

# Big Muddy

# Folk Festival **SOUNDINGS** April 7-8, 2017

## ***The Muse to Tour the River Valley***

There have been a few days in the Boonslick that resemble Janice Haralson's "Winter" slice in our quilted festival banner of the changing seasons on the Missouri River (see <http://bigmuddy.org>). The ice flows migrating from their natal upstream reaches don't come in diamond shapes, but their schools move in patchwork through the river valley. The brown and gray branches of trees along the banks delineate the expanse of bare floodplain below that has been white less often than not. We have been teased a bit with the winds of spring, walking to the post office in a sweater in January like we have to Thespian Hall for a past Big Muddy, but we know better and expect a change.

We predict favorable conditions inside Thespian Hall as we present an impressive artistic lineup of some of the most respected and gifted musicians and writers – a Grammy winner and a nominee, some legendary Ozark folk rockers and some of their possible musical descendents. Almost all of them are new to the festival. Our roster -- one that our late co-founder Bob Dyer might have devised -- includes a healthy dose of songwriters. Some are songwriters first while others have let their immersion in a musical tradition or style inspire their creations. Whether it be an intimate lyric of love and wisdom or a tune that makes you want to dance, the historic Thespian Hall stage will accommodate it.

Ah, it looks like it's starting to snow...no, wait, maybe not.

### **Irish Fiddle Champion And One Major Squeeze**

The way that **Liz Carroll** plays the fiddle makes you just sit straight up in your seat and listen tight, because apparently there's another conversation going on. It is achievement enough to play the instrument with precision and clarity, but her mastery of tone makes the fiddle talk.

Growing up in Irish Chicago with a father who played accordion and an encouraging mother, Liz won the junior division of the All Ireland Fiddle Championship, and at age 18 she won the senior division. Her stature has grown ever since, touring internationally as a solo and with Greenfields of America, Trian and the String Sisters. She began writing her own tunes at age eight, and many of them are played by Irish musicians everywhere. She received the National Heritage Fellowship Award in 1994, and in 2011 she became the first American-born composer honored with the *Cumadóir* TG4, Ireland's most significant traditional music prize.

For an additional treat Liz has asked fellow Chicagoan **Jimmy Keane** to join her. His mastery of the piano accordion is the highest and requires

much from his fellow players. Big Muddy fans will remember when his trio **Bohola** charged us all up in 2003. There will be more soul and power of Irish music here than any two people can play.

### **Yes, I Would Like to Play The Guitar Like That**

For 10 years on "Prairie Home Companion" millions of people listened to the Guys All-Star Shoe Band led by **Pat Donohue**, a terrific finger-style guitarist who often paid homage to his great influences like Blind Blake, Robert Johnson and Muddy Waters. Chet Atkins called Pat one of the greatest finger pickers in the world today. In 2005 he was part of the Grammy-winning "Pink Guitar" compilation of acoustic guitar versions of Henri Mancini's music. His devotion to the instrument has made him an American standard and a mentor to folk guitarists everywhere. It takes some wit to play guitar like that, and Pat doesn't stand short of wit. He has written some of those clever songs that people want to play for you, like parodies "Would You Like to Play the Guitar," and "Sushi Yucki." If you would really like to play like Pat, you might go so far as to find the custom

signature edition guitar made to his specifications by the C. F. Martin Company.

## ***Had We Started the Festival Twenty Years Earlier***

Back in 1973 Missouri's airwaves buzzed with the Ozark Mountain Daredevils. **Randall Chowning** sang "Do You Want to Get to Heaven," and the next year **Larry Michael Lee** did "Jackie Blue." In the atmosphere were the tracks of "Will the Circle Be Unbroken" and "Dueling Banjos," and the Daredevils sweetened the mix with original material set to mountain sounds and hit the charts. By the early 1980's both singer/songwriters had left the band and released solo projects on major labels. Lee relocated to Nashville where he flourished as a writer and producer for the likes of Alabama and Restless Heart and toured with Jimmy Buffett. Chowning moved there in the 1990s, and in 2005 they released a project under the name Beyond Reach. After returning to the Ozarks they won the Quill Award and were inducted into the Writers Hall of Fame. Joining them is one of our festival favorites, multi-instrumentalist **David Wilson**.

## **Songs Spawned Mindful of Ozark Community Roots**

**The Creek Rocks** are **Cindy Woolf** and **Mark Bilyeu** from Springfield. The two got together when Mark was producing Cindy's solo albums. Mark was a founding member of Big Smith, a popular band somewhat in a musical lineage of the Daredevils. They write songs inspired by and borrowing from the musical tradition so strong and prevalent in the Ozark region. Their debut CD album is titled "Wolf Hunter," a fusion of the names of Ozark song collectors John Quincy Wolf of Batesville, Ark., and Max Hunter of Springfield, from whom the songs of the album are drawn. (Max also was the Big Muddy's first emcee.) This kind of repertoire is very close to the heart of our festival and our belief in sustaining traditional folk music with all its dynamic variations. Cindy and Mark are among the Ozark Plateau's most potent songwriters expressing themselves with a humble folk-rock sound and lyrics to touch the heart.

## **Braving the A Cappella Seas**

We don't know whether Artemisia I of Caria sang her ship into battle in 480 BCE, but she probably didn't do it with a guitar. The longest and broadest singing tradition is a cappella. Gospel songs, work songs and ballads sung unaccompanied all resonate in Thespian Hall, some by singers holding their instruments quiet for a bit and others by artists who came without them. Present day **Artemisia**, from Chicago, is a trio that highlights the power of the female voice with the intimacy of sound and space that a cappella singing provides. **Kaitlin Foley, Diana Lawrence** and **Alexandra Olsavsky** all trained at universities around Lake Michigan, sing early and classical music. They have worked individually, however, with a wide variety of musicians and settings, so the trio has a reputation for blurring the boundaries between classical and folk (which deserve blurring) with 11th century chant, Tushetian highlander cries and Norwegian war songs. They brought a program of some eclectic American folk songs to mid-Missouri on a short tour last fall.

## **Songs That Sound Like Plays**

Nashville is good place to look for songwriters; most of them will point you to **David Olney**. Relative anonymity can have its advantages, such as freedom from overbearing expectations that allow you quality time with your muse so you can write "Titanic" from the iceberg's point of view, or a Palm Sunday song from the donkey's. David's songs went over well in Music Row after he hit town in 1973, but his first solo albums came years later on the Philo/Rounder label, an appropriate one for the relatively anonymous. Half of the songs from one were covered by singers like Emmylou Harris and Linda Ronstadt. Steve Earle has called him the best songwriter ever. The high praise from his contemporaries should get you to your seat. His superb song craftsmanship is self-evident.

"If I were a poet, I would want to write sonnets," David has said, and apparently has a notebook full of them. "I appreciate a good structure. In songs, the melody and rhythm act as an editor, throwing out the extraneous stuff. Sonnets seem really close to that to me." The late Bob Dyer's poetry mentor, John Neihardt, would have appreciated that.

## Not Shy, These Guys Have Enough Bricks for the Job

The **Adobe Brothers** is a band of identical quadruplets born to different mothers who began playing together in 1979 shortly after their mothers kicked them out of their homes. The brothers, Toby, Moby, Jacoby and Pierogi, started playing old-time fiddle music in bars and restaurants around Albuquerque, but eventually were booked for festivals, street fairs and concerts as their repertoire acquired the sounds of swing, Celtic, blues and whatever else might be fun to play. Their song list has over 200 titles on it, and they'll often draw from another 200 pieces they forgot to add. Guitarist **Jimmy Abraham's** songs are favored by many acoustic musicians, and he is happy to teach a tune on the harmonica. Fiddler **Bruce Thomson** is a contest winner and has written several articles on fiddling and old-time dance. **Wayne Shrubbsall** has played banjo with some of the legends in bluegrass music and is a columnist for the *Banjo Newsletter*. An infamous pie thief, **Terry Bluhm** is among the most sought after bass players in New Mexico.

## All the Way from Sixth Street

Festival organizers **Cathy Barton** and **Dave Para** are grateful for the columns of Thespian Hall welcoming them home any week of the year. They first got together in the 1970s to sing at the old Chez Coffeehouse in Columbia, but Cathy's hammered dulcimer and banjo playing has always stepped out and won many fans across the U.S. So they recently returned to the studio to produce an album mostly of instrumentals. The project pays homage to their fellow Carp Campers at the Walnut Valley Festival in Winfield, Kan., since they have inspired much of their instrumental work in recent years. More importantly they are joined in the project by a number of those player/friends. Sharing inspiration from friends is one of life's great treasures. Dave and Cathy are pleased to have **Lauralyn Bodle** join them on fiddle this year.

The couple looks forward to another year of vicissitudes on America's roads and rivers. Last fall, when the Mississippi ran high, they were aboard the *American Queen* when she cleared the bridge at Lacrosse, Wis., by two inches.

## Festival Workshops

At this writing we are getting workshop ideas to congeal, but one could imagine from the herd of fiddlers and the gaggle of songwriters that there should be some interesting sessions, as well as those with guitar and musical genres.

We're hoping the Missouri Master Apprenticeship Program will return with folk arts masters and apprentices which offer a view of cultural preservation in action. Sessions will be at Thespian and Turner halls, First Presbyterian and Christ Episcopal churches. Check <http://bigmuddy.org> as we get closer to April.

### Singing Celebratory Notes About Our Festival Funding

Two years ago we started the River of the Big Canoes Fund to specifically bolster our artistic budget and asked all of you, our festival audience, to help us out with annual or single donations. Your generous response has been humbling and gratifying these past two years and enabled us some breathing room in putting together our show. We thank all of you first for coming to the festival and giving it vitality. To those contributors to the fund thanks ever so much for this extra help; it's a big extra help. For you folks who might want to join this canoe trip, please let Melissa at the Friends office know and come aboard. There's plenty of room.

The Friends of Historic Boonville receive funding from the Missouri Arts Council and so did our festival for its first number of years until state funds were cut. We also have benefitted from the generosity of the Isle of Capri Casino and Hotel since it first came to town. These sources have helped sustain our festival and the Friends' efforts for years.

## Smokey Goodness To Taste

Turner Hall becomes a congenial meeting house Friday and Saturday as **Terry** and **Angie Smith** provide some friendly and tasty victuals. You not only get some terrific barbecue made with years of experience, but you can also visit with members of the Friends board of directors who serve the food. They will be happy to greet you with their latex-covered hands. While our festival helps support the Friends, the Big Muddy BBQ is the organization's only fund-raiser.

## **Current Festival Schedule**

**Friday evening's concert** will feature the Creek Rocks, the Adobe Brothers, David Olney and Liz Carroll and Jimmy Keane. An old-time dance will follow at Turner Hall.

**Saturday** sessions in songs and instruments will be in the morning and afternoon. The evening concert will feature Barton and Para with Lauralyn Bodle, Artemisia, Pat Donohue, and Chowning, Lee and Wilson.

**Festival Tickets** go on sale Jan. 23, 2017, and are **\$25** per night or **\$45** for both nights

To purchase online, visit

[www.friendsofhistoricboonville.org](http://www.friendsofhistoricboonville.org)

Or call our friendly office at 888-588-1477 or  
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