The Newsletter of the Saline Fiddlers

Fiddlin' Around

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Saline Fiddlers freely showcase musical talents

Raisin Pickers return to Fiddler stage

The Saline Fiddlers will perform a **free** concert for the community on Friday, February 6 and Saturday, February 7 at 7:30 pm. Their 10th Annual Hometown Show will also feature local favorites, The Raisin Pickers with Sheila Graziano.

Along with the Fiddle Clubs, the Saline Fiddlers promise to delight audiences with the folk and bluegrass music for which they are known. The group is looking forward to performing again under the leadership of Artistic Director Ben Culver, who has written and arranged some exciting new music.

The Raisin Pickers perform a variety of musical styles from traditional Celtic, swing, acapella gospel, and old-time string band music. Band member and full-time musician David Mosher also writes and produces. Mark and Carol Palms have been with the group since its beginning ten years ago. Percussive dancer Sheila Graziano is known not only for her connection with the Raisin Pickers, but also for her instruction and choreography of the high-energy Saline Fiddler Cloggers.



Raisin Picker dancer and Fiddlers choreographer Sheila Graziano.

The group got its start in Manchester, Michigan and is named after the city's River Raisin, the most crooked river in the world!



The Raisin Pickers are (from left) David Mosher, Carol Wells Palms, Sheila Graziano, and Mark Palms.

General Admission tickets will be distributed at the door. However, priority seating is available to those who arrive before 7 pm. CD's from both groups will be available for purchase the night of the concert. The Saline Fiddlers plan to record their fifth CD this spring.

For information regarding booking or sponsorships of the Saline Fiddlers please contact Business Director, Shelly Banet at 866-257-5333. Visit them on the web at **www.salinefiddlers.com** and the Raisin Pickers at **www.raisinpicker.com.**

Winter Hometown Concert:

Friday, Feb. 6 and Saturday, Feb. 7, 7:30 p.m. Reserve your seat for the concert! Call for your free tickets in advance, 866-257-5333, extension 603. You can pick them up by 7:00 at the door the night of the concert.

Fiddlers make some structural changes

You may have heard that the Saline Fiddlers have undergone some changes in their organization. What does this mean to our supporters and fans? Fiddlin' Around has asked Will Warner, frequent contributor to this newsletter and member of the team that formed the changes, to address some common concerns and questions.

FA: *I heard the Fiddlers are leaving the school system and going private. What does that mean?*

The Fiddlers have grown beyond what can reasonably be operated as an extracurricular program of the schools. With the support of the school system, Fiddler parents created a private, nonprofit corporation for the sole purpose of perpetuating the group for future generations of Saline High School students. The schools have entrusted the Fiddler legacy to that organization.

FA: *Do you still have the same organization and student performers?*

The public can expect to see no change in the Saline Fiddlers. It continues to be devoted to extending the education of Saline high school students through the mastery and performance of American fiddle music and dance.

FA: *Will you still perform shows at the high school?*

The group will rehearse and perform at Saline High School.

FA: *How will the show change?*

The Fiddlers have rehired Ben Culver as artistic director. His creative vision will guide the group in the future as it has for the last year and a half. You can expect no radical changes in the show. Still, Mr. Culver continually challenges the students to grow musically, and, over time, that growth results in a higher quality, more polished and sophisticated show.

FA: *Will you still be able to go on trips and tours?*

Many of the kids' life-long memories come from touring. This will continue to be the ultimate reward for all their hard work. Besides, it brings fiddle music to people far and wide, many of whom are thrilled to see the revitalization of these traditions in the next generation.

FA: *What will an executive director do for the group?*

The executive director — aided by business, technical, and financial directors — is responsible for the day-to-day management of the group. This arrangement provides us with streamlined and efficient operations.

FA: *How can the community show their support to the Fiddlers?*

Come to our shows, spread the word, give us your thoughts through our online guest book. Donations will still provide a large part of our income. The Fiddlers will be operated as a nonprofit organization and we are applying for tax-exempt status (technically known as 501(c)(3)) so that donations are tax-deductible to donors. This will take a month or more, but tax-deductibility for donors is retroactive.

Fiddlin' Around is the official newsletter of the **Saline Fiddlers.**
We publish four times yearly, or as needed.
Editor: Jen Lahnala
Otherwise unmentioned writers: Theresa Brosius, Deanna Searls
Photos: Raisin Picker website, Shelly Banet, Jim Roth, Nancy Warner
www.salinefiddlers.com

Calendar of Upcoming Events

- February 6 & 7: **Winter Hometown Concerts.** Guest artists: **The Raisin Pickers**, a great traditional folk group from Manchester, MI, featuring clogging by the Fiddlers' favorite choreographer, Sheila Graziano.
- March 16: **Tecumseh Civic Center** opening for **Bowfire,** ten fiddlers with styles as diverse as classical, jazz, country, rock, old-time, Texas-style, bluegrass, gypsy, eclectic, Celtic, and electric.
- March 27: **First Presbyterian Church, Ann Arbor.** Public performance - details to be announced.
- April 25: **Northport, MI.** Public performance - details to be announced.
- May 8: **Milford, MI.** Public performance at Milford High School. Details to be announced.

Meet the new Fiddlers

We would like to introduce you to six of our newest Fiddlers for the 2003-2004 season. Four other new Fiddlers were featured in the fall 2003 issue.

By Erica Wood and Jen Lahnala

Nathan

Nathan is new to both the Fiddlers and to the bass guitar. When Ben Culver had a need for another bass player this fall, he called on this senior to fill the job. Not new to music, however, Nathan has been playing violin for 12 years and also plays guitar and "random other instruments." Nathan's passion is songwriting – his first album, called "Brightly," is in the works. He plans to study both songwriting and Spanish at Belmont University in Nashville.



Marie

Seeing the Fiddlers perform when she was in fifth grade inspired freshman Marie to take up the violin. She says being a part of the group is every bit as fun as she thought it would be. Marie has a lot of irons in the fire, between volleyball, dance, Girl Scouts, and drawing. Right now she thinks interior or fashion design would be an interesting career, but admits that's subject to change in a person with so many interests.



Mary



Musical from a very young age, freshman Mary knew she wanted to play violin. She enjoys being part of the Fiddlers because everyone is so welcoming and down to earth, plus she gets to play the music she loves. Mary is a cheerleader on the varsity basketball squad and is also a talented artist. If music doesn't work out as a career, she thinks she might like a career as a graphic artist.

Andrew



Andrew , a pianist since the first grade, caught the violin bug in fifth and, fortunately for the Fiddlers, succeeded in convincing his parents to get him lessons by the end of sixth grade. Attracted by the fun and challenges posed by the Fiddlers, this freshman was surprised to discover how many opportunities for travel the group has. Along with soccer, golf, football, hockey and theoretical physics, Andrew lists magic tricks among his many hobbies, which should come in handy on those long bus rides. He'd like to attend the University of Michigan and develop his talents in either music or physics, perhaps finding a career in aerospace or electrical engineering.

Please see **New**, *page 5*

Fiddlers receive feedback

Some stuff worth sharing

We have received so many kind comments from letters and our website guest book at **www.salinefiddlers.com**, we thought we'd share some of them with you:

Milan, MI, Dec. 17, 2003…
We were truly blessed to have had the opportunity to witness the joy on the faces of those Veterans who in some cases have no home to return to. What impressed me were the smiles on the faces of the Fiddlers. Not only were you enjoying what you were doing but more importantly why....

Saline, MI, Nov. 27, 2003…
Hey guys! I saw you at the hometown concert recently, and you are a true inspiration. I play the violin, and I plan to join the Fiddlers when I am in high school!

Clarkston, MI, Nov. 22, 2003…
Wow, we JUST had you guys play for us at Clarkston high School in Michigan. You guys were amazing! If we weren't obvious enough, we were the ones screaming the whole time and loving the bass player (Scott) and the guitar man (Jeremy).

Allen Park, MI, Sept. 27, 2003...
Your reputation precedes you. I was in northern MI. recently and had good reports of your past performances nearby. I would like to obtain your future performance schedule.

Canton, MI, Aug. 17, 2003...
I was totally impressed with the talent, and enthusiasm of all the young people in the group. I will definitely watch for future performances and be sure to attend!

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Melbourne, Australia, July 13, 2003...
As a participant at the recent American String Workshop at the University of Michigan, I had the great privilege to hear the performance you gave on our final evening. You are a truly inspirational group! Your performances ooze energy, musicianship, joy and amazing talent! Keep it up - I hope to have the pleasure of hearing you again soon.

Westfield, NJ, July 12, 2003...
I am a BIG fan of bluegrass music and already have two of your CDs ... The quality of your performance is definitely on a professional level. I was thrilled with the outstanding show today and look forward to hearing your group again in the near future.

Saline new resident, July 12, 2003...
We went to the Celtic Festival today for the first time, and didn't expect it to be as good as it was. The highlight was your performance.

Sault Sainte Marie, MI, July 2, 2003...
Saw this marvelous group at our SOO LOCKS FESTIVAL Mon. July 30, 2003. Words can't describe how much it was enjoyed. …Another thing that interested me as a former cello player was the abbreviated ones the 2 gals played.

Springfield, OH, June 23, 2003...
Saw your performance at the Summer Arts Festival. Great show! Thanks for coming.

Gibsons, British Columbia, May 9, 2003...
I'm a member of the Coast String Fiddlers... Glad to hear you guys are still doing well. You should check out our site if you get a chance…

Saline, MI, Apr. 20, 2003...
I am in the 6th grade fiddle club now and wish to become a Fiddler in a few years. ... Viola section is the bomb!!!!!

Los Angeles, CA, Mar. 18, 2003
I recently had a chance to meet your Artistic Director and it was a pleasure to hear him talk about your group. I hope to one day see the Saline Fiddlers perform in person.

Calgary, Alberta, Feb. 1, 2003
Great Web Site guys! I'm currently with Barrage, and was down in Chelsea not that long ago to do a few shows. It was great listening to you guys!

New / More Fiddlers to meet

- Contiued from page 3 -

Jacob

Jacob started out on the piano and added the violin in fifth grade. He knew very soon he would set joining the Fiddlers as a goal for high school, and added mandolin playing to his list of talents. When this freshman violinist is not hanging out with the Fiddlers, Jacob fills his "extra" time with Boy Scouts, camping, soccer, swimming, his computer, and church. Not sure of a career yet, Jacob is thinking he'll stay nearby for college, perhaps U of M or Eastern Michigan.



Kelsey



Freshman violist Kelsey began playing piano in preschool. She also plays a little guitar and can fake it pretty well on the trumpet. The energy she saw in the Fiddler shows and the traveling made her want to join the group. She loves performing, but if Broadway doesn't work out, she's thinking of being a meteorologist or English professor. Either way, Kelsey definitely wants to go to college far away. She claims she has not inherited her family's chronic tardiness, and any lateness is to be ascribed to her older sister, junior Fiddler Kim .

Artistically Speaking

Culver describes his songwriting process

In this new feature we will explore the insight and plans of Saline Fiddlers Artistic Director Ben Culver. In each issue we will ask Ben different questions about the processes and demands of bringing the fiddling show on the road. Here is our first question for Ben:

What is the process that you use when creating new music for the Fiddlers?

Ben: Since I was little, music has always been part of the way I think. When I hear a song, I have a much easier time remembering the melody and harmonic/rhythmic structure than I do the words. This is helpful when I write music for the Fiddlers because it helps me focus on the many different aspects that go into a final composition.

When I get a melodic idea (often this happens in the shower), I'll focus on that melody for a while and try several variations to find the most natural feeling direction to take it. I'll pick up an instrument (violin, mandolin or piano usually) and play over the concept several times to see where it can go before sitting down to write it out with my computer. Once I have the melodic idea solidified on the computer, I usually focus on rhythmic and harmonic structure, then the orchestration, and by then usually I have a pretty decent idea of where the tune will go. I'll try several different variations for each instrumental part (nine parts for the Fiddlers) and usually find one that works well balancing the musical demands with the players' skills.

Once everything is solidified and I have a clear beginning, middle focus, and ending, I'll play through each part with friends and write in bowings and articulations for the players before I extract the parts and print them off for copyright and duplication for the kids.

A bit more complicated than you thought?

An update on Fiddler Alumni

By Laura , Fiddler alumna

Fiddler alumni find themselves in many different places these days. Although, for them, the days of tours and gigs have passed, they are still pursuing their passions and setting their best faces forward. We lend them our support and wish them the best of luck in their endeavors.

Evan – At MSU studying mechanical engineering
Lauren – Attending U of M and concentrating on the biological sciences
Kristen – Attending Central Michigan
Brad – U of M music school enrolled in the jazz and improv program, continuing his music career
Laura - Transferred from Central Michigan and is now attending Washtenaw
Andrea – Recently transferred from Hope College to Michigan State
Bobby – In LS&A at U of M
Mackenzie – Attending MSU, concentrating in advertising while minoring in music
Richard – An aspiring conductor, studying violin and piano
Stephanie – Studying at MSU, concentrating on business and German
Laura – Enrolled the U of M's SNRE (School of Nat. Resources and the Env.)
Jackie – Attending Michigan State
Jared – Still attending Hope
Jeremy – Finishing his final year at MSU, pursuing law
Renee – Studying at MSU in the James Madison College, concentrating in foreign development
Andrew – Studying mechanical engineering at Michigan
Jeremy – Finishing up his performance degree at U of M, making his way in the music world and rocking out on the stage
Kristen – Third year at U of M
Donna – Attending medical school at U of M

Attention Fiddler Alumni

We would like to know what is happening in your lives. Please email us at info@salinefiddlers.com and tell us what you have been doing. We will add your story to a future Fiddlin' Around.



Sally , Sarah , Kelsey , and Jordan take a break between acts during the November Hometown Concert.

Happy Birthday to:

Dave	August 28
Dan	September 8
Jeremy	September 16
Stefanie	October 3
Marie	October 25
Scott	November 3
Jordan	November 7
Sally	December 14
Brian	December 23
Kim	January 11
Nathan	February 15
Andrew	February 21
Michelle	February 23
Lee	February 25

Sheila's story

Choreographer attends dance residency in Vermont

In November 2003, Fiddler Choreographer Sheila Graziano took part in a dance workshop with Tony and Margaret Dale Barrand and Kari Smith, from a grant she received from the Wheatland Music Organization. Sheila wanted to share her experience with us. Following are excerpts of her experience, conveying the original inspiration and adventure she gained.

"The dances I went to learn were first performed in the 1920s by Anna Marley and her family. The Marleys wore wooden-soled shoes when they danced, a direct link to their roots in the Lancashire dancers of England. The sailors brought them to the States in the 1840s and from there they evolved into an Americanized version of these traditional English steps.

"The entire first day was spent looking through an album of lovely historic photos of Anna Marley and her family. Many stories accompanied the photos; ones that Anna had shared with Tony during their association of 12 years when she taught him her routines in the basement of her home. Tony videotaped these workshops and has been able to use the tapes to harvest precious nuggets of info and insight into Anna's life and the history of her dances. The next step was to watch the videos, which were wonderful. Between the photos and the videos I was able to get a true feel for the era and the fierce obsession that Anna had in keeping the steps and style true. Currently, individuals such as Dr. Barrand and his associate Kari Smith have taken custody of the dances and are intent on keeping them as true to form as possible.

"Other videos I viewed were more academic in nature and were valuable inasmuch as they helped put the 'big picture" of wooden shoe dancing together. Finally the lessons were ready to begin and we rolled out the dance mats and began working on the Marley Buck and Wing Steps. Kari was doing all the 'feets on' work, and Tony, who suffers from MS, was coaching and providing some music (humming and whistling). He was able to interject with details on posture, foot position, etc., and both he and Kari would stop now and again and say, 'Anna would tell me over and over that it must be just like THIS…'

"Anna's style started to become clear to me. During the course of the days there were plenty of conversations about all the normal dancer topics – shoes, tradition vs. innovation, floors, stage presence, costuming, the importance of technical proficiency vs. 'spirit' of the dance, possessiveness vs. sharing of information, routines, history, and the future. These exchanges were an integral part of the whole experience, as they allowed me to peek into the minds of these individuals so smitten with the Marley history and dances.

Between the photos and the videos I was able to get a true feel for the era and the fierce obsession that Anna had in keeping the steps and style true.

"What does attract a person to one tiny area of any given art form, or for that matter any other field of study? I, of course, have no answer for that. My first encounter with traditional dancing was an accident. I ended up at the Wheatland festival (1977) as a food vendor after a friend mentioned a 'really cool festival' up north that Angelo and I could haul our Smoothie wagon to. Turned out to be a very cold, wet weekend and we sold a handful of drinks, but I saw clogging for the first time and recognized my destiny at first glance…so clearly I remember thinking 'Ah! That's why I spent ten years as a kid learning to tap dance…so that now I can do this!'

"I've made a concerted effort over the years to learn a variety of styles of step dancing, and meeting Tony last year opened the door to yet one more genre. I am eager to master the material I learned from him and pass on to others."

Note: Tony Barrand and his musical partner, John Roberts, will be at the Riverfolk Festival in Manchester, MI, August 7, 2004.

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The Saline Fiddlers

Ben Culver, Artistic Director
Shelly Banet, Business Manager
Jesse Mason, Assistant Director
Carl Newton, Technical Director

Direct booking inquiries to Shelly: 1-866-257-5333

www.salinefiddlers.com



Although it looks like sound tech Dave is helping with the dishes during Fiddle Camp last summer, he was actually filling water balloons in preparation for a tech attack!



The Saline Fiddlers
PO Box 315
Saline, MI 48176

To:



Oktoberfest with the Fiddlers