and the distinctive sound of rhythm bones enlivened the typically quiet and reverent atmosphere of one of the world’s most renowned museums. I hope Andrew Brewster, the model for *The Bone Player*, enjoyed it.

Not sure, but I believe we set a world record for most rhythm bones played in an art museum!

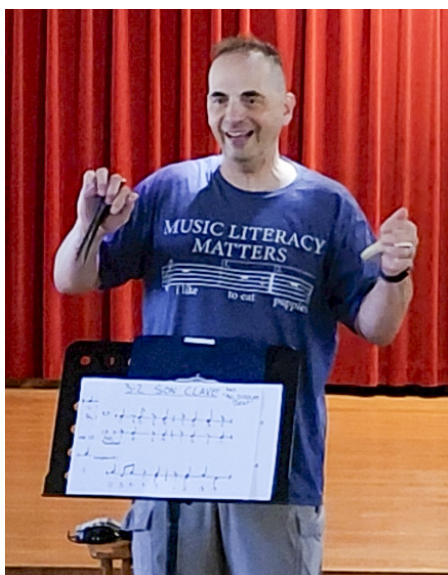
We enjoyed more of the museum’s art collections and then wandered down to the musical instruments section, which featured many historical instruments. Following our visit, we ended the day by saying our goodbyes. Thanks go to my co-host, Steve Brown, for arranging this with the museum!

Other thanks go out to Ian Mevorach for allowing us to use their beautiful space at Common St Spiritual Center for the weekend, Deb Sayer for the Natick Farmer’s Market flash mob, Tennessee’s BBQ of Framingham, Morse Tavern, and Steve Wixson for all he does. Also, thanks to all the Rhythm Bones Society Board Members for their help and, of course, all the attendees for contributing to Bones Fest XXIX.

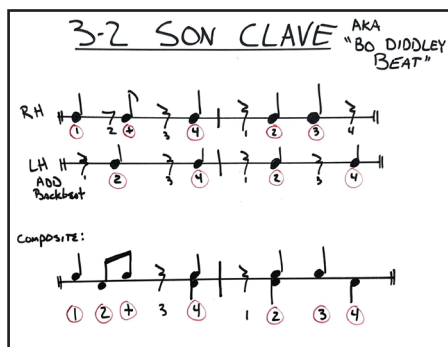
The Saturday Evening Show



From left to right and down" Ron Bruschi, Rob Rudin, Jonathan Danforth, Evan Lattimore, Ernie Duffy, Mary Gunderson King and Skeffington Flynn, Dean Robinson, Bruno Giles and Paul Sedgwick, Bruce Strong, Jonathan Danforth and Spike Bones, Alan Kaufman and Steve Brown, Alan Kaufman and Graham Hargrove, Mary Gunderson King and Jim runner, Dennis Riedesel in costume, Kenny and Teri Wolin, Kenny and Teri Wolinh.



Larger version of the above drawing



The Graham Hargrove Experience



Introduction to Drum Circle - Dave Curry



My Life in Bones - Hubby Jenkins



Indian Dance Rhythms - Fabio Pirozzolo



Intro to Irish Sessions - Skeff Flynn



(Exec Director continued from Page 1)
out for just a little longer.

One more person I need to thank is Steve Wixson (see photograph by Evan Lattimore below). Steve has served as Secretary/Treasurer of the Rhythm Bones Society since its creation and has decided it's time to pass those responsibilities on to someone else. Fortunately for us he's still putting together newsletters and maintaining the website, with no immediate plans to stop. That said, we will need a new Secretary / Treasurer for 2026. There is some talk about splitting the roles between two board members, so if you are interested in either one please reach out through the website.

Mary and I are still marveling at the time we had. As you read through the accounts and look through some of the wonderful images, I hope that like me, you'll be starting to think about next year. It's looking like we'll likely be back in Massachusetts. Stay tuned for updates. And until next time, may your bones be with you!

Your friendly neighborhood bones player, *Skeffington Flynn*



Irish Session at Morse Tavern



(Steve Brown continued from Page 1)

hosting, and in this case co-hosting a Bones Fest. It was more than 10 years ago that I last hosted Bones Fest, and 24 years since I first hosted. This time in Natick, MA, about 20 miles outside of Boston. Of course I was very familiar with Natick, having been born in a neighboring Framingham, and my oldest son Jeremy was born there some 54 years ago. I considered it the perfect location, and aside for the relentless traffic, I think I was right! Below are my highlights of the weekend, which I think everyone in attendance enjoyed!

Thursday night was the “Jug Band Jam” hosted by the local band, the Jug Nuts! The band specializes in jug band music from the 20’s and 30’s, performed in a pure joyous way, and focusing on including everybody. The back room at Morse’s Tavern was hopping with guitars, fiddles, banjos, washboards, a jug, and of course rhythm bones! So many of our members participated, but one in particular caught my eye. Devin Giles, son of Bruno, was rocking out and a joy to watch! Not only was he playing rhythm bones, but showing style on the washboard! Multi-instrumentalist Hubby Jenkins was able to spend a couple of days with us including the Jug band Jam, wowing us not only with rhythm bones, but guitar as well.

Friday afternoon was an exciting 5 workshop affair featuring Latin rhythms from Kenny Wolin, Quadruplication from Graham Hargrove, Hubby Jenkins, My Life in Bones, Skeffington Flynn, Introduction to Irish Session, and Dave Curry Introduction to Drum Circle. All of the workshops were really well received, and many attendee’s left with their heads

spinning with new ideas.

Friday night was in two parts, an Irish Session at the Morse Tavern (where I was) and a drum circle at the Common St. Center led by Dave Curry. As I was not at the Drum Circle, I will let Bruno cover that. The Irish session was great! Multiple musicians showed up, including many of the attendee’s and folks from the area. Rhythm bones and bodhran ruled the night with three drums rocketing, and multiple rhythm bone players joining several fiddles, banjos, and guitars! The tunes flowed as well as the Guinness, and as they say, “the Craic was mighty” and went long into the night!

Saturday morning we had a unique presentation of the Indian Drum Language, Solkatu, by Italian percussionist Fabio Pirozzoli. While difficult to understand, his enthusiasm and encouragement helped rhythm bone players work through the process.

Steve Wixson unveiled a 19th century project to understand why rhythm bones were popular in the 19th century, which may eventually lead to several articles for our newsletter. We are looking for participants for this project, please contact Steve Wixson for more details.

The Rhythm Bones Society has held “Flash Mobs” at several of our events in Leominster, MA, and Grand Rapids, MI. As part of Bones Fest XXIX, we descended upon the Natick Farmers Market, starting with Paul Sedgwick on banjo, Mary Gunderson King on guitar, and Jon Danforth on fiddle, and gradually adding almost 30 rhythm bone players! The Market was alive with music, and everyone showed their appreciation.

As an organizer I could not attend every event, but as I returned to the

Common St. Spiritual Center with cold drinks and ice, the pleasant sounds of the Busted Jug Band were emanating from the stage! Old friends Rob Rudin, and Dennis Poitras, along with new friend Jeremy Lyons made up the sub-set of the band who usually have five members, and they added new electricity to the event! They were joined on fiddles by Jon Danforth and Alan Kaufman and a room full of rhythm bones players!

The Saturday evening performance included far too many performances to remember, but here are a few, Kenny and Teri Wolin adding percussion to a tune by their daughter previously recorded, sweet and elegant, Graham Hargrove playing rhythm bones and bodhran at the same time while Alan Kaufman fiddled, Jonathan Danforth whistling and playing rhythm bones, and so many others!

After Sunday morning breakfast, and many goodbyes, about 10 players left for the Museum of Fine Arts. The Curator of the Museum Instrument Collection Jared Katz, was nice enough to make the arrangements for us to visit the Museum, and in particular, William Sydney Mounts’ painting, *The Bone Player*. This iconic painting has been a favorite of the Rhythm Bones Society since our inception in 1999. Although I did not attend, I reveled in the pictures and phone calls that I received that afternoon. I’m so glad they were able to participate!

Bones Fest XXIX was my 22nd Bones Fest. They have enriched my life and that of my family, especially Jeremy who passed away last year (rip). Thank you all for attending and continuing the tradition! *Steve Brown*



Thursday night’s reception at Morse Tavern with the Jug Nuts Band joined with Hubby Jenkins.



Start of the Flash Mob

Minutes of the Board Meeting

The meeting was called to order by Skeffington Flynn in the Common Street Spiritual Center, Natick, MA, on Saturday, August 9, 2025 at 2:15 PM with all members present except Tom Connolly. The minutes of the last meeting as they appear in Rhythm Bones Player, Vol 26, No 2, were approved as printed. There was no Treasurer's Report.

The meeting was called to order as the Nominating Committee and all current members would like to serve for another year except for Steve Wixson who does not want to run for the position of Secretary/Treasurer. Since this office needs someone with certain skills, the Committee after considerable discussion decided to postpone the meeting until one or more qualified people can be identified. The Committee will then meet virtually over the Internet to nominate Board members for next year. The General Membership meeting was also postponed until the Nominating Committee can vote on a slate of nominees. At that time there will a Virtual General Membership meeting using the Internet.

Old Business. There were a few items that are not relevant now and were dismissed.

New Business. Jonathan Danforth volunteered to host Bones Fest XXX next year. The Board asked him for a formal proposal.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:15.
Respectfully Submitted, Steve Wixson,



Ron Bruschi rehearsing for the Show

How I Happened to Write *The Music Man* by Meredith Willson

[Sandor Slomovits found this gem and shared it in his comprehensive article on Percy Dansforth (https://aadl.org/sites/default/files/docfiles/percy_mr_bones_danforth-sandor_slomovits.pdf). The following was extracted from the liner notes on the back side of *The Music Man* LP record. Meredith Willson (1902-1984) was an American flautist, composer, conductor, musical arranger, bandleader, playwright, and writer.]

My town was Mason City, Iowa.

I had to take piano lessons when I was very young. Most of the kids on our block had to take. I began to take when I was around seven. That was about the age when most of the kids I knew took.

However, even before piano lessons, the chances were that you had already lost your lay status by getting involved with one of the following musical instruments: (A) a pair of bones, (b) a jew's-harp, or (c) an old fashioned piccolo with seven holes and a couple of little, fugitive-tadpole, German-silver keys.

This abrupt change in a hitherto-care-free slingshot world was invariably brought about when some visiting relative heard you (a) whistle, (b) sing, or (c) cough one day out in the back yard when you thought you were enjoying a little privacy, and, insisting that your harmless idiocies were signs of genius, rushed you down to the local music store, convinced that your great talent should be fostered without delay.

At the store said well-meaning relative was sure to select one of the three above-mentioned items for the simple reason that a pair of bones is the cheapest thing you can buy next to a jew's-harp, except for a piccolo which you can get for nothing; in fact, a bonus for carting it off the premises is by no means unusual.

Also, there appears to be a universal belief that these particular tools of Orpheus are easy to learn to play. This, of course, is the most wide-spread swindle ever to be circulated in our modern civilization. And I can so testify because I hit the jackpot with these relatives all in one summer who heard me playing reveille on a piece of old gas pipe out back of the barn: Uncle B. B. bought me bones, Aunt Lida bought me a jew's-harp, and Cousin Gus bought me an old-style piccolo.

Well, there happened to be a bones expert in our neighborhood. He was an older kid who lived two houses away.

He used to grab my bones, give them one simple straight-arm push, and immediately set them to sprrrrrrrrattling like a shinny stick on a picket fence. In fact, I learned everything from him about rattling bones except how to do it myself.

I hope you enjoy the sound rack from *The Music Man* picture. Uncle B. B., Aunt Lida, and Cousin Gus did.



The Grand Finale Congo Line



Saturday Group Photograph. Front from left; Graham Hargrove, Jonathan Danforth, Evan Lattimore, Bruno Giles, Kyle Forsthoff, and Steve Wixson. Back from left; Cliff Teixeira, Ron Bruschi, Teri Wolin, Kenny Wolin, Dean Robinson, Mary Gunderson King, Bruce Strong, Skeffington Flynn, Ayal Zinger, Susan Riedesel, Darryl 'Spike Bones' Muhrer, Paul Sedgwick, Trueman Muhrer-Irwin, Marie Bruschi, Jim Runner, Rob Rudin, Tommy Byrnes, Dennis Riedesel, Spencer Udelson, and Steve Brown.

Rhythm Bones Society

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Address Correction Requested