Saline Fiddlers Philharmonic

Fiddlin' Around

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Fiddlers perform their show at school for autistic youth

A Day of True Love

By Andrea, Senior Fiddler

Thunderous applause filled the gymnasium, music boomed from the speakers on both sides of the stage, and happiness lit up the faces of everyone involved – to many, this sounds like any normal concert. In the minds of the Fiddlers, however, one extra detail changed everything – the audience consisted of autistic students aged three through twenty-six, and their dedicated teachers.

> *It was a great experience for me and for all the kids in Fiddlers to play at something so different than what we usually are used to. It was nice to see those kids enjoying us and our music, because they probably don't get very many opportunities to see things like that. It was truly a miracle to see those kids smile.*
>
> **-- Senior Fiddler Nicole**

On February 14, the Fiddlers traveled to Garden City, MI, to perform at the Burger School for Students with Autism. Upon our arrival, we loaded in, set up the sound system, and warmed up; nothing was out of the ordinary. We soon realized, however, that this particular show was going to be anything but ordinary. It was going to prove to be one of the most rewarding performances of our Fiddler years.

As the students filed in, all were dressed in red for Valentines Day and ready to begin a holiday celebration with an upbeat fiddle concert. When the first note erupted from our instruments, an incredible energy filled the gym. The students began moving to the music, clapping, imitating our actions, cheering, smiling, and even dancing. Though they may not have been moving in rhythm and they may not have been clapping exactly on beat, they were doing something incredibly more amazing: unabashedly feeling the music. Whatever emotions were being stirred up inside of them were being allowed to surface in the form of physical reactions, and it was so inspiring, moving, and refreshing to witness their pure, unfiltered responses to our music.



Lee, Gus and Claire dance, and Burger School student Matthew joins in.

In fact, it was so much fun that, before we knew it, the show was almost over. We were playing our signature show finale, "The Orange Blossom Special," with more energy than ever before, and

Please see **Burger**, *page 5*

ASTA in Columbus

Fiddlers receive another invitation to perform at a music conference

By Will Warner

The Fiddlers hit the road again for a show on March 27th in Columbus, Ohio. They will be featured performers during the opening ceremonies for the American String Teachers Association (ASTA) National Conference at Ohio State University.

The Fiddlers are thrilled to accept this invitation, which came from ATSA officers who saw the Philharmonic perform at the Midwest Clinic for music teachers in Chicago a year and a half ago. For the first time, one thread of the ASTA national conference will explore "alternative styles" such as folk and jazz. Convention organizers suggested that a performance by the Fiddlers might illustrate what can be achieved in a high school string program beyond the core classical repertoire for orchestra.

While at the convention, several of our students will take part in bowing workshops. The whole group will assist Director Emeritus Bob Phillips in his workshop on how to administer and organize a self-funded alternative styles performing ensemble. Fiddlers soloist Brad and alumnus Jeremy are among eight junior musicians, from across the nation, invited by ASTA to participate in its *Alternative Styles Awards* program later in the conference.

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We publish five times yearly, or as needed.
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Calendar of Upcoming Events

- May 17: **Kellogg Arena, Battle Creek**, 7:30 pm. Public performance sponsored by the Battle Creek Optimists Club. Kellogg Arena, 60 W. Van Buren St., Battle Creek, MI. Tickets: $10.50, all seats reserved. Tickets will be available in early April from The Discovery Theater at 269-441-2703.
- June 22: **Springfield, Ohio Summer Arts Festival**, 8:00 pm.
- June 28 - July 6: **Fiddlers' Tour of Northern Michigan** – see story, page 4.
- July 12: **Saline Celtic Festival**. Open to the public - charge at the gate.
- July 25: **Howell Concert Series**.
- September 5: **Saline Fair**. Open to the public - charge at the gate.
- September 20: **Western Michigan Bluegrass Festival**. Open to the public - charge at the gate. The Fiddlers will be giving 2 performances, one in the afternoon and another in the evening.
- November 14 & 15: **Fall Hometown Concerts**. Guest artists to be announced.



"Pulse" violinist Mark Sullivan demonstrates his technique to the Fiddlers during a workshop held on February 1, between the two Winter Hometown Concerts. Tradition is to hold a workshop with the guest artist prior to the Saturday Hometown Concert. The Fiddlers enjoyed the youthful Canadian group, which featured Canadian stepdancers and superb musicians.

Where do those Fiddlers get their start?

Sixth grade fiddle club gets new leadership with Erin Hansen

By Will Warner

"Playing the big instrument" is another name for conducting an orchestra. It is an apt description of Erin Hansen leading a practice of the 6th Grade Fiddle Club in Saline, MI. Forty 11 and 12-year-old musicians move in synchrony as she walks among them, playing her violin, encouraging, critiquing, correcting, and occasionally singing. Her bow is the piston, the mainspring, the prime mover of the entire ensemble, and the big sound of the whole seems to emanate directly from her instrument.

This scene occurs every week, beginning at 7:00 AM on a designated morning. Miss Hansen puts to use every minute of each 45-minute session. Her confident "Ready, and..." kicks off iteration after iteration of the tune under study. Often she sings a bar by way of introduction. She heads off potential interruptions ("Miss Hansen, his bow is touching me!") without missing a beat.

"Erin has thrown herself enthusiastically into our program; she's doing a great job with the kids," says Bob Phillips, the creator of the fiddling phenomenon in Saline, including the fiddle clubs and the Saline Fiddlers Philharmonic. "The fiddle clubs are the root of the whole fiddling program. They are for exploration, learning tunes and having fun," building on the basic skills and a love of music learned in the regular orchestra curriculum. "Because of the amazing tradition that has been built up, today's fiddle clubs perform as well as the early Fiddlers sometimes."



Erin Hansen in action, working with one of Saline's fiddle clubs.

Miss Hansen teaches 5th, 6th, and 7th grade orchestras for the Saline schools, in addition to directing the 6th Grade Fiddle Club. She serves as the director of the American String Teachers Elementary String Camp held in Howell, MI. She is a former member of the Great Lakes String Quartet, and continues solo and chamber performances. Erin holds a Bachelor of Music-Music Education degree from Michigan State University.

"I'm really enjoying working with all of my students," Erin says. "I am continually amazed by how much they can learn in a year's time." The fiddle club experience is an end in itself, but the clubs also function as a farm team for the Fiddlers Philharmonic. Many of Miss Hansen's 6th graders will one day don the uniform and take the stage as Fiddlers.

"It is so cool to see the fiddle clubs striving to be the best they can be," comments Bob. "That only makes the Fiddlers better as those accomplished young players move up."

Happy Birthday to:

Michelle	February 23
Joshua	March 1
Mike	March 15
Patrick	March 30

Summer tour plans are taking shape



The Fiddlers will start their 2003 Northern Michigan Tour "bright and early" on June 28th. They will travel via tour bus to their lodging, check in, and turn around and leave for their first concert in Cheboygan. The concert will be held at the Cheboygan Opera House at 8:00 p.m. Past Northern Michigan Tours have found the Fiddlers playing here as well. It is a beautiful historical building that makes for an exciting start for tour!

On June 30th the Fiddlers are scheduled to perform at the Soo Locks Festival in Sault Ste. Marie. This is an evening concert beginning at 7:30 p.m. The group will be arriving early in the day so they can enjoy a tour of the Soo Locks by boat.

On July 2, Alpena, Michigan is the destination spot, with a concert being sponsored by the Thunder Bay Arts Council. It is scheduled to begin at 6:30 p.m. in the Bay View Park Fine Arts Shell.

There are many activities being planned for the Fiddlers, including a trip to Mackinac Island. Mr. Jim Roth, the Fiddlers Tour Manager, continues to work with Mrs. Mollie Nieves on the logistics of the trip, as well as making sure there are plenty of "fun" activities available during their free time. More concerts are being negotiated and the planning continues!

Fiddlers report: "What I did during summer vacation"

Speaking of summer, and dreaming of warm days ahead, it seems like a good time to bring up summer vacations. The Fiddlers did not go on a huge tour last summer because the terrorist attacks on our country happened in the midst of planning a trip to Europe. It was decided at that time to keep a decidedly American group here on American soil.

As a group, the Fiddlers only went as far as Cleveland. But individually, some Fiddlers indeed traveled around the world. Many had things to share about where they went:

Laura - This summer I went to Hilton Head, SC for a week, and I also went to Indianapolis with my United States Tennis Association Team to a Midwest challenge in the highest division. We qualified for the AAU Junior Olympics next summer.

Lauren - I went to western Poland for six weeks. It was truly an experience!!!

Ben - I went to Cape Cod, Massachusetts, to visit my grandparents.

Brandon - Hey... I only went to marching band camp, and my family camp in Caseville (other than fiddlers).

Ana - I was in Minnesota for FCCLA (Future Leaders), Marching Band Camp in Arbor Springs, Michigan, Cedar Point, Mackinac Island & Mackinaw City, Lake Michigan, and Northern Ohio.

Claire - I went to Traverse City, Cedar Point, and my Grandma's pool.

Evan - I went on a western Caribbean cruise. We climbed Mayan ruins, went scuba diving in Cozumel and the Cayman Islands and we just swam and enjoyed ourselves.

Brad -I went to Telluride, CO; San Diego, CA; and Nashville, TN.

Christina – For the most part of the summer I was in Greensboro, North Carolina, at Eastern Music Festival.

Kevin - The only thing I did during the summer was go to the All-State program at Interlochen Arts Institute. I was in the All-State Orchestra.

Nicole - I went to Florida and a Lebanese festival (not in Florida) in New York!

Gus - I went to Eastern Music Festival for piano in Greensboro, NC with Christina. It was REALLY fun. I learned SO much! The faculty was amazing, and the other piano students were so much fun, so cool, and so much better than me.

Kim - This summer I went on a three-week motor home adventure to the great and Wild West with my family. I also went on a one-day canoeing trip and a family reunion in Houghton, MI.

Michelle - This summer I went to Alaska and the Yukon. We visited Dawson City and our 64 acres of property that was across the Yukon River from there. We also went to Fairbanks, Denali National Park, Kenai Fjords, Seward, and Anchorage.

Burger / Students and Fiddlers find bond through music

- Continued from page 1 -

the students were ecstatic. When we finished, they cheered wildly and did something none of us will ever forget: every single one of them rose from their seats and provided us with a standing ovation. This was incredibly touching, because these students weren't applauding because it was the polite thing to do or because they had to; they were applauding as a result of sheer enjoyment. Their love was being poured upon us for providing them with the type of experience that most of us commonly take for granted.

After the concert, numerous students approached us for pictures, autographs, or handshakes. A few even asked to play a couple notes on our instruments, which we gladly allowed! Their teachers thanked us profusely and told us that they had never seen their students enjoy a special event as much as they had enjoyed our show.

Performing at the Burger School for Students with Autism allowed us to provide the students with a Valentines Day show full of fun and enjoyment. We, however, are at least as grateful as they are, for they provided us with a true and valuable lesson in both life and love: music speaks to the hearts of everyone.

The red shirts, smiling faces, and excited attitudes of the Burger School students will forever be fond memories in the hearts of the members of the Saline Fiddlers Philharmonic; we hope to be lucky enough to visit them again someday.

And the envelope please. . .

Fiddlers chosen for 2003-2004 school year

February has become the traditional month for two big events in the Fiddlers' season. It is the month when we stage our annual Hometown Concert and is the month when auditions are held to choose new members for the next season.

Choosing the young people who make up the group is an extremely difficult task. Ben Culver takes many things into consideration, besides ability – the instrumental and male/female compositions of the group, and each person's character and ability to

The current Fiddlers also re-audition and listen to the tryouts of the potential members.

Without any further ado, we are pleased to announce and to congratulate the new Fiddlers:

Andrew – violin
Jordan – cello
Jacob – violin
Marie – violin
Kelsey – viola
Sarah – violin
Mary – violin
Alex - cello

We also welcome Dave, who joined the tech crew mid-season.

...From the Burger staff

Shortly after the concert, Burger teacher Sharon Hegwood had this story for the Fiddlers.

"First, there was a student at the back of the gym, you may have noticed him. He is extremely autistic, and is afraid of everything. He will not go into crowds, large open areas, noisy places, etc.

"After standing in the hallway listening for several songs, he came into the gym, actually sat down for several seconds and then spent the rest of the time in back of the gym jumping and dancing to the music! It was a special moment for all of us who know him. One of the teachers even bought him a CD to be kept in the classroom just for him.

"Secondly, is a compliment for the group, and those of you who work with them. Our custodian came to me, and to our administrators, and said that there had never been a group at Burger who helped him set up and take down the chairs and equipment, before and after the program. He was so impressed with the group!"

Thanks, Sharon, for sharing your story and the compliment.



Saline Fiddlers Philharmonic

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To:

