

Big Muddy Folk Festival **SOUNDINGS** April 10-11, 2015

The Place Will Be Jumping on Main Street

Ice flows shaped like frozen whirlpools still the brown Missouri water a bit, catching a pink hue from the sunset upstream as winter grudgingly relinquishes another morsel of daylight. High above, two eagles, one not yet bald, cross up and over the Boonslick Bridge with eyes out for a morsel of their own liking. It's another turn toward spring.

Quiet since early December, Thespian Hall will have plenty to waken her during the **24th Big Muddy Folk Festival**. Bands will rock the place from any which way, and there will be some closer, intimate moments with individuals and duos. We will hear powerful music from those who play across the country and fun things from others who stay closer to home, as well as musical styles more than a century old in the hands and mouths of players who keep it fresh. This will make for two exciting days celebrating great music and players a little more than a handshake away.

As Sister Venus and Brother Mercury dance close to each other in the footlights of the sunset, we're reminded of the lunar and solar conditions of Easter and remind you that the festival will be during the second weekend of April this year.

Knowing that Tax Day shortly follows the festival, we again can offer you a meaningful tax deduction by way of donating to our festival. Funding beyond our ticket sales has always been vital to the festival. We have had different fund-raising programs over the years and have occasionally raised or ticket prices slightly, but some years we just have to let it breathe and make a simple pitch for some of your expendable income. Please consider being a donor and a bigger part of this music celebration. We're grateful for the good crowds we have had because we need most of our 600 seats filled to keep going. We're still here out of your generosity and enthusiasm, and we're happy for it.

In the Passing Lane on the Bluegrass Highway

As a singer and songwriter in the bluegrass genre, **Claire Lynch** has had a long career praised for its creative force in acoustic music. Such luminaries as Patty Loveless, The Seldom Scene, Cherryholmes, Kathy Mattea, The Whites and Stephanie Davis have recorded her songs. She often found herself in the studio as a session vocalist with them as well. Dolly Parton says Claire has "one of the sweetest, purest and best lead voices in the music business today."

Claire was living in Alabama in the 1970s when the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band did its legendary Nashville project. Caught by the sounds and energy of the style, she joined the band Hickory Wind that later changed its name to the Front Porch String Band and featured Claire's lead

singing. Her bands and songs have always kept national attention in the bluegrass scene. Her relationship with the road has been periodic, though, opting for 10 years of real life in 1981 and again in 2000. In 2005 she formed her own quartet of like-minded musicians who prefer blending tradition and innovation, like **Mark Schatz** on bass, percussion and dance, mandolinist and guitarist **Matt Wingate** and young string wizard **Bryan McDowell**. She has been named female vocalist of the year twice by the International Bluegrass Music Association and nominated for two Grammys.

Touring behind "Dear Sister" (2014 IBMA song of the year) the band is able to present fresh and timeless material. The title track is an emotional piece Claire wrote with southerner Louisa Branscomb as an intimate farewell letter

between a brother and sister whose lives are ravaged by the destruction of the Civil War

Blow, Gabriel, Blow

Music became an important commodity on steamboats as railroads took more and more of the river valley freight business during the last century. Boats purveyed music, dining and dancing and as much as steerage. New musical ideas went along for the ride, and the syncopated sounds of ragtime and Dixieland toured the nation. **The Saint Louis Rivermen** are the definition of a high-energy, tightly unified traditional jazz ensemble. A number of Boonville river rats heard them at **Phyllis Dale's** birthday party in St. Louis last summer, and the consensus was a trip upstream to the Big Muddy. As traditional jazz players they rely on instincts, inspirations of the moment, perfect pitch, inevitable humor and camaraderie to create joyous jazz and heart-breaking blues extemporaneously out of challenging ideas flowing forth from each of them. Band leader and sousaphone player **David "Red" Lehr** is an original member since 1982, and **Bobby Grimm** (tenor banjo), **Steve Lilley** (trumpet, cornet), **Noel Kaletsky** (clarinet, soprano sax) are longtime veterans, Noel now comes in from Connecticut. **Jim Maihack**, (trombone) who tours from his Sacramento home, joined during a Holland America cruise in 2004, and **Ray Templin** (piano) and **Don Schroeder** (drums) round out the septet.

Our Riverboat Queen Returns

Phyllis Dale has been a real blessing to our festival. Her performances would be enough on their own; as she captured us all in a guest spot in 2008 and in her returns since. At the ivories she can go a long way with songs and music styles to connect to anyone. During her 50 years as an entertainer, a singer, a player both in the band and front stage, Phyllis has played the "Red Hot Mama," belting out the big numbers, from Sophie Tucker to John Denver. She is also ready to write her own songs from the life she knows to bring the audience in. If Thespian Hall weren't intimate enough, she can make everyone feel like they're sitting around her piano. That's where we met her almost 20 years ago on the Arkansas River in the Texas Lounge of the *Delta Queen* steamboat.

Adopting us all, Phyllis has helped us in major ways to raise some needed programming funds,

and is a major sponsor this year. Two years ago, our mayor gave her a key to city. We're thrilled she's come back to use it.

Sounds of Upper Louisiana

The French were the first white people to settle in this part of the country, upper Louisiana, or the "Pays d' Illinois." These early French Americans called themselves Creoles, a different meaning than the African and mostly French mix that is understood commonly today. Born and raised in southeastern Illinois, **Dennis Stroughmatt** has been on something of an odyssey in the largely untold French story in America. Absorbing the traditions of French still living along the Wabash and Mississippi River corridors, he later moved to southeast Missouri to study Illinois Creole French, play the fiddle, and sing many of the traditional songs that have permeated the region for over 300 years. He would also go on to live, work, and play music in the Louisiana Cajun country and then study in Quebec, thus completing the circle of French culture in North America.

Dennis rocked the house in 2006 with his full-blown Cajun band, Creole Stomp. His trio, l'Esprit Creole, offers a closer look at the Missouri fiddling mix of old-time and French sounds, as well as songs, stories and other cultural context. Last year, the Missouri Humanities Council gave Dennis the Governor's Award. What many have considered to be long lost is alive and kicking. It'll make your soul jump, your head spin, and your heart glad to know, as they say in the hills, "On est toujours icitte: We are still here!"

Big Muddy Girl Downstream

A fine writer and performer of a hybrid of contemporary folk music with traditional roots, **Gloria Attoun** comes from the little Missouri river town of Augusta and has been upstream for a visit to the festival occasionally. Hooked on the guitar when she was a kid, she is now adept with a passel of fine acoustic instruments, banjo, mandolin, harmonica, and other gadgets. She writes insightful songs which have had airplay all over the U.S., Germany, Italy, Australia, Ireland and Israel. Her song, "Wrong Side of the Road" made it to "Car Talk." in an intimate performance that draws in the listener. Her songs have been heard on folk shows around the country.

A Big Muddy girl, she plays with the bands Augusta Bottoms Consort and the Texas Giants. She spends a portion of her spring with the Washington River Festival, River Education Experience and the Missouri River cleanup in Washington, Mo. She is connected to us by water, by the love of traditional folk music and by the people. We know you will enjoy her pertinent, original songs--performed with her clear voice and expert musicianship--honoring the traditions she holds dear.

Local Folkies in Charge

Festival organizers **Cathy Barton** and **Dave Para** had a full year of dance music, Civil War songs for area reenactments and shows on riverboats plying the Mississippi, Ohio and Columbia rivers. They also produced two album projects, one of the songs Cathy wrote for the musical "Gumbo Bottoms," with emcee **Meredith Ludwig**, and another for friends of the duo Shortleaf. This year will have them traveling to East and West for festivals and camps.

Cathy will look forward to sharing her hammered dulcimer tune repertoire with her Texas pals, and with guitar, banjo and autoharp the two will crank out some old time songs. Dave and Cathy are both always grateful to return to the Thespian Hall stage.

Lone Star Whammydiddlers

David Lindsey and **Dana Hamilton** were both teaching school in Mansfield, Tex., when they found each had heard a hammered dulcimer (though not by the above folk name) and were interested in having one. Inspired by the same Bill Spence album that prompted Cathy Barton to ask her father for one, they bought themselves kits and taught themselves to play. The kits didn't sound very good, so they began building their own. Meanwhile, their wives, **Annette**, and **Judy**, took to the mountain dulcimer while visiting the Ozark Folk Center in April 1979, when popularity for both dulcimer instruments was surging. With a growing community of players, builders and old-time music enthusiasts, the two couples formed the **Sweet Song String Band**, named for the translation of the word, and the Lone Star State Dulcimer Society, a group that is still going strong and happy producing two festivals a year.

The vitality of the group is reflected in the joy of playing this traditional dance music on these big, resonant instruments. And if the grin on your face is in danger, they sing plenty of old-time songs that can crack a smile out of you. David and Annette have sold instruments from his shop at our festival for some time, and both Cathy and her hero Bill are proud to play them.

A Festival's Worth of Talent

Making a return visit from their Ocean State home, **Aubrey Atwater** and **Elwood Donnelly** wowed us all in 2007 with fine mix of traditional American and Celtic folk music and dance. Aubrey is a well-respected player and teacher of the mountain dulcimer, and the two include guitar, mandolin, whistle, banjo, harmonica and percussion to accompany their fine duet singing. During their previous appearance, Aubrey gave an amazing mini-lecture on various Appalachian, Celtic and French Canadian step styles, all while demonstrating each one. She kept the audience, rather than herself, breathless. Through their research of music from Britain, New England, the Maritimes and the Southern Highlands, this couple has wrought a repertoire that "chronicles the human spirit," according to poet Phillip Pearson, "its joys and sorrows, light and dark, hope and despair."

Elwood will be doing the calling for the Friday evening dance following the concert.

Festival Workshops

At this writing we are getting workshop ideas together. There are a lot of fine instrumentalists who will provide valuable and specialized insights. We're hoping young band players might take advantage of a workshop on jazz and Dixieland led by the St. Louis Rivermen. Phyllis would like to do a session on the American Songbook; expect some dance and dulcimer sessions, banjo and fiddle workshops, Civil War songs and some family-focused sessions. We also look forward to the return of the Missouri Master Apprenticeship Program with the fine traditional arts in music, story and craft this program has strived to preserve. These events will be held again at Thespian and Turner halls, First Presbyterian and Grace Episcopal churches. Check our <http://bigmuddy.org> website as we get closer to April.

**Funding Assistance From
The Missouri Arts Council,
A State Agency**

Smokin' Up the Place

The Big Muddy BBQ expanded last year to include a Friday lunch, and this sole fund-raiser for the Friends of Historic Boonville is a tasty success. Chef Terry Smith cooks up a substantial plate for the price with a wide selection of smoky goodness. You might even take home a slab of ribs after the show to remember us by.

Big Muddy Tickets go on sale Jan. 27, 2014
\$25 per night or **\$45** for both nights
Visit www.friendsofhistoricboonville.org
Or call 888-588-1477 / 660-882-7977 to
purchase

Festival Schedule Rundown

Friday evening's concert will feature the Sweet Song String Band, Atwater-Donnelly, Phyllis Dale and the St. Louis Rivermen. A dance will follow at Turner Hall with Elwood Donnelly doing the calling.

Saturday sessions will begin in the morning featuring a variety of workshops with songs, instruments and dance and will continue after lunch. The **evening concert** will feature Cathy Barton and Dave Para, Gloria Attoun, Dennis Stroughmatt et l'Esprit Creole and the Claire Lynch Band. Expect some guest spots yet to be determined.

Friends of Historic Boonville

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