Saline Fiddlers Philharmonic

Fiddlin' Around

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New season, new director, new show

Culver leads Fiddlers into ninth season



Fiddlers break for a photo op during June Camp Phil.

By Jen Lahnala

The Fiddlers are pushing the limits this season with more tunes, dancing, camps and variety in style. Artistic Director Ben Culver has big plans for the group. "This year I'm looking to establish our group as a regional headliner act and as an opening act on a wider scene."

And Ben just took the helm in July.

If there was any trepidation about where the leadership of the group would go after the retirement of Bob and Pam Phillips earlier this summer, folks can relax. Ben has been involved in nearly every aspect of the group since its inception in 1994, and has eagerly picked up where the Phillips left off.

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Hometown Concert Series

Pair of legends to join Fiddlers

By Will Warner

The Saline Fiddlers Philharmonic opens its 9th Annual Hometown Concert Series with shows on November 1st and 2nd. The headliners are a pair of legends, now touring together.

Norman Blake was born in Tennessee in 1938 and raised in Georgia. At age 16 he quit school to join a band. In the years since, Norman has become one of the greatest interpreters and preservationists of traditional American music, on the guitar, mandolin, dobro, and fiddle.

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Legends / *Blake and Ostroushko join Fiddlers in November*

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Norman (just his first name is enough to identify him among bluegrass music fans) is *bona fide*. In the grand old days of the Grand Ole Opry, Norman was there. He played with June Carter and Johnny Cash. He backed Bob Dylan on *Nashville Skyline*.



Norman toured with Kris Kristoferson and Joan Baez. His work is there on the celebrated Nitty Gritty Dirt Band's *Will the Circle be Unbroken* album. In the last 12 years Norman has garnered five Grammy nominations for his own discs. A San Francisco Examiner music critic wrote that Blake "produces an American music of incomparable purity and integrity."

Peter Ostroushko is one of the country's pre-eminent mandolinists, and he comes by it naturally. In the Ukrainian-American community where his family lived, all their friends play the mandolin and they ain't uptight if one of the kids will. So in addition to bluegrass and classical, Peter performs Ukrainian folk songs, and composes in all three traditions.



He is widely known as a regular on *A Prairie Home Companion* and was the show's musical director from 1980 to 1986. He has recorded and performed with Dean Magraw, Johnny Gimbel, Bob Dylan, Willie Nelson, Emmylou Harris, Chet Adkins and Sir Neville Marriner.

Blake and Ostroushko will take the second half of two performances at Saline High School. As usual, Saline's own Fiddlers Philharmonic will open the shows.

Come see Saline's kids play America's music; spend an uplifting evening witnessing the revitalization of America's traditions by an exciting new generation of energetic young Fiddlers. Shows begin at 7:30 PM on the 1st and 2nd of November, in the auditorium at Saline High School, 7190 N. Maple Rd., Saline. Tickets are $12 for adults and $5 for students through grade 12. To reserve yours, call (734) 429-7210.

The second pair of concerts in the Hometown Series will take place on the 31st and 1st of January and February, 2003, with guest artists to be announced.

Some hard workers!



Sound Technicians, Patrick (left), and Dan, (right), along with Technical Director Carl Newton, have the critical job of getting the sound right during shows

We're on the web!

www.salinefiddlers.com

Meet the newest members of our Fiddling group

By Barb Radloff

Every year several new students are selected to become part of one of the hottest fiddle groups going. This year nine new members joined the Fiddlers. The following is what some of these exciting new members have shared about themselves.

This issue of "Fiddlin Around" features half of the new members. Be sure to watch for the next addition to learn all about the remaining new members.

Kristen



Kristen is a freshman viola player who joined the Fiddlers because the music sounded "really cool" and because she thought Fiddler's always looked like they were having fun. She thought learning to clog would also be fun.

Kristen has learned many new things since joining the Fiddlers including all the new music, but the one thing that she didn't know was how much good food the Fiddlers eat. Besides the viola, Kristen plays the piano and fools around with her brother's ukulele. Kristen plays soccer and ran cross-country in the middle school. She loves to read and says she reads all of the time. Kristen would like to visit all seven continents and fifty states. She lived in Germany for three years and speaks fluent German.

As promised in the previous newsletter, here is our new phone number:

1-866-257-5333

You don't have to commit it to memory, but call us now if you would like us to play for you!

Scott

Scott is a fabulous bass player who joined the Fiddlers because it gives him the opportunity to play the bass more. This freshman saw the Fiddlers as an opportunity to have some fun, meet new friends and play great music. Scott also was surprised about all the great food the Fiddlers eat.



Besides the bass, Scott played the violin, and has a guitar that he "screws around" on. Scott likes all kinds of music, but likes the band "Primus" best because they have "the best bassist in rock today." Scott would like to attend Berklee College of Music and would like to make a career of playing the bass.

Patrick



Patrick joined the Fiddlers to be part of the tech crew or better known as the "Men in Black." Patrick is interested in learning about sound equipment and found the Fiddlers as a great way to learn sound as well as travel and meet new people. This freshman loves all kinds of music including pop, country and light rock. Patrick has many interests including riding horses,

Please see **Newest**, *Page 7*

New / *Culver and associates have big plans for Fiddlers*

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In August, Ben initiated and directed a second Camp Phil, the annual summer retreat where the Fiddlers work on their act and learn new music, and invited music instructors from the south-central Michigan region to preview their new material.

"The kids are playing better than ever, and I'm thrilled to be working on developing our new show. This year we've added eight new tunes and will be reworking many of our older tunes. We'll see lots of new solos, some exciting new vocals from the guys, and soon we'll start having students announce different songs from stage. I'm hoping to feature each student in some way at each show."

Jesse Mason, new Assistant Director, and Ben have each written some new Celtic and bluegrass arrangements, which will be featured in the shows this fall, and are reworking many of the older tunes. So don't worry; the favorites are still there, too.

If you enjoy the American-style clogging numbers, you're in for a treat. "I've asked Sheila Graziano, our choreographer, to help design and teach an exciting dance set for the entire group to be debuted at our February Hometown Show. I'm working with the students to bring more of their personalities out on stage as we take on our more challenging music.



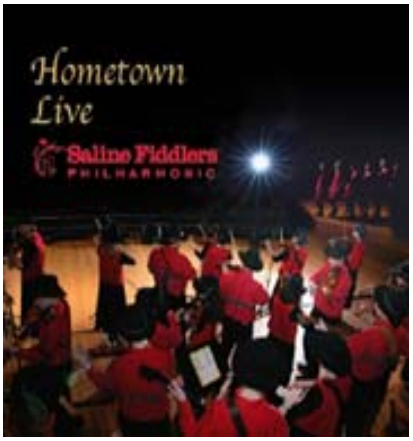
Ben Culver and Sheila Graziano work out the details at Camp Phil in August.

"I'd like to thank everyone involved with the Fiddlers for their overwhelming support and help in keeping this great experience for students around. I'm honored to be a part of this organization."

Ben Culver. A man with a mission. And a group of high school students with the ability to carry out that mission.

The Fiddlers are alive and well.

It has arrived!



See back page for order form.

Mark your calendar now…

For the

Winter Hometown Concert Series, January 31 and February 1, 2003.

Details to be available soon. Keep an eye on our website,

www.salinefiddlers.com,

and look for more information in the November/December issue of **Fiddlin' Around**.

Fiddlers benefit from two summer camps this year

By Ana

Every year, members of the Fiddler's Philharmonic enjoy the opportunity to roast marshmallows over a crackling campfire, sleep outside on a beautiful summer night, and learn an exciting new show for the upcoming year. It's called Camp Phil and the summer of 2002 found the group enjoying this great experience not once, but twice.



Reid Smith, Music Education Intern, practices at June Camp Phil with Laura and Stefanie.

It began at Camp Phil 2001 when former director Bob Phillips suggested moving the traditional camp date from early August to one immediately following school's end, in part to allow students a more flexible travel timetable. The proposed schedule was quickly adopted and a location secured for a mid-June camp.

Shortly after the arrangements were made, the Fiddlers were honored with an invitation to open for the Del McCoury Band at their June 16th Power Center Show. The show, however, overlapped with our first day of Camp Phil, and the intensive training camp was cut from three days to a mere two.

"While we got a lot done at the first camp, I didn't feel we had accomplished everything we could have due to out limited time frame," expressed new Artistic Director Ben Culver. "With the invitation from my dad to bring the group to his house for a night, [new Business Manager] Mollie Nieves and I decided to hold a second summer Camp Phil in August, aimed to further solidify the music learned in June and to work on the many non-instrumental aspects of stage performance."

Fiddlers fondly remember the multitude of free-time activities offered at Camp Fa-Ho-Lo in June. Between rehearsals and meals, the group spent time wall climbing, playing cards, practicing, and lounging, but the go-cart track was certainly the favorite pastime. Providing several hours of adrenaline pumping, bone jarring entertainment, participating Fiddlers left the dirt track with a few bumps and bruises, but dust-laden smiles, nonetheless.

"I loved the Camp Fa-Ho-Lo environment," proclaimed senior violist Claire. "All the options on break, like wall climbing and go-carting, were great. It was a lot of freedom, and a lot of fun."

Two months later, "Camp Culver" provided an entirely different set of memories. While a visit to a local lake, a huge capture the flag game, a post-camp concert, pig roast, and ice cream social were all included in our schedule, the camp, held at the home of director Ben Culver's father, was truly rehearsal driven.

"On the last day, the work ethic was amazing," explained Reid, a second year Music Education Intern. "The group trained for almost 10 hours with two ten-minute breaks; it was amazing."

By the end of the summer, the group had experienced a wonderful performance with the Del McCoury Band, a campfire, a 10-foot bonfire, birthday cake, subs, an entire roasted pig, over 24 hours of rehearsal time, and the violinists had some schooling in "capture the flag". The two camps resulted in the ideal amount of time to prepare this year's new show for the enjoyment of all.



Guitarists Phil, Ana, and Scott practice during "Camp Culver."

Mason selected as new Assistant Director

Guitarist has long history with Fiddlers

By Will Warner

Alumnus Jesse Mason is the new Assistant Director of the Saline Fiddlers Philharmonic, taking the position vacated when Ben Culver ascended to Artistic Director. Jesse is a music composition and physics major at Eastern Michigan University. You may have heard him perform last December on a *Prairie Home Companion* broadcast from Hill Auditorium in Ann Arbor.

The Fiddlers rhythm section is especially happy with the appointment of a guitarist as Assistant Director. (Think about it: playing guitar in an ensemble called the "Fiddlers" is a little like being the fish dish in a steak house). Jesse picked for the Fiddlers while in high school. Many current members of the rhythm section have for several years taken private lessons from him. He is their coach and mentor. Plus, he's not about to overlook their importance in his arrangements.

Jesse didn't pick up a guitar until he was 17 years old, and then only because it was an instrument he could tote to jam sessions. Until then he played and composed for the piano. With the tutoring of his teacher, Dr. Joseph Bauer, he composed a three-movement, classically structured piano sonata at age 16. Jesse also plays the trumpet and studied band arranging with Nate Lampman, Saline High School's director of bands, the two collaborating on a composition for full wind ensemble.

"After high school", Jesse says, "I started playing with Jeremy Kittel," another Fiddler alum-

Please see **Jesse**, *Page 7*



Jesse Mason (above), along with Ben Culver, is arranging many of the Fiddlers' new tunes.

Calendar of Public Events

- Saturday, September 21: **Fowlerville Fall Fest,** Fowlerville Fairgrounds, 6:00 PM.
- Saturday, September 28: **First Presbyterian Church of Ann Arbor**. Missions Fundraiser, performance at 8:30 PM.
- Saturday, October 5, **Rentschler Farm**, Saline. Performance at 2:00 PM.
- Sunday, October 13: **Nashville Strings**. Nashville Baptist Church, 212 Phillips St, Nashville, MI. Donations will be taken. Call 517-852-9133 for information.
- Thursday, October 24: **Monroe Lutheran Retirement Home**. Open to residents and guests.
- Friday, November 1 and Saturday, November 2: **Ninth Annual Hometown Shows**. Featuring guests **Norman Blake** and **Peter Ostroushko**. Saline High School auditorium, 7190 N. Maple Rd., Saline,

Jesse / *Guitarist a natural addition to group*

- Continued from previous page -

nus. "I was introduced to the music of Scotland, Ireland, and Cape Breton. During our four years together Jeremy and I played some really cool gigs and made some amazing music together." Currently, Jesse is part of the Irish-fusion band "Millish."

Jesse and Ben are the group's principal arrangers. "I'm thrilled to be working with such a talented musician as Jesse Mason," says Ben Culver. "We've been developing our musical repertoire to include more styles, and already we've seen some great additions: Jesse's arrangements of *Lady Be Good* and the medley *Mason's Ape, Ron* are terrific. He's been working in rehearsals and at camp with our rhythm section" and the soon-to-be-licensed pilot "is poised to take them to new heights. He has already become a valuable addition to our team."

For his part, Jesse is "pumped about being the new assistant director. Ben and I have been rockin' out on arrangements together already."

For his part, Jesse is "pumped about being the new assistant director. Ben and I have been rockin' out on arrangements together already. I really look forward to working with this group in perpetuity."

Newest / *We feature four of our new players this month*

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Patrick (continued)
playing the violin and playing paintball. This year Patrick has joined the high school cross-country team. Patrick's future plans include college and he would like to study business.



Marilyn

Marilyn is the third member of her family to be part of the Fiddlers. This freshman fiddle player saw the Fiddlers as a great opportunity to perform, which she states she loves to do. Marilyn is an avid dancer and loves jazz, ballet and tap. She is excited to be part of the Fiddler Cloggers as clogging is one form of dance she had not had the opportunity to learn.

Marilyn credits her family for her inspiration to play music and to be part of the Fiddlers. She says that she was exited to actually learn how to play the songs she has listened to for so many years. Marilyn is undecided on her future college and career plans.

Happy Birthday to:

Dan	**September 8**
Marilyn	**September 14**
Jeremy	**September 16**
Stefanie	**October 3**
Kristin	**October 6**
Laura	**October 24**

It has arrived! **Hometown Live!** See photo on page 4.

Title	CD $15.	Cassette $10	Total
Hometown Live (2002)		(not avail)	
Down By The Old Mill Pond (1996)			
Mothers Request (1998)			
Better Than Bingo (2000)			
	Total		

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Saline Fiddlers Philharmonic
Ben Culver, Artistic Director
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Jen Lahnala, Editor, **Fiddlin' Around**



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