

Workshop/Master Class/Outreach Service Descriptions

The Singer/Songwriter/Guitarist's Craft

A hands-on workshop/master class for up to ten participants. (Day-long and two-day retreat options available.) The workshop begins with a "song circle" where each singer/songwriter performs one or two recent compositions. Following the song circle, Steve will outline his creative process. He will highlight how his guitar playing and the various fingerpicking and strumming styles he employs support lyrical content. When and where to insert bridges and instrumental breaks will also be explored. Steve will then share tools and resources he employs when crafting his music. Various props will be used to provide participants with inspiration and songwriting assignments will be given. Steve will be available to provide encouragement and one-on-one coaching as workshop participants compose a new song. The workshop ends with a second song circle where each participant performs their new work for the others. If time permits and if there is interest, the importance of making quality, professional, mastered recordings will be discussed. Protecting/copyrighting and how to distribute one's work may also be examined.

Making Cover Songs Your Own

Pete Seeger, Cathy Fink, Peter Yarrow, Doc Watson, John McCutcheon, Dewey Balfa, Marcy Marxer, Gordon Lightfoot, Tom Paxton, Jerry Jeff Walker, Elizabeth Cotton, The Boys of the Lough, Lydia Mendoza... these are just a few of the Folk Music greats Steve has known, worked with, performed with, and presented. In this hour-long outreach service, Steve will perform extracts of songs composed by some of these artists as he learned them. He will then share the process he employed to make these tunes his own. Steve will then perform selected songs in their entirety, demonstrating how he gives each new life.

*** Over Please ***

In The Tradition: Wooden Music

During this hour-long outreach service, Steve will perform traditional tunes and songs he has learned from some of the Folk Music Masters whom he has known and/or from recordings he has studied. He will discuss how such traditional music has influenced his songwriting. He will perform selected song pairs where he will play a traditional tune highlighting musical figures, chord structures, alternative tunings, picking patterns, etc., that he has borrowed or adopted or transformed, and then perform one of his tunes in that respective tradition. Material to be performed may cover a broad spectrum of styles ranging from Bluegrass to Celtic, Appalachian to Cajun, Acadian to Country Blues, and Tex-Mex to Gospel.

The Road

Being a professional touring musician is more than creating great art. In this hour-long workshop, Steve will offer advice to help singer/songwriters prepare for gigging and touring. As a presenter that books and supports some 100 distinct musical events a year as part of his “day job”, Steve will share with participants what he is looking for from artists seeking gigs. As a 40-year veteran of “The Road”, he will discuss how the music business has evolved since he first started playing out and how he has changed both his life and business plans in order to deal with the realities of being a gigging singer/songwriter today. He will share the tools and materials he has developed for prospective presenters and promoters, and strategies that workshop participants might emulate. The importance of producing quality, professional, mastered recordings and developing presenter-friendly websites will be discussed. The copyrighting original works, how to collect ASCAP, BMI or SESAC royalties, and how to ensure that the creators of covers performed are properly compensated will be examined.

On Valuing Music and Respecting Musicians: How Streaming Culture Has Changed the Creative Landscape

In this hour-long workshop Steve will examine how streaming culture has changed the nature of the music business. The harsh reality is that most artists find it difficult to make a living and that many immensely talented musicians have stopped creating new work. This workshop will explore the various ethical dilemmas artists and the music industry has faced both historical and current including how the “old record” business worked for the record companies and never really worked for musicians, how the internet and the modern streaming culture has forever changed the money paradigm, and how payola has evolved but still exists.