

## Star of the North 2024 - Biographies



**Gaye Fifer** has been calling at ECD and contra dance camps, weekends and festivals around the country for many years. Her pleasant style and graceful teaching put dancers at ease and set the stage for a great dance experience. A retired elementary school teacher living in Pittsburgh, PA, Gaye is the immediate past president of the Country Dance and Song Society (CDSS) and has a passionate interest in supporting dance community leaders and organizers.



**Karen Axelrod's** piano playing combines expressiveness, energy, lyricism and power, with styles ranging from traditional folk melodies to passionate tangos, Old World French musette waltzes to English Country Dance tunes and much more. Her playing is soulful and improvisational, touched with humor and whimsy.

Karen plays with a number of 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.



**Shira Kammen** is a multi-instrumentalist (fiddle, classical violin, vielle, rebec and medieval harp) and vocalist who has devoted herself to exploring the worlds of early and traditional music. She has worked with the English Country Dance bands Roguery and Night Heron, and is a long-standing member of early music groups. Shira is a favorite at dance and music camps and weekends, and is constantly performing and teaching, both nationally and internationally. She is also the founder of Class V Music, a group that brings live music to river rafting trips and has played on a number of movie and television soundtracks when “weird” medieval instruments are needed.



**Eric Martin** is equally at home on fiddle and viola, bringing joy and 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 the bands Alchemy, Coincidance, and the Axelrod-Martin duo. 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.