

Banjo Jim's First Annual Banjo Festival '08

Wednesday, April 16, 2008 7pm-2am

With

Tony Trischka, Noam Pikelny, Shlomo Pestcoe, Andy Cartoun, Dayna Kurtz,
Matt Munisteri, Eamon O'Leary, Jesse Harris, Skip Ward, John Pinamonti,
Eli Smith, Jake Schepps, Alexa Story, Sana Ndiaye and much more!

\$10 cover, two drink minimum, no advance tickets

Doors open 6:30pm

Held in benefit of
The Akonting Center

The Evening's Program

Hosted by Lisa Zwier-Croce

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|---------|--|
| 7:00pm | Alexa Story – lyrical narratives |
| 7:50 | Jake Schepps with Ross Martin, guitar – ragtime banjo and Choro tunes |
| 8:15 | Jesse Harris and Mauro Rofosco – 6-string banjo/percussion duo |
| 8:40 | Eamon O'Leary – tenor banjo with Dana Lyn, fiddle, and Brendan Dolan, piano |
| 9:00 | Shlomo Pestcoe, “Banjo Evolution 101: West African Roots, New World Innovation” with Rena Rubin and Sana Ndiaye – special presentation with ekonting, early 4-string gourd banjo, fretless banjo, standard banjo and banjeaurine |
| 9:50 | Eli Smith – frailing style |
| 10:15 | John Pinamonti – faux-sitar banjo |
| 10:45 | Tony Trischka – progressive bluegrass banjo |
| 11:35 | Dayna Kurtz – originals and covers |
| 12:00am | Noam Pikelny with Chris Eldridge, guitar – originals and bluegrass favorites |
| 12:25 | Andy Cartoun (aka Stony Lonesome) – Scruggs style pickin’ |
| 12:45 | Matt Munisteri – new Vaudeville on Silver Bells |
| 1:00 | Sana Ndiaye – the ekonting today |

Banjo Jim's
700 East 9th St at Avenue C
New York, NY 10009

<http://www.banjojims.com>

<http://www.myspace.com/banjojims>

Our **First Annual Banjo Festival '08** is being held in benefit of **The Akonting Center**.

The Akonting Center is a grassroots, non-governmental, cultural initiative in the village of Mandinary, Gambia (West Africa), started by Gambian Jola folk music scholar Daniel Laemouahuma Jatta and Swedish banjo historian Ulf Jägfors. Its objectives are to research, document, and perpetuate the many different endangered string instrument traditions of the various peoples of Senegambia, such as plucked lutes (e.g. the Jola **akonting** [**ekonting**], the Manjak **bunchundo**, the Wolof **xalam**, etc.), **bowed lutes** (fiddles, e.g. the Fula **nyaanyooru**, the Wolof **riti**, etc.), and harp-lutes (bridge-harps, e.g. the Jola **furakaf**, the Mandinka **simbingo**, etc.).

The Akonting Center is organized under the auspices of **The Chossan Center for Senegambian Culture**, a community-based NGO which strives to perpetuate the traditional agrarian way of life and folkways of Senegambia as the foundation for progressive communal self-development on a democratic cooperative basis.



The **akonting** [**ekonting**] is the traditional folk lute of the **Jola** (**Diola** in French transliteration), a West African people found in Casamance (southern Senegal), Gambia,

and Guinea-Bissau. It's a banjo-like instrument with a skin-headed gourd body, two long strings and a top short drone string, similar to the short 5th "thumb string" on the **5-string banjo**. The traditional technique for playing the ekonting is a form of **down-picking** called **oo'teck**. It's remarkably similar to 19th century **stroke style**, the oldest documented style of playing the banjo, and the folk variants of stroke style -- **frailing**, **clawhammer**, **thumping**, etc.

The ekonting is a principal "missing link" that connects the banjo to its West African heritage and will be played by Sana Ndiaye, Shlomo Pestcoe and possibly others during this festival.

<http://www.myspace.com/akonting>
<http://www.myspace.com/danieljatta>
<http://www.myspace.com/banjoulf>
<http://www.shlomomusic.com>

All proceeds from the door will be donated to the Akonting Center. If you wish to make further donations, please see the staff or Eli Smith during the evening, or email Eli Smith elismithetc@gmail.com .



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If you enjoy this event and want to learn about similar upcoming events at Banjo Jim's, please subscribe to our email broadcast <http://banjojims.com/phplist/?p=subscribe>

Program Notes (April 16, 2008)

7:00-7:50 Alexa Story

Alexa Woodward is New York city based artist whose original banjo songs have been likened to the music of Devandra Barnhart, Patty Griffin, and Gillian Welch. "I will be playing a few original songs on banjo; some of the songs have an Appalachian feel - probably comes from growing up in Virginia and South Carolina- while others use the banjo in new ways. I find that the banjo is an emotional instrument, and I like to use its hollow, achy twang to compliment lyrical narratives."

www.myspace.com/alexasounds

7:50-8:15 Jake Schepps with Ross Martin, guitar

Jake Schepps is known for his intelligent touch on the banjo and his imaginative variation on string-band music. His group, Expedition Quartet, explores a wide array of styles and musical sensibilities from swing to tango to bluegrass to jazz. Jake's recent release *Ten Thousand Leaves* was named one of the Top 10 recordings of 2007 by JazzReview.com, and received an award from the Independent Acoustic Music Awards.

"I am pretty far from a traditionalist and try to apply my own sensibilities and interpretations to the music, which in this presentation will include some 'classic' or ragtime style banjo (played on a steel-strung Gibson Mastertone), some Brazilian choro tunes and an original composition. I will be playing mostly with Brooklyn-based guitarist Ross Martin and a classic banjo duet with Noam Pikelyny."

www.jakeschepps.com

www.expeditionquartet.com

www.youtube.com/user/10000Leaves

www.rossmartinguitar.com

8:15- 8:40 Jesse Harris and Mauro Rofosco

Grammy-winning singer/songwriter Jesse Harris and Mauro Rofosco will be performing as a duo of 6-string banjo and percussion. "I would not say that my approach to the banjo is traditional, but more of a hybrid guitar/banjo approach to playing "singer-songwriter" music, although I will doing a great deal of

finger-picking. We'll probably play some covers too. In terms of style, I'd like to think that we're tracing the roots of American banjo and Brazilian percussion back to their African roots to wed them together again in a contemporary setting of original music" (Harris)

www.jesseharrismusic.com

www.myspace.com/jesseharrismusic

www.forrointhedark.com

www.myspace.com/forrointhedark

8:40-9:00 Eamon O'Leary with Dana Lyn, fiddle, and Brendan Dolan, piano

Eamon O'Leary is a banjo and guitar player from Dublin, Ireland now living on the Lower East Side. He has toured and recorded with many of the great players in Irish music. A recording of the session he hosted on Avenue B for many years is now available, *Live at Mona's*.

"The tenor banjo has become a key part of Irish music in recent decades. I'll play a few dance tunes with my friends Dana and Brendan."

<http://www.liveatmonas.com>

9:00-9:45 Shlomo Pestcoe, "Banjo Evolution 101: West African Roots, New World Innovation" with Rena Rubin, banjo and fiddle, and Sana Ndiaye, ekonting (special presentation)

Since the early '80's, Shlomo Pestcoe has been performing everything from old-time country, early blues and Louisiana Cajun/Black Creole to French-Canadian, Scandinavian and Jewish klezmer dance music on a variety of different instruments, ranging from mandolin and fiddle to button accordion and concertina. He first picked up the 5-string banjo as a teen in the mid-70's. Over the years, Shlomo has mastered a variety of banjo styles including clawhammer down-picking and old-time 2-finger and 3-finger up-picking from the African American and European American traditions. In addition to performing and teaching, he researches and writes about ethnic/regional vernacular musical traditions the world over as well as the history and lore of musical instruments. Shlomo's main areas of study are the origins and the organology of the lute family of string instruments found around the globe with a focus on the rich diversity of African lute family instruments. In recent years he has been working with other researchers investigating the banjo's early history and its roots in Africa and the African Diaspora. Together with fellow banjo historian Greg

C.Adams, Shlomo has created a vital public forum for contemporary banjo roots research online: ***Banjo Roots: From Africa to the New World*** <http://www.myspace.com/banjoroots> . Likewise, he created and hosts ***Akonting: A West African Ancestor of the Banjo*** <http://www.myspace.com/akonting> .

“I’ll trace the roots and history of the banjo by presenting and playing different forms of the instrument. First, I’ll touch on the banjo’s West African heritage by presenting the Jola ***ekonting*** (akonting). Next, I’ll introduce the early gourd banjo with 4 strings (1 short ‘thumb string’ + 3 long melody strings), the most prevalent form of the instrument throughout the New World from the late 17th century on through the advent of the 5-string banjo in the 1840s. Then I’ll look at different kinds of 5-string banjo, using my 1880s fretless banjo made by Edwin J. Cubley of Ravenswood, IL (active c. 1880-1893) and two modern replicas of Classic Era (c. 1880-1920) instruments: a full-size ‘regular’ or ‘standard’ banjo and a short-neck ‘pony’ banjo (also known as a ***banjeaurine***). I’ll follow this up with the modern 4-string tenor banjo and a couple of banjo hybrids, the banjo-guitar and the banjo-ukulele. All in all, I hope my presentation will be a unique sampler of different instruments, styles and music . . . in other words, certifiable banjo mania taken to the extreme.”

Rena Rubin, old-time multi-instrumentalist, studied banjo and fiddle with the late great Appalachian master Tommy Jarrell. Sana Ndiaye is an ekonting player from Senegal appearing later in the program.

<http://www.shlomomusic.com>
<http://www.myspace.com/uncleshlomo>
<http://www.myspace.com/banjoroots>
<http://www.myspace.com/akonting>

9:50-10:10 Eli Smith

Eli Smith is a banjo player, writer, researcher and promoter of folk music living in New York City who plays as part of the [Roots ‘n’ Ruckus](#) music collective. He is the host/producer of Down Home Radio, a hardcore, unreconstructed, paleo-acoustic, folk music program and hosts Down Home Live every second Saturday of the month at Banjo Jim’s.

“I will play banjo in the old-time frailing style, also known as clawhammer and other names including ‘possum whomping.’ I will

also demonstrate banjo in the style of jug band musician Gus Cannon.”

<http://www.myspace.com/elismithetc>
<http://www.downhomeradioshow.com>

10:15-10:35 John Pinamonti

John Pinamonti is a Brooklyn-based musician who latest CD is *Live at Sunny's*, the legendary Red Hook bar at which he plays a regular gig.

“I will be playing “Within You Without You” (George Harrison) and “That's Alright Ma (I'm Only Bleeding)” (Bob Dylan) using a 6 string banjo in a drone (roots and fifths) tuning. I do play a bit of "regular banjo", but started using the 6th string 10 years ago when I discovered the tuning I use and found it suited my vocal range and also gave me extra bass notes, which helps when I play solo.”

<http://www.pinamonti.com>
<http://www.myspace.com/pinamonti>

(10 minute catch-up)

10:45 – 11:30 Tony Trischka

The avant-garde banjo stylings of Tony Trischka have inspired a whole generation of progressive bluegrass musicians. He is considered among the banjo's very best pickers as well as one of its greatest teachers.

<http://www.tonytrischka.com>
<http://www.myspace.com/tonytrischka>

11:35-12:00 Dayna Kurtz

Dayna Kurtz is the kind of artist who inspires wild-eyed zealotry among her fans, and there are three reasons for it: One, she's an artist's artist, one whose whiskeyed, determined alto often earns her comparisons with Nina Simone; two, while Europeans adore her, she's obscenely underappreciated in her own country; and three, her songs, which straddle a difficult space between jazz, rock, and folk, are pure poetry.

“i'm mainly a songwriter who's also a guitar player. but i play almost exclusively in open tunings which just opens up the instrument

world for me to dabble in anything with strings and frets, including banjo. i compose on whatever the song i'm working on suggests i use. the banjo's warmth and off kilter vibe and simplicity and majestic strength and most importantly, the nostalgic longing it can evoke brings a whole new palette to what might have been just a direct, simple song. i love the way banjo sounds particularly in minor keys. it's the saddest, most mournful sound in the world. having a string whose main purpose is to drone a single note makes its effect hypnotic. i also love playing cover songs written for guitar on banjo. my whole goal with covering other people's songs is to make them utterly feel and sound like my own, and playing a song originally performed on guitar on a banjo has become one of my favorite ways to begin to draw a line in the sand between the original and my own."

<http://www.myspace.com/daynakurtz>
<http://www.daynakurtz.com>

12-12:30 Noam Pikelnny with Chris Eldridge, guitar

Noam Pikelnny hails from Chicago, IL, where he spent his youth in joint custody between Wrigley Field and the Old Town School of Folk Music. During high school, he played all over Illinois and Indiana with several traditional bluegrass bands, which occasionally required him to wear a uniform. He studied music at the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana, before loading up the truck and moving to Boulder, Colorado, that is. In 2002, he became the principal banjoist with the award winning Colorado ensemble, Leftover Salmon. His debut solo record, *In the Maze*, was released on Compass Records, and though it did not have much success on the charts, it made a big splash in the world of postmodern progressive 3-finger style 5-string banjo. He relocated to Nashville, TN, in 2006 to play with New Grass Revival bassist and vocalist, John Cowan. He started performing and recording with mandolinist, fellow cub fan, Chris Thile, in the fall of 2005. Noam is a founding member of Punch Brothers. Their debut album, *Punch*, was released by Nonesuch Records in February 2008 to great critical acclaim. Noam and fellow Punch Brothers received a Grammy® Award nomination for Best Country Instrumental Performance for the song "The Eleventh Reel" on their 2006 release, "How to Grow a Woman from the Ground." In March 2007, *Punch Brothers* premiered *The Blind Leaving the Blind*, a long-form, four-movement chamber suite composed by Chris Thile, at Carnegie's Zankel Hall.

"I will be accompanied by Chris Eldridge (guitarist for Punch Brothers). I'll be playing original instrumental acoustic music from

my CD *In the Maze*, some new original compositions, and some re-workings of bluegrass favorites."

<http://www.myspace.com/noampikelny>

<http://www.punchbrothers.com/>

12:30-12:50 Andy Cartoun (aka Stony Lonesome)

Andy Cartoun (aka Stony Lonesome) has been involved in bluegrass music for over thirty-five years. He plays the five-string banjo in the style of Earl Scruggs, Ralph Stanley, and J.D. Crowe! Growing up in the "hills" of Westchester County, New York he had a chance movie theater encounter in 1968 with the Earl Scruggs banjo sound in the movie *Bonnie and Clyde* (Foggy Mountain Breakdown). Life from that moment on would be different. Hundreds of hours in front of the phonograph player slowed down to 16 RPM, a college choice in Nashville, Tennessee and many Saturday nights at the Grand Ole Opry's Ryman auditorium convinced him that the driving sound of the five-string banjo was his destiny. Andy is currently a member of the traditional bluegrass band Big Apple'achia. The Village Voice calls Big Apple'achia "Strikingly high, lonesome purists!"

"I was thinking of playing a couple of Scruggs style banjo tunes in the banjo tuning of "D". It's a very cool and different banjo kind of sound. As it happens, Earl Scruggs' first ever banjo tune, the one he claims to have figured out the revolutionary 3 finger roll on, was the song 'Rueben' in "D" tuning. This at the tender age of 10 +/- . The rest is history. Anyway, there are a few other tunes that also come to mind I'd like play: "John Henry", "Careless Love", "Holiday Pickin'". They are all cool tunes that have lots of banjo drive to them."

<http://bigappleachia.com/>

<http://www.myspace.com/bigappleachia>

12:50-1:00 Matt Munisteri

Matt Munisteri is a fourth generation Brooklyn-ite who grew up playing the 5-string banjo and now makes his living as a guitarist. He also sings and writes. "My set will feature tunes for the New Vaudeville played on a pair of wah-wah Silver Bells. One of those Silver Bells is a six string."

www.mattmunisteri.com

1:00-1:45 Sana Ndiaye

Sana Ndiaye, a Jola master of the **ekonting** (akonting), was born in Casamance, the southern region of Senegal, in the village of Djembering. When he was a small boy, Sana's grandfather taught him to play the ekonting, the banjo-like folk lute of the Jola. The gourd-bodied instrument is reminiscent of the earliest forms of the banjo and is played using a down-picking technique similar to the oldest documented styles of playing the banjo. Its sound is so soothing that historically it was used to bring peace to the villagers in times of unrest.

“I will be playing the ekonting which is a three-stringed ancient instrument that has been played by members of my family for decades and passed down from generation to generation. I began learning at age 9 and actually became a master of the instrument. I am taking the ekonting to a new level as part of the Gokh-Bi System and also as part of my own band, Sana and the Ekonting Peace Band with the purpose of bringing ekonting music to a much wider audience. *See you at the festival.*”

<http://www.myspace.com/sanandiaye>

<http://www.gbs411.com>

You have 1 file(s) called [Sana.zip](#) for download. You can click on the following link to retrieve your file. The link will expire in 7 days (April 22, 2008.) Link:

<http://download.yousendit.com/0FB049302EA82BC0>

Pre-Festival Broadcast

WKCR 89.9-FM, Matt Winters' "Moonshine Show" airing 10:30am Sunday April 13, 2008 with Andy Cartoun and Richard Ogust on Banjo Jim's Banjo Festival and Mandolin Madness Festival (Thursday, April 17, 2008.)

More Banjo Links:

AIM For Africa Akonting/Banjo Collaborative: A partnership and cultural exchange program between Florida arts and health care organizations, on the one hand, and The Akonting Center for Senegambian Folk Music (Mandinary, Gambia, West Africa) and the Royal Victorian Teaching Hospital (Banjul, Gambia), on the other. <http://www.arts.ufl.edu/cahre/senegambia.asp>

American Banjo Fraternity: <http://www.abfbanjo.org>

Banjo Ben's: Bluegrass and Old Time Music Listings in NY Tri-State area.
<http://www.banjoben.com/>

Banjo Club House: Resources For The Early Banjo
<http://milfordmusic.com/Banjo%20Audio.htm>

Banjo Hangout: <http://www.banjohangout.org>

Banjo Lounge: <http://www.banjolounge.com>

Banjo Newsletter: <http://www.banjonews.com/>

Banjo Roots Blog Site: Exploring the Banjo's Early History & Its Roots in the African Diaspora & Africa <http://www.banjoroots.blogspot.com/>

Banjo Sightings Database: The wonderful 'banjological' site that Greg C Adams and the acclaimed early banjo maker/historian [George Wunderlich](#) developed over the last few years. It's a superb online resource center offering free access to an incredible wealth of historic period art, illustrations, and documentation tracing early banjo history from the instrument's beginnings in the Caribbean in the 17th century on through the American Civil War.
<http://banjodatabase.org>

Bill's Banjos: Cool resource site on banjos of the Classic Era [c.1880-1920] with great photos. <http://billsbanjos.com/index.htm>

Bluegrass Blog: Lots of Banjo news. <http://www.thebluegrassblog.com>

Classic Banjo: Once a very popular musical style, classic banjo (also known as finger-style or guitar-style) has received little attention from contemporary banjo players and music scholars. This site aims to be a resource for anyone interested in learning more about the history of the 5-string banjo in England and America.
<http://www.classicbanjo.com/index.htm>

Mugwumps Online: Information on 19th century and early 20th century banjos, guitars, mandolins, ukes, etc. <http://mugwumps.com>

NYCBluegrass: A great site of local listings. <http://www.nycbluegrass.com/>

Pre-War Gibson Banjos: <http://www.earnestbanjo.com>

The Banjo: Some Thoughts on its African Heritage: Great blog by Shlomo Pestcoe.
<http://blog.myspace.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=blog.view&friendID=51623506&blogID=154733102>

Tommy Jarrell: Sprout Wings and Fly (with tons of great YouTube links)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bDJpN3RDxU&feature=related>

Ulf Jägfors' Banjo Roots/ West African Music Videos: Mostly field recorded videos of West African traditional string instruments, especially the ekonting.

<http://www.youtube.com/user/UlfJagfors>

Zither-Banjo: The [zither-banjo](#) is the form of the Classic Era 5-string banjo that was popular in the UK, created and introduced into England in 1888 by native Brooklynite [!!!] Alfred D. Cammeyer . <http://www.zither-banjo.org/>

And as if that's not enough, be sure to come out tomorrow for:

Banjo Jim's First Annual Mandolin Madness Festival '08

Hosted by Elena Skye – Demolition String Band

Thursday, April 17, 2008 8pm-1am

\$10 cover, two drink minimum, no advance tickets

Doors open 7:30pm

Featuring Barry Mitterhoff, Jimmy Ryan, Bob Mavian (Big Apple'achia), Greg Schochet, Bob Green, Elena Skye, Boo Reiners and more!

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<http://banjojims.com/phplist/?p=subscribe>

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If you would like an email version of these notes with active hyperlinks, contact us at

banjojims@msn.com.

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Special thanks to

Shlomo Pestcoe, whose life of late has been subsumed by an insidious debilitating ailment clinically known as FBM (Freakin' Banjo Mania) symptoms of which range from extreme awkwardness in social situations, due to a marked inability to talk about

nothing else but banjos, to a chronic inability to discern accurate pitches in music as scientific studies have proven that it is virtually impossible for a banjo to ever be tuned properly or to play in tune, for services above and beyond;

Matt Winters (WKCR 89.9-FM) and the Moonshine Show for allowing us on his broadcast;

Andy Cartoun for playing on said broadcast and keeping all our facts straight;
Skip Ward whose wonderful gift of the banjo head he carried around for a year getting signed by a zillion banjo players is going to get some new names;

Travis Stuart who almost made it and will next year;

Richard Rothenberg for donating services as our sound engineer;

Tony Ryan for filming and photographing our event;

Ulf Jagfors for the use of the ekonting image;


Elena Skye and Boo Reiners for constant support and involvement;
and the inimitable Jack Grace,

whose crazy idea it was in the first place for us to do a Banjo Fest!

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212-777-0869

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