

## Steven J. Schmidt -- Long Bio

Steven J. Schmidt, Sally Ordway Commitment Award winner recognizing his lifetime achievement, contribution, and leadership in the arts (<https://youtu.be/uEYSBOPsbsk>), is a Midwestern singer/songwriter who has written hundreds of songs, and each one is like a bottle of fine, bourbon barrel-aged stout. He performs his rich, full-flavored original tunes, crafted over the last fifty years, at house concerts, listening rooms, coffee houses, wineries, theatres, and festivals. A highly skilled guitarist some refer to as “a folkie with chops,” Steve is noted for his fingerpicking, novel chord voicings, use of alternate tunings and multiple instruments, and playing up-the-neck.

Steven has been hard at work in the studio recording his soon-to-be-released album entitled **The Driftless Sessions** that will drop on September 6, 2025 at a concert he will stage as a fundraiser for The History Center of Olmsted County (tickets available [here](#)). He has also been busy producing his new YouTube series entitled **A Songwriter's Craft**. A direct link to all episodes is available on his YouTube channel via his website [here](#). He continues to perform in support of his “Heartland” and “The Road” CD's and performing new songs he has written. His recordings are available on his [web site](#), [Bandcamp page](#), [YouTube Channel](#), and [Spotify Channel](#).

His music has been featured in a PBS-affiliate KSMQ-TV's [Off 90](#) segment, KBEM's **Twin Cities Weekend** broadcast entitled [Steve Schmidt Creates Midwestern Songwriting Legacy](#), [Open Mic America](#) segments, and a [Music of America](#) podcast.

Two-Time GRAMMY® Award Winners, [Cathy Fink & Marcy Marxer](#) write, “Beautiful imagery and guitar playing!” about Steven's recent National Public Radio “Tiny Desk Concert” submission, “The Witch of the Reeds”.

Ken Onstad, President of [New Folk Records](#), says about Steve's **Heartland** album, “There could be no better title for this CD. With these songs, Steven has courageously opened up his heart and invited the listeners to experience an amazing reflection on some of the highest and lowest moments in his life. His guitar work is extraordinary; embracing the sad whimsy of a Nick Drake and the creative fury of a Leo Kottke. It is a perfect CD for anyone who enjoys great guitar and great stories.”

Jeff Pieters of the [Rochester Post-Bulletin](#) referred to Steve as “...a talented guitarist and gentle, introspective lyricist.”

Sean Dowse, retired Executive Director of the Sheldon Theatre in Red Wing, MN wrote, “Steven J. Schmidt's song lyrics are a vivid mix of deep honesty and vulnerability that seamlessly meld with haunting and engaging melodies. I observed immersed attention and enthusiastic response to deft musicianship and a new and penetrating vision... I highly recommend his show, his songs, and his appealing brightness.”

Steve has direct links to and has worked with many folk music icons during his career. As a board member of [Sing Out, Inc.](#), publisher of [Sing Out!](#) Magazine, folk music books and recordings, Steve worked with and swapped songs with Pete Seeger. While on a business trip to Washington, D.C., folk music great Cathy Fink asked Steve to perform on the “I Have Seen Freedom” album she and Marcy Marxer were producing for Si Kahn. He developed friendships with and learned songs from such artists as The Boys of the Lough and Lydia Mendoza as a performer, stage manager and host at the National Park Service's Border Folk Festival.

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While working for a concert series during graduate school, Steve sat in with Dewey Balfa when Dewey's guitarist was unable to make a trip and helped present a workshop with Elizabeth Cotton and Mike Seeger. Steve has played in various settings ranging from workshops to song circles and conferences to festivals, with such performers as Doc Watson, David Holt, Bryan Bowers, John McCutcheon, Tom Paxton, and George Kahumoku Jr.

While working in Topeka, Kansas, Steve competed at the National Flatpicking Championship and National Fingerpicking Championship at the Walnut Valley Festival in Winfield, Kansas and placed third in the Folk Guitar Division and fifth in the Folk Singing Division of the Kansas State Fiddling and Picking Championship. Steve's music was twice featured on in-studio performances hosted by Gloria Throne that aired on KANU-FM (University of Kansas). While working as Director of Arts Resources for the City of El Paso, Texas, he was a frequent performer on Dan Lambert's **Blues Train** program on KTEP-FM (University of Texas at El Paso) and he performed during KTEP's 10th Anniversary Celebration for **A Prairie Home Companion**, broadcast from the Chamizal National Memorial Theater.

Steven makes his home in Rochester, Minnesota and spends summer weekends in West Salem, Wisconsin. He recently retired from his "day job" as Artistic Director and General Manager of the City of Rochester Music Department/ Riverside Concerts where he conceived, booked and managed the popular *Down by the Riverside*, *Riverside Live*, and *World Music* concert series. He also served as Curator of the *Thursdays on First & Third* music festival and managed an Education and Community Outreach program and administered a Community Music program. Steven and his wife, Elizabeth, are the principals at West Channel Records and West Channel Music publishing.

**Steve's Website:**

<https://stevenjschmidt.net/>

**Steve's YouTube Channel:**

<https://www.youtube.com/@StevenJSchmidtSongwriter>

**Steven's Bandcamp Page:**

<https://stevenjschmidt.bandcamp.com/>

**Steve's Facebook Artist Page:**

<https://www.facebook.com/stevenjschmidt.music>

**Steve's Instagram:**

[@stevenjschmidtmusic](https://www.instagram.com/stevenjschmidtmusic)

**Steve's Spotify Channel:**

<https://open.spotify.com/artist/7LAAFA7xSzmXXxTkNJEajk>

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records