

Big Muddy **SOUNDINGS**

Folk Festival April 1- 2, 2012

Significant Digit Festival Year at Thespian Hall

So the story goes: In January 1991, Cathy Barton and Dave Para played the Ann Arbor Folk Festival, a marathon one-evening show at the huge Hill Auditorium at the University of Michigan. A few months later they approached Friends of Historic Boonville Director Judy Shields and asked about putting together a similar indoor event like that in the spring of the following year. Judy said, "We'd better call Bob (Dyer) and get a committee together." Discussing a name at the first meeting, Bob said he had long schemed of a festival on a Missouri River island and would call it the Big Muddy Spirit Jam, and it went from there. Cathy, Dave, Judy and Ken and Linda Askren have been with the committee since the beginning, and Bob was with it until his last. There are plenty of festivals obscure and famous that have lasted longer, but not usually with the same people in charge for the duration. We have long since ceased walking by Thespian Hall wondering what it would be like to have a folk festival there.

To mark the big Two – O we welcome back some favorites and some newcomers to celebrate some of the many variety of musical styles that the term "folk music" can encompass. We're grateful to have garnered an open-minded audience that will come to see musicians they often haven't heard of before.

Built during the Missouri/Kansas border wars, Thespian Hall watched the Civil War come to town 130 years before the first Big Muddy. The Battle of Boonville in June 1861 was one of the earliest land battles of what in Missouri is aptly called the "Brothers War." As the state and nation mark this anniversary Boonville organizations including the Friends have planned a number of local events during the year. Our festival will include artists who have paid special attention to the music of the period and its faceted historical context.

Bare Bones

"The sacred harp," the "straight with no chaser," the glories of the unadorned chord (in the unadorned vocal cord) is "the bare bones of music," according to **Becky and Bill Kimmons and Mark Davis**, a trio of a cappella singers from Charleston, W.V. The couple met 27 years ago and sang in The Missing Person Soup Kitchen Gospel Quartet, combining his formal bass singing training and the Primitive Baptist style she remembers from her grandmother deeper in the West Virginia hills. Mark was trained in vocal and percussion, is known to Charleston pop and rock audiences and teaches elementary school Orff instruments which encourage ear training. That's a good fit because the trio sings entirely by ear, rehearses without notes or charts, just words, and develops their arrangements intuitively.

Dogs in the House Again

You might think that dogs in the rain sing the loneliest of blues, but the Kansas City **Rain Dogs**

play the kind to drive your blues away. **Jim Herbert, Karla Peterie, Mike Roark and Phil Smith** were here in 2006 emulating bands like the Mississippi Sheiks and songsmiths Memphis Minnie and Bo Carter, with acoustic and resophonic guitars, washboard, mandolin, bass, harmonica and piano. Add a little boogie-woogie and jug band sounds from early jazz and you have music designed to be fun playing as well as hearing. You might remember cowgirl singer Liz Masterson from 1997. After the Evergreen, Colo., Jazz Festival she said, "The Rain Dogs are tighter than last summers shorts!" That'll squeeze the blues out of you.

Blue and Gray In Black and White

We have crossed paths a number of times with **Sparky Rucker** in his road warrior life, more often at interesting festival venues. His deep voice and strong guitar picking serves well his traditional blues and gospel repertoire, and his adventurous wit is enjoyable to follow. Since his early days at Appalshop, he's no longer "cold and lonesome on a

train” after he hooked up with **Rhonda** and they integrated more closely a story-telling and musical approach, enhanced by Rhonda’s harmonica and keyboard work.

Folklore and history can be just as easily integrated, especially when they involve a good story to tell. This duo can take their audience on an educational as well as emotional journey from poignant stories of slavery and war to an amusing rendition of a Brer Rabbit tale. Their songs can range from old-time blues, slave songs and work songs to spirituals, ballads, Civil War music, cowboy music, railroad songs, and a few of their own originals.

Close to the Folk Revival

Lots of artists can declare influences by the folk revival of the 1960s, that mighty wind of music that took a share of the top 40 on the radio. Chicago, with clubs like the Gate of Horn, the Quiet Knight and the Earl of Old Town, was a better place than most for a good hootenanny, and **Mark Dvorak** keeps that thread vital. A longtime faculty member at the seminal Old Town School of Folk Music, where you can learn how to pick blues like Big Bill Broonzy and banjo like Fleming Brown, Mark keeps his Chicago roots watered while crisscrossing the country for 25 years performing, teaching and learning. While a fine solo performer, Mark has formed a trio with **Ellen Shepard**, a versatile singer and clawhammer banjo player, and **Chris Walz**, a hot guitar player who appeared here in 1999 with The Special Consensus bluegrass band and joined Mark in the cast of a show celebrating the music of the Weavers.

Just Another Autoharp Virtuoso

We have had some of the finest Autoharp players in the U.S. in our 20 years, and with Bryan Bowers and Ron Wall, **Karen Mueller** wins us the trifecta. While she has worked for some time in the vital Minneapolis music scene, it was the big festival that showed up annually in her hometown of Winfield, Kan., where she was inspired to play the celebrated version of the zither and named a champion player in 1986. She tours solo nationally for her mountain dulcimer and autoharp playing but also works with guitar, mandolin and bouzouki, currently in the band of Katie McMahon, the original lead singer of “Riverdance.” Her innovation and interpretation of tradition has led her to performances with legendary artists Liz Carroll, Irish fiddle master, and

contemporary banjo pioneer Tony Trischka. Karen is a very musical and adventurous player -- an aspect making the instrument’s current revival so exciting.

Funding Assistance From The Missouri Arts Council, A State Agency

A Riverside Red Hot Mama

Phyllis Dale blew us all away a couple of years ago during a guest spot in 2008, as she seemed to gather the whole audience around her seat at the piano and entertain us one by one. That’s where we met her in 1996, though her piano bench was in the Texas Lounge of the legendary steamboat *Delta Queen*. During her long career as an entertainer, Phyllis has kept an active repertoire of folk hits from the great “folk scare” of the 1960s, to Broadway show songs, river songs and classic songbook numbers from entertainers such as Sophie Tucker. Beloved on the “Delta Queen”, this “Red Hot Mama” will make many new fans at this year’s festival. Phyllis is a great and versatile player whose fingers have known many musical styles. Her music comes from the heart for an intimate and fun time.

A Solo From Paul, the Artist Originally Known as Fotsch

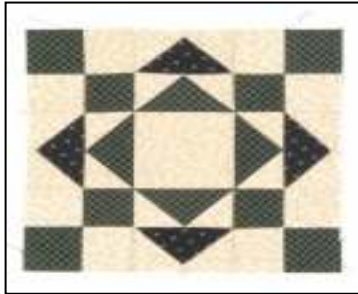
Paul Fotsch has been a good friend of the festival for most of its 20 years, appearing as the male lead in the Grace Family Band and also with the Discovery String Band with Dave, Cathy, Bob Dyer and Win Grace. His versatile fiddling, mandolin and guitar playing and high-energy singing are part of the sounds of the Big Muddy legacy. With musical influences from the Southern highlands and the Kingston Trio and the folk revival, Paul plays a variety of songs and styles including lovely ballads, fiddle tunes that set you on the beat or something silly to make you smile.

Troubadours Down the Street

Festival organizers and local troubadours **Cathy Barton** and **Dave Para** will wander over from their house two blocks away and offer some songs from the noted Civil War music albums they produced with Bob Dyer. We’ll see if they can hook up some of their harmony singing and various string instruments with

other festival guests. They anticipate performances elsewhere this year that draw on their musical connections to Missouri history. They released their 14th album, "Sweet Journeys," last year and this year look to return to banjo camps in Florida and Michigan and a cruise on the Columbia River.

Heritage Quilt Show Coincides With Festival on Main Street



Many visitors coming into Boonville from South Main Street take note of the impressive old mansion Roslyn Heights, now the headquarters of the Missouri Daughters of the American

Revolution. The local Hannah Cole Chapter is holding a Heritage Quilt Show coincidental with the Big Muddy and cooperating with Boonville Civil War Commemorative Commission. The show will feature historically significant, hand-crafted items from mothers, grandmothers, great-grandmothers and other family members of MSSDAR, plus treasured quilts from area residents. Docents will show and describe each quilt. Attendees can also have quilts of their own appraised for a fee by noted quilter and appraiser Dorothy Shull. The show will run 1 to 6:30 p.m. on Friday and 9 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. on Saturday. Admission is \$5.00, which includes a booklet detailing information about each quilt.

Possums Don't Play Fiddles

From the Ozarks we welcome a large group of young fiddlers set on keeping Ozark fiddling traditions alive. **The Possum Holler Fiddlers** were formed three years ago for the purpose of playing old time, traditional Ozark tunes and to pass them successfully to another generation. Members range in age from 11 to 17 and hail from Springfield, Nixa, Diamond, and Purdy, Mo., and Boerne, Texas. They attend week-long fiddle classes each summer and have given more than 30 performances at various venues, including Silver Dollar City, the inauguration of Governor Nixon, and the Missouri Folklore Society. Troupe members receive strong support from their parents and are currently trying to raise enough

money to play at the Fringe Festival in Edinburgh, Scotland, in August. Karlene and Bob McGill coordinate the group, and the Possums are sponsored by Ozark Adventures, Inc. a non-profit corporation headquartered in Branson.

Win This Masterpiece Rocker, Benefit the Big Muddy

Festival friends Lyle and Nevy Otten have come from their Torrance, Calif., home for the weekend a number of times and have donated some handcrafted pieces to raise money for the festival. This year Lyle shipped us one of the fine rocking chairs he has been making for the past seven or eight



years. Made in 2008 in Lyle's unique design in beautiful walnut, it is his 32nd chair. Made in 2008.

We will display the chair in downtown Boonville this winter and sell raffle tickets, six for \$5, fifteen for \$10 and forty for \$20.

Festival Workshops, Dance

The workshop schedule for Saturday is still in the works, but with so many great singers on the bill we can expect a variety of song and vocal workshops like harmony, gospel, folk revival songs, Civil War music and the blues. A fiddle showcase and hands-on sessions for Autoharp and dulcimer are likely.

Our Friday night contra dance following the concert has been a part of the festival since its second year. Regulars from the Mid-Missouri Traditional Dancers populate this dance and often help adventurous beginners, and they often help open the evening concerts. These folks dance twice monthly in Columbia on Fridays. Look them up at First Christian Church and on the web: <http://mmtd.missouri.org/>

Taste the Smokey Goodness

I can't tell you how happy the artistic director is that the Friends board of directors got barbecue chef Terry Smith to join the festival years ago, but his volunteers manning the barbecue can because they

often see him hanging around the BBQ tent trying experimental ribs. Taking in all this good music is hard work, and one has to keep up his nourishment.

Tentative Festival Schedule

Our **Friday evening concert** will include Paul Fotsch, Barton and Para, Karen Mueller, Phyllis Dale and the Rain Dogs, with an old-time dance following at Turner Hall.

Workshops on Saturday again will be held in nearby Turner Hall, First Presbyterian Church and Christ Church Episcopal, for instrumental and song sessions and some close-up concerts. An occasional check at bigmuddy.org will keep you as up to date as we are.

Saturday evening will feature the Possum Holler Fiddlers, Bare Bones, Sparky and Rhonda Rucker and the Mark Dvorak Trio.

Martin Bergin and apprentice Mike Massey, who also do leatherwork and make saddles. They also have two Native American apprenticeships this year, one in buckskin regalia for use in pow-wows, and one in Potawatomi hand-sewn ribbon work. We hope they will join the other crafters at Turner Hall.

In Memoriam

Don Shorock, 1944-2010

Don passed suddenly on Dec. 2. A great friend to the festival, he did the bigmuddy.org website for us, and several others for musicians, festivals and those relating to his many wide interests.

We're still sorting out our website possibilities, so please visit <http://www.friendsofhistoricboonville.org> as well to get tickets and info online.

Cowboys and Indians at Turner Hall

The Missouri Folk Arts Program Hopes to bring back one of their favorite masters, cowboy poet

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