



~ Burlington Vermont's lively band of singers ~

Social Band's Vermont Composer's Project The Composers

Mary Alice Amidon, Brattleboro. Deeply involved in traditional music and dance for 30 years, Mary Alice has presented concerts, teacher workshops, and school residencies in music, storytelling, and dance throughout Vermont, New York State and around the country, both independently and with her husband, Peter. She has presented at the Northeast Whole Language Conference in Johnson for several years. The Amidons have released several recordings and books of traditional dance for children and community dance leaders. www.amidonmusic.com

Peter Amidon, Brattleboro. Peter is founder and former director of the Brattleboro Music Center Children's Choir, and assistant choir director at the Guilford Community Church. He and his wife, Mary Alice, left full-time elementary school music teaching jobs a decade ago to devote more time to their concerts, and to conduct elementary school residencies of singing, storytelling and traditional dance. Peter also calls contra and community dances throughout New England, and leads monthly community sings of early American folk hymns. www.amidonmusic.com

Rachel Bissex, Burlington. (1956-2005.) Raised in Newton, Massachusetts, Rachel started playing folk guitar at age 13 and eventually earned a B.F.A. in the Performing Arts from Johnson State College. In the 20 years since then, she performed her own songs in concert halls, coffee shops and festivals around the country. She founded the Burlington Coffeehouse and also was instrumental in organizing Burlington's Discover Jazz Festival. Her pieces – sometimes political, sometimes personal – were popular with audiences, who also enjoyed her humor and easy stage presence. Rachel passed away on February 20, 2005, after a long battle with cancer. www.rachelbissex.com

Betsy Brigham, Marshfield. A native of Bakersfield, Betsy is a self-taught musician and composer who has been involved in musical theatre, choral and folk singing her entire life. She began composing for chorus while a member of Anima, the Central Vermont medieval ensemble. Between 1998 and 2002, to showcase her works, she produced and directed *Winter Cheer*, a Revels-type celebration of Winter Solstice and Christmas. She is the after-school Program Director at Twinfield Union High School, as well as a freelance illustrator focusing on botanical and natural history subjects.

Patti Casey, Montpelier. Born in Vergennes, Patti studied flute in high school and college, moving to guitar, singing, and songwriting in her early 20's. Much of her time is occupied by being a mom, and she performs often with the Bluegrass Gospel Project, a seven-piece New England band. Patti has traveled a lot in Appalachia, and the rootsy music of that region inspires much of her writing. She has recorded several albums, solo and with friends, and appeared live on "A Prairie Home Companion," taking third place in the Talent From Towns Under 2000 competition. www.patticasey.com

Tom Cleary, Burlington. A jazz pianist, Tom has studied technique with Charles Eller and improvisation with Yusef Lateef and Archie Shepp. He plays classical piano as well, and took first

place in the 1996 University of Vermont Concerto Competition. He has taught at schools and camps in Massachusetts, New Jersey and Vermont, and teaches students at his Burlington studio.

Susan Comen, Middlesex. With a B.A. in music from Lewis and Clark College in Oregon, Susan has conducted children's choirs and taught Suzuki violin in Central Vermont since 1996. She is a founding member of the medieval quintet Aurora, and has sung with Anima, Social Band, and the Vermont Millennium Festival Chorus. www.auroramusic.org

Sara Doncaster, Irasburg. The director and co-founder of the Warebrook Contemporary Music Festival, Sara was awarded a Citation of Merit from the Vermont Arts Council. Her music garnered her a Charles Ives Scholarship from American Academy of Arts and Letters and commissions for a variety of chamber, choral and vocal music. Sara earned degrees in Theory and Composition from Boston and Brandeis Universities. A native of Irasburg, Sara grew up on the dairy farm where she now lives with her family. She teaches music in the Lowell and Newport Town schools. www.warebrook.org

Billy Drislane, Burlington. Billy was a charter member of Social Band. A fiddler, guitarist, singer, and songwriter, he is the leader of a string band called the Zillionaires. He learned what he knows by listening to his mother play the piano and listening to his father whistle his tunes. Currently, Billy's main influences are his wife, Liz Thompson, and his son, Willy. He is a practicing attorney in Burlington by day.

Jon Gailmor, Lake Elmore. Jon "failed to grow up" in Philadelphia, then "sought the peace and open arms of the Green Mountain State in the winter of '77, where it felt right to make music my own way." He hosts a weekly radio show and has performed in schools, colleges, child care and senior centers, clubs, coffeehouses, prisons, on tour with the Vermont Symphony Orchestra, and even in a tennis stadium in Lima, Peru. Jon has six recordings, including the 2004 release, "Checking In." www.jongailmor.com

David Ross Gunn, Barre. The inimitable David Gunn, who can be presented only in his own words, "studied composition at a big university not noted for its music department. He equates the tunesmithing process with hanging from the ceiling while grappling with an annoyed boa constrictor. Still, his eclectically-titled pieces *Cowbellies*, *Wagadoo* and *Khartoumaraca* are well worth hearing." David's pieces have been commissioned by the Vermont Contemporary Music Ensemble, Vermont Youth Orchestra, Vermont Symphony Orchestra and others.

John Harrison, Plainfield. John has been playing saxophone and singing for 30 years, starting as a chorister in his father's upstate New York Episcopal church. He spent 13 years in New York City, where he led his own bands, performed with Otis Rush, Buster Poindexter and in an improvisational musical-comedy group. He moved to Vermont in 1992, and teaches choral music at Twinfield Union High School in Marshfield, directs the Montpelier Community Gospel Choir, and performs with his own band as well as with Michael Arnowitz, the Vermont Jazz Ensemble and the Onion River Chorus.

Michael Hopkins, Burlington. On the faculty at the University of Vermont, Michael conducts the University Symphony Orchestra, teaches courses in music education and music technology, and performs on the double bass. For 15 years, he has composed serious works for string orchestra, full orchestra, chamber ensembles and solo instruments, as well as electro-acoustic and popular music. www.uvm.edu/~mhopkins/

Seth Houston, Brattleboro. Seth grew up in Craftsbury and began composing in the shape-note tradition at age 12. He sang with the teen chorus Village Harmony for many years, contributing many songs to their repertoire. He earned a B.A. in Composition and Religion at Oberlin College, and an M.A. in Asian Studies at the University of Michigan. He teaches music at Monadnock Waldorf School in Keene, New Hampshire, directs the Brattleboro area teen chorus, *Big Sky*, leads community sings, and plays piano and guitar with several contra-dance bands. www.liftticketband.com

R.W. Keller, Burlington. A self-taught bassist, composer, arranger, and former member of Social Band, R.W. went from angelic choirboy to scruffy rock guitarist to sophisticated jazz bassist in just 20 years. A couple of decades later, besides working at an architectural salvage warehouse, he writes “poly-valent improvo-pop” pieces for the jazz trio Moodcircus and performs with them in the Burlington area.

Jorge Martin, Addison. Born in Santiago de Cuba, Jorge came to the United States in 1965, and settled in Vermont in 1994. He majored in music at Yale University and earned an M.A. and Ph.D. from Columbia. He has received commissions for his operatic works from numerous groups, including the Vermont Contemporary Music Ensemble and the Vermont Symphony Orchestra’s “Made in Vermont” tour. The Vermont Music Teachers Association named him “2003 Composer of the Year”. www.jorgemartin.com

Anna Patton, Brattleboro. Anna was born in Bakersfield of a musical family, and grew up singing and touring with the teen chorus Village Harmony and the mixed-age chorus Northern Harmony. She is working on a senior project in translation and ethnomusicology at Marlboro College, and performs dance music on the clarinet in contra, Balkan, Brazilian and swing styles. She has composed half a dozen choral pieces in the shape-note tradition, some of which have been performed by Social Band as well as Village Harmony and Northern Harmony.

Troy Peters, Colchester. A dynamic conductor and composer with a wide repertoire, Troy is conductor of the Middlebury College Orchestra, as well as Music Director of the Vermont Youth Orchestra, which has seen tremendous growth and national acclaim under his baton. He gained international attention for collaborations with guitarist Trey Anastasio of the rock band Phish. Troy’s compositions range from orchestral pieces to a large body of songs and an opera for hand puppets. www.troypetersmusic.com

Thomas Read, Burlington. A professor of music at the University of Vermont, Thomas studied violin, composition, and conducting at several conservatories, including Oberlin, New England, Mozarteum and Peabody Conservatories. He has composed more than 100 works for small ensembles, full orchestra, solo voice, chorus and musical theater, most of which written for specific occasions or commissions. A recent work, *Alcyone* (for narrator, chorus, accordion, marimba, steel drum, and synthesizer), enjoyed a successful premier at the Barbican Centre in London.

Robert Resnik, Burlington. For more than 30 years, Robert Resnik has encouraged folk music in Vermont by singing weekly for children, performing regularly at festivals and community events with a wide variety of musical partners, hosting Vermont Public Radio’s *All the Traditions*, and writing music reviews for *Seven Days* newspaper. For the past decade, he has worked as Reference Librarian at the Fletcher Free Library in Burlington, serving as Co-Director since 1988. This is his first choral composition.

Katie Shimizu, Marshfield. After moving to Marshfield at age ten, Katie spent ten years singing and touring with the teen chorus Village Harmony and the mixed chorus Northern Harmony. She began composing at the age of 11, and helped to teach and direct her high school choir at Twinfield High School in Plainfield. She is now attending Emerson College in Boston, majoring in film production.

Moira Smiley, New Haven. Moira began composing at age six and attended Sacred Harp sings with her family. Now, with a B.A. in Performance from the Indiana University School of Music, she works internationally as a composer, singer and teacher of new, folk and early music. She performs as a soprano soloist with Theatre of Voices, Fretwork Consort of Viols and her own group Anima Fortis, which presents theatrical performances of Italian Baroque music composed by women. Her *a cappella* quartet VIDA performed traditional and original folk music around the U.S. from 1996 to 2001. www.moirasmiley.com

Stephen Spitzer, Brattleboro. Stephen grew up in a large musical family and played trumpet, guitar and drums in his youth. He became an avid singer of shape-note music while a counselor at Farm and Wilderness summer camps in Plymouth, Vermont. A professional child and family therapist, Stephen plays marimba and vibraphone, and has composed several choral pieces in the shape-note hymn tradition, as well as instrumental pieces. He finds it amazing to feel kinship with so many musicians and singers around Vermont.

Pete Sutherland, Monkton. For several decades, Pete has brought original and age-old acoustic folk music to stages and festivals across North America and Europe. He has played and sung in half a dozen groups, including Social Band, and leads the contra-dance band Clayfoot Strutters in concerts and dances around the United States, Central America and the Caribbean. Pete, who loves the fiddle best of all the instruments he plays, has composed dozens of solo, choral and instrumental pieces. www.epactmusic.com

Liz Thompson, Burlington. Liz is a vocalist and percussionist with Aurora, a five-woman ensemble that performs impassioned interpretations of vocal music of the Middle Ages and Renaissance, and explores new music that complements those traditions. Liz directed Anima, a women's medieval vocal ensemble, from 1988 to 1998. In 1998, she co-founded Social Band with Don Jamison, and was director until 2001. She has studied and performed traditional music – from southern shape-note songs to Bulgarian dances – with Northern Harmony, Bayley-Hazen Singers, Matrix, and the South End Scramblers. In addition to making music, Liz works as a consulting ecologist and instructor at the University of Vermont. www.auroramusic.org