

SONG & DANCE



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Song & Dance is a celebration of tradition—old-time music and dance as it lives and breathes in the ballrooms, beer halls, and festival tents of the Upper Midwest. Rooted in the ethnic music of German, Czech, Austrian, and Bohemian immigrants, this genre evolved on American soil, blending cultures and generations into a singular musical identity. What began as village tunes and folk dances became part of the heartbeat of America—a heritage carried forward through family, community, and joy.

This music has been part of my life since childhood. My grandparents introduced me to it early, bringing me to dances and tuning in to old-time radio programs. Their passion left a lasting impression, and the music became an important part of my life—always there, always meaningful.

That connection deepened in an unexpected way when my daughter Evelyn faced a life-threatening illness. During that difficult time, I turned to the concertina as a source of comfort and creative expression. It led to the formation of the Riverbend Dutchmen, and to Evelyn—now healthy—becoming a gifted musician herself. My son August has also taken a strong interest in music and is growing into a talented musician. Music is a constant presence in our home—my wife Melissa is a musician as well—and what began as a personal passion has become something our whole family shares. While our story is part of this film, it's just one of many. Thousands of families have similar stories of how music helps people heal, connect, and celebrate life.

Song & Dance is ultimately about community, continuity, and the joy of shared experience. It traces the lifeblood of a tradition that is too often misunderstood or misrepresented. Through historic ballrooms, long-running radio and television broadcasts, and the infectious rhythm of the dance floor, the film reframes old-time music not as a relic, but as a living, evolving cultural force. The future of this music is bright—and it's already in the hands of the next generation.

— *Kris Keltgen*