

**STAR OF THE NORTH** English Country Dance Weekend  
Friday, October 6 - Sunday, October 8, 2023

**CALLER**



**Susan Kevra** is a dance caller, musician and singer who now makes her home in Nashville, Tennessee. She travels across the country and occasionally, around the globe to teach contra, square dances, English Country dancing and French dancing. Inspired by tunes by her Old World Charm School bandmate, Rachel Bell, Susan has choreographed a dozen English dances and counting. She is also a professor of French and American Studies at Vanderbilt University, where she teaches the class “American Social History through Dance.”

Visit [Susan’s website](#) for more information.

**BAND**

**Alchemy** brings together three dynamic players steeped in traditional English Country and Contra dance music: Karen Axelrod (piano), Rachel Bell (accordion), and Eric Martin (fiddle). Individually, they have performed across the United States, Canada, and Europe. The trio’s improvisatory style brings a contemporary and innovative feel to both traditional and newly composed tunes and songs. From driving Scottish Reels to French Mazurkas and everything in between, Alchemy delights the listener with heartfelt performances with a touch of whimsy. Alchemy plays English country dances, contra dances, concerts, and more, and is in high demand for English country dance weekends and other special events.



**Karen Axelrod’s** piano playing combines expressiveness, energy, lyricism, and power. She is equally at home with styles ranging from traditional folk melodies to passionate tangos to old world French musette waltzes to English Country Dance tunes and much more. She left behind classical music over 40 years ago and has happily settled into her musical home...somewhere between folk, classical and improvisation. Her playing is soulful yet touched with humor and whimsy.

Karen plays with several bands for traditional dance events as well as concerts. Her bands include Alchemy, Foxfire, Peregrine Road and 3rd String Trio. Based in Brattleboro, VT, Karen tours extensively throughout the United States, Canada and abroad at dances, festivals, concerts, camps, private parties, and other events.



**Rachel Bell** is sought after for concerts, English country dances, contra dances, French BalFolk dances, workshops, and festivals around North America. Her playing spans an enormous range of emotion, pushing the boundaries of what is expected from an accordion.

She loves to create authentic connections with audiences everywhere—from packed, energized dance halls to small, intimate house concert settings. Rachel thrives on ensemble projects—especially with her bands Alchemy, Old World Charm School, Eloise & Co., and Peregrine Road. She is collaborating with Susan Kevra to write new dance and tune compositions for the English country dance repertoire. She lives in Brattleboro, Vermont.



**Eric Martin** is equally at home on fiddle and viola, bringing joy and soulful expression to many folkdance idioms. Through the freedom and improvisation inherent in traditional music, Eric enjoys the opportunity to break away from his Classical background while playing for English country dances, contra dances, festivals, balls, camps, and concerts throughout the United States, Canada, and Europe with Alchemy, Axelrod-Martin duo, and

Coincidence. Eric holds performance degrees from Ithaca College and University of Limerick, Ireland and lives and works at Gould Farm, a therapeutic farming community, in the Berkshires.