

Big Muddy

Folk Festival **SOUNDINGS** April 5-6, 2019

Welcome to Our 28th Festival

As the New Year unfolds in our river town the streets can be quiet in a given evening. The chill and early darkness keep most from venturing for more than a cozy dinner out. The intrepid will brave a walk out on the bridge during sun-kept hours. It has been quiet at Thespian Hall as well. Early snows doused rehearsals for an annual Christmas choral concert, and even earlier in the year curtain ropes and sandbags urgently needed replacement and kept people out of the stage house until work was done. It seems the stage rigging at Thespian Hall is historical in its own right. New York theaters in the 19th century often hired seamen to string and operate ropes and curtains, and our system harkens back to those earlier times. Before us now is a new season of life and celebration for the hall and its keepers as we anticipate our 28th Big Muddy Folk Festival and the ensuing hubbub at Fourth and Vine.

Old friends returning and new ones to make are the characteristics of many of our festivals now. The sound and setting of the hall and the appreciative audience makes for fond memories, and word gets around, as do our festival organizers. We welcome bands with big and varying sounds, players who make their instruments sing, singers who let their hearts project right through their own voices, and dancers to take it all in rhythm and motion. It's a two-day party, and the muse is the guest of honor.

Long Time Travelling Family Bluegrass Band

The **McLain Family Band** came to Thespian Hall one summer in the early 1980s, and by then they already had been touring from their home in Berea, Ky, for 15 years. Last year marked their 50th anniversary of national and international performance, including all 50 states and 62 countries, pops orchestra concerts and the Johnny Cash Christmas Special. They bring to audiences traditional and original Appalachian bluegrass music noted for its spirit and spontaneity. They have remained a family band through the years with various combinations of family members and all the classic instruments and sounds of the genre. Multi-instrumentalist **Raymond McLain**, sister **Ruth** and sister **Alice** and husband **Al White** were here with their late father years ago. Adopted member **Daxson Lewis**, who with Raymond and Ruth teaches at the Kentucky Center for Traditional Music at Morehead State University, joined in more recent years and brought an extra banjo to the group.

Epicurious String Band In Five-Courses

Before we chew on the name, the **Alferd Packer Memorial String Band** is five multi-instrumentalists who dress in old time costumes and sing with any combination of fiddles, banjo, guitars, mandolin, hammered dulcimer, accordion, bass, and creative percussion. There is a lot on their plate; look in the bill of fare under "Eclectic." They can cook up old-time tunes, historical and period pieces, but their main course is original songs – very original. These people **Lauralyn Bodle**, **Matt Kirby**, **Steve Mason**, **Mike Yoder** and **Noah Musser** all have too much learning' for the typical string band, and from their menu of songs it's obvious they haven't thrown away their old textbooks. Bring some reference material like American history for the band name. Alferd Packer, still a nemesis for those with an active spell-check, led some prospectors to Colorado in the winter of 1870, and things got pretty tough, so much so that Packer was later convicted of cannibalism. It's something to digest while you watch their show.

Fretboard Master Returns

We're glad to have **Joel Mabus** return after too long a wait for the wit in his playing, songwriting and performance. The son of a 1930's old time fiddle champ and a banjo-picking' farm girl in southern Illinois, he started with the family mandolin and continued with the guitar and banjo. He is a respected master of all three instruments with a repertoire including mountain banjo and jazz guitar styles, and has his own take on those musical currents. His most current album extends his reach to the ukulele, a handy little thing that can become addictive. His original songs are just as worth the listen, as well. He started performing while studying anthropology and literature in college, and perhaps his best songs reflect the education and social conscience of that time as much as the strains of the bluegrass and old-time music revival. You can cop some great lines in verse or on the fretboard from Joel. He is also a generally fine and thoughtful writer, and that makes his website worth a visit as well.

Singular Dulcimer Soloist

In the right hands, the mountain dulcimer can play credibly in many styles other than the traditional repertoire. **Stephen Seifert** has a pair of those hands. His teaching and playing have made him a favorite with players in dulcimer festivals and workshops across the country. His technical skills, however, give way to a spontaneous playing and performance style in which he seems to approach every song and many individual notes as ideas that just came to him. Stephen was dulcimer soloist with the Nashville Chamber Orchestra for over 10 years and was featured on their Warner Classical recording of *Blackberry Winter*, a concerto for mountain dulcimer and string orchestra by Conni Ellisor and Stephen's late mentor, David Schnauffer. Stephen continues to perform the piece as a guest soloist with orchestra around the country and in 2012 he premiered another work by Ms. Ellisor for mountain dulcimer and full orchestra with the Tucson Symphony. Touring with his mentor Schnauffer, who singularly brought the mountain dulcimer to Nashville, he learned much of the tone and projection of the instrument. Both were adjunct instructors of the instrument Vanderbilt's Blair School of Music. Stephen also studied classical and jazz piano at the University of

Kentucky and earned a degree in recording from Middle Tennessee State University.

Two Fine Singers Raise Host of Fine Old Songs

Acclaimed folk singers **Ed Trickett** and **Sara Grey** have played our festival as solos and as part of the Golden Ring. The two collaborated first back in the 1970s for Folk Legacy Records, and we welcome the reunion of two exquisite song finders and crafters for ballads, sea songs, songs of love, and tunes from both sides of the Atlantic. Ed has appeared on over 40 recordings, 10 of which he made with Gordon Bok and Ann Muir and also played our festival in 1999. Sara has lived in both the U.S, and the UK where she is a featured performer of traditional song. She lends her engaging presence to old stories, many of which she learned from her father in New England. In addition to fine a cappella singing Sara plays old-time banjo with a hypnotic foot-tap rhythm; Ed embellishes his sensitive singing with six and 12-string guitars and hammered dulcimer, an instrument he helped popularize. Both sing with clear, unaffected voices that show great respect for the song and tradition. They lend new voice to older cultural expressions to make richer the culture of present day.

From Dance Hall to Stage

With only the continental divide between their home bases of Tucson and Manhattan, Kan., **STEAM!** defies geography to play dances across the country pleasing dancers wherever they rendezvous. The four can drive a set with plenty of rhythm power and dynamics with mandolin, fiddle and guitar strings cranking and feet stomping, but they can give you pause with the elegance of their harmonies as well as their quirky sense of humor. These folks are in it for the fun, as when they just met to jam and laugh in the years before forming a band in 2010. **Dave Firestine**, **Alice Boyle**, **Robert Rosenberg**, bring lots of strings – mandolin, fiddle, viola, banjo, guitar, bouzouki -- and **Claire Zucker** plays rhythm with the bodhran or her feet but can switch to concertina. Concerts are also graced by her fine singing. In classic contra-dance band style, they are not beholden to any one style or ethnicity of repertoire; their medleys can be comprised of Appalachian, Irish, French Canadian

or Swedish. It defies geography just like their itineraries.

Joie to Brace the North Wind

Coming all the way from Quebec are **Benoit** and **Antoine Bourque** bearing the vibrant tradition of Quebecoise music, dance and song. Benoit has toured for more than 30 years in North America and Europe with great bands like Éritage, Ad vieille que pourra, Hommage à Alfred Montmarquette, Matapat, Le Vent du Nord and La Bottine Souriante. His charismatic, exuberance and humor is as notable a presence in a band as is his accordion, clogging and rhythm playing His seated clogging while playing bones makes quite a rhythm machine. Benoit has passed plenty of joie de vivre to his son Antoine, who started piano at the age of 11 and accordion at 16. He has a degree in music from Université de Montréal where he studied the classical repertoire for piano-accordion and he studied accordion and tuba at Collège Saint-Laurentny.

Many of the French in North America came from the Celtic provinces in France, like Normandy, so some of the complexities heard in Irish music are evident in the joyous energy of the Quebecoise style and these Bourque Emmissaires.

Folkies Down the Street

After some slower winter times, festival organizers **Cathy Barton** and **Dave Para** were again on the roads and rivers of America. Before heading to festivals in Pennsylvania, New Mexico and Massachusetts, they performed as guests with the Columbia Civic Orchestra at the Missouri Theater and featured orchestral arrangements of two of Cathy's songs from "Gumbo Bottoms" and the Lewis and Clark album as well as Bob Dyer's "River of the Big Canoes." Dave made sure to thank the band. Plans are in the works to repeat that performance here in August during the Missouri River Festival of the Arts.

The Mississippi had its own ideas in the fall as high water stopped a number of cruises on the upper river. One was diverted to the Illinois River on the *American Queen*, which for Dave and Cathy completed their list of American rivers for steamboat travel.

The Friends of Historic Boonville receive funding from the Missouri Arts Council, a state agency

Playing Her Heart Out

We are always glad to have **Phyllis Dale** grace our festival stage and capture our hearts from behind the grand piano. She has moved into new housing out in sunny Florida and takes some breaks from retirement of a long show business career by playing at least twice a week for her fellow residents, including a couple of special holiday shows this season. She believes she will be up for plane travel to get here, and we'll have as much sequined props as possible for her.

Festival Workshops

The line-up this year features many great players, dancers and singers, so the Saturday workshops should offer a variety of expertise and entertainment. We're working on the schedule now. Morning and afternoon sessions will be at Turner and Thespian halls and First Presbyterian and Christ Episcopal churches Please check the website, <https://bigmuddy.org> as we get closer to festival time and the schedule is finalized.

Smoke Signals From the Lot

We happily welcome back **Terry Smith** to the BBQ pit after a couple of years of absence. Owner of the local pharmacy Medical Arts, Terry has put a lot of thought and creativity into his hobby, and it's one that is best enjoyed by a bunch of people, much like music. Terry started the Big Muddy BBQ in 1994, which is the only food service the festival has and is also the only fund-raiser for the Friends of Historic Boonville. It makes for a great welcome table over at Turner Hall.

Welcome to Kelly Smith

We got pretty wistful when we learned just before last year's festival that **Melissa Strawhun** was leaving the Friends of Historic Boonville. Working with her for six years was a true joy that is vital to a non-profit, volunteer organization. Heartening, and true to form, though, was the better part of her last two weeks she spent with **Kelly Smith** combing through notes, calendars and modus operandi for as smooth a transition as

possible. Kelly is a fine writer and singer and headed the Habitat for Humanity in Jefferson City. Her parents, Rita and Larry Sanders, have attended every Big Muddy. We have known her since her childhood and enjoy a relationship of mutual admiration.

Festival Tickets go on sale Jan. 21, 2018, and are **\$25** per night or **\$45** for both nights
To purchase online, visit
www.friendsofhistoricboonville.org
Or call our friendly office at 888-588-1477 or
660-882-7977

Skeletal Festival Schedule

Friday evening's concert will feature Cathy and Dave, Stephen Seifert, the Bourque Emmissaires, and the Alferd Packer Memorial String Band. We will have a dance at Turner Hall following the evening show, and Claire Zucker of STEAM! will call.

Saturday sessions in songs, instruments and dance will be in the morning and afternoon. The evening concert will feature STEAM!, Ed Trickett and Sara Gray, Joel Mabus and the McLain Family Band.

Friends of Historic Boonville

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