

April 14-15, 2023



SOUNDINGS

The Festival Flows on in Endless Song

A note on Facebook last month mentioned how nice it was to enjoy the spring-like weather, as if we had all forgotten how it tried to kill us the week before. Massive ice jams can make the river easier to walk than float in the frigid weather one week and then crack up and move on down the next under sunny skies.

You may not be able to step in the same river twice, but the energy is the same; the river valley is the same. Change is the constant part of the flow, much like it is in folk music traditions. Some think folk music is about preserving the past in a fixed or homogenous way, but dynamic variation is a vital component of the definition of traditional culture. Folk music has roots, and it has routes – whether or not you pronounce them both to rhyme.

As communities become less isolated those currents can find new chutes and channels while marking their path from the start. Roots grow in new fertile soils -- like African traditions in Louisiana and an Irish music scene in Texas -- and make the living mosaic in our garden of humanity.

Boonville citizens built Thespian Hall in the mid-nineteenth century high above the river to witness and celebrate such cultural expression, and it, too, has taken different routes in its life -- as meeting hall, opera house, city government offices and hospital. It inspired the Big Muddy Folk Festival 31 years ago and is its home. The stage and the audience is something you just have to share in as many ways possible. So again we alert you to the sounds ahead of strings and voices, dancing feet and clapping hands to add to the decades of echoes that you might still hear in the walls and rafters of the hall if you listen well.

Who Is Playing

Ellie Grace

Mound City Slickers

Artemisia

Elliot Rogers Trio

Dave Para

Newberry and Brashear

Cedric Watson

The Here and Now

Mastering Louisiana Creole Music at a Young Age

A powerhouse solo entertainer, **Cedric Watson** is a Grammy-nominated fiddler, singer, accordionist, and songwriter with the ability to bring into the future the musical mix of French Louisiana -- Cajun, Creole and Zydeco. In his late teens he appeared in Zydeco jam in Houston, and not long afterwards he moved from his home in San Felipe to south Louisiana and quickly immersed himself in French music and language. The next several years saw performances in 17 countries and on seven full-length albums with the Pine Leaf Boys, Corey Ledet, Les Amis Creole and with his own group, Bijou Creole.



Cedric makes the most of the mix that defines Creole, even the mix of definitions. He can resurrect the old sounds of the French and Spanish contra dance and bourrée alongside the spiritual rhythms of West African tribes whom the French and Spanish brought as slaves to the Caribbean and Louisiana. He can play obscure tunes from old Cajun masters as well as contemporary Cajun and Zydeco songs and can give a special taste to the occasional bluegrass or old-time fiddle tune. He writes almost all of his original songs on his double-row accordion. Cedric's music is a tapestry of pulsing rhythms and Creole poetry channeling his own diverse ancestry of

African, French, Native American and Spanish. Missouri was like that, too, before it became a state 200 years ago and was known as Upper Louisiana.

Three Voices Present A World of Music

Our audience thoroughly enjoyed the Chicago-based vocal trio **Artemisia** when they brought their great a capella arrangements of international and American roots music. We have tried to get them back since 2017, but covid prevented it twice and childbirth took care of a third time. They since have produced their debut CD “Sounds Like Us,” and the power of unaccompanied voices is undeniable. With a trio praised for “sincerity, wit, and mind-blowing technique” by Vocal Arts Chicago this pure-form music brings the voices of the world closer together in one story. Blurring the lines between classical and folk can be an illuminating experience when hard-earned, trained technique is held in respect for the traditional material. A cappella voice accomplishes this well, especially with a global repertoire that includes Appalachian songs, Tushetian highlander cries, Cuban dance and Norwegian war songs. **Diana Lawrence, Alexandra Olsavsky, and Kaitlin Foley** also actively commission and perform newly composed works by living female composers, including one from our own Leela Grace, and all three members regularly compose for the group. In addition to performing Artemisia does educational outreach for community and youth ensembles on subjects such as cultural literacy through song, improvisational songwriting and female empowerment.



A Fine Troubadour From the Southwest

Elliot Rogers found himself in Austin after getting out of the army in the 1980s, as Blaze Foley and Townes Van Zandt helped that city gain its musical notoriety. Singing with them and playing in their bands for even a short while earned him a lifetime of stories as well as inspiration. He joined Lyle Lovett and Nancy Griffith to



play on Robert Earl Keens’ first album. Returning to his native Albuquerque he played in bands with the bluegrass heroes from his childhood. He was virtually the house band for the Albuquerque Folk Festival, being able to share the stage and music with many of the greats there. Back in Texas he joined the iconic banjo player Alan Munde in his Gazette. One evening in Santa Fe, after hearing his trio with his wife, Janice, and musical omnivore Mike Kearney, followed by his show with Munde led me to tell Elliot that I could listen to him all night.

Then I realized I had done just that. He is one of the best bluegrass singers, players and writers out there.

The Mounds Are Gone But The Slickers Remain

The Mound City Slickers play old-time string band music with passion, drive, and a great sense of humor. Hailing from St. Louis, where the last of its great mounds were removed in the early 20th Century, they each are longtime members of that city’s vibrant old-time music scene. The band has played festivals, house concerts and more than a few dances throughout Missouri and Illinois. A full band with **Sean Belt**, ukulele, **Lindell Blackford**, fiddle and mandolin, **Rich Hibbs**, banjo, **Rich Egan**, piano, and **Keith Dudding**, guitar, they are able to punch out some dance tunes, warble country harmonies, and feature Midwest tunes, rags, and other surprises. Hopefully, we can all catch our breath when their high-energy playing is through.



Old Friend, New Duet

In November 2021 we asked **Joe Newberry** to help the festival emerge from the pandemic, and he came with Canadian fiddler and step dancer April Verch for an unforgettable performance. Joe has made distinctive collaborations a prominent part of his career to feature his clawhammer banjo and guitar playing and versatile singing and songwriting styles.



Recently, he has teamed up with Chris Brashear, who plays fiddle, mandolin and guitar and brings a clear distinctive voice to his own original music. He shares an Ozark heritage with Joe and spent a lot of time there learning ballads and songs from traditional singers and tunes at local fiddle sessions and dances. Though he travels about in the Southwest, his Ozark roots remain a vital part of his repertoire and inspires his original work. He has played with the Deep River Ramblers and with the Perfect Strangers, with Jody Stecher and the late Forrest Rose.



Bluebells and Shamrocks

A fine young band of Celtic musicians based in Texas, **The Here and Now** feature players from both Ireland and the U.S. **Chris Buckley** grew up in Milwaukee and studied viola at the University of Minnesota and Irish fiddle from greats Liz Carroll, Gendan Mulvihill and James Kelly. He competed in three All-Ireland world competitions. Since moving to Austin in 2001, he has been active in a number of energetic Texas bands. **Niamh**



Fahy, from Tara, County Meath, took lessons from the infamous Antoin McGabhann. She toured with Riverdance, Project West and John Williams. While living in London she did session work and worked on a master's degree in music therapy. She moved to Texas in 2014 and works in both fields.

Bodhran player **Rob Forkner** claims he was born on a paddle-wheel gambling boat in Louisiana and has told that story while living in many parts of the world. In Alaska, far from the Emerald Isle, he discovered Irish music from a loaner cassette tape, and the great Johnny "Ringo" McDonagh inspired him to find a drum. Instead, he fashioned one of his own from birch bark and salmon skin. In Texas, he studies geology and plays with Irish bands there.

Guitarist **Joseph Carmichael** has worked with list of bands in a variety of directions, from his contemporary trio, Flashpoint, to the legendary Solas, to singer/songwriter Ashley Davis in Lawrence, to the nationally touring Celtic-rock band Needfire. His versatile playing has taken him far and wide.

Ellie Grace and the Old Homeplace

Our festival has a special relationship with **Ellie Grace**. We have watched her and her sister, Leela, grow up in life and in music over our 31 years. We are excited that she has agreed to act as emcee this year and do an opener and some workshops for us, too. Ellie found her own path in folk music first blazed by singing, playing rhythm and dancing in her family's band. She has toured internationally as a singer, multi-instrumentalist, songwriter, and dancer specializing in roots-based Americana and percussive dance. In addition to playing with her sister, she plays in a duo with Brian Claflin, and Blue-Eyed Girl. Her own songs tend to focus on social justice messages more than the yeedah factor. She sang some of her original songs as a featured guest with Peter Yarrow and Paul Stookey at the Rubicon Theater in California and with Janis Ian at the Swannanoa Gathering in North Carolina. She won her master's in dance and choreography from Smith College in 2015 and has directed schools of folk music dance in Missouri and North Carolina. And in other news, since we last saw her here, she married Ami and has a one-year-old son, Milo.



Tilly and Her World Still Part of Ours



Tilly Tyrell, a.k.a. **Meredith Ludwig**, has passed her beloved role of 15 years as emcee on to Ellie Grace, but happily, she will still be a part of the show at the Big Muddy. She'll be calling on her friends, both winged, many-legged, and root-bound to offer up some wit and hopefully some wisdom about life on this planet. Her stories have aired on KOPN Columbia, KDHX St. Louis, and her piece about tree frog love appeared in the Christian Science Monitor.

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

The Carp Camp Sessions

Dave Para, artistic director and who writes these Soundings, mixed metaphors and all, will open an evening concert as well as share the emcee duties. He hopes to sing a small passel of songs more peculiar to his camping and jamming experience at his beloved Carp Camp. These novelties weren't on the tunes lists that he and his late wife, Cathy, normally played, although he almost sang her favorite "Snake Farm" on the *American Queen*. The Carp Camp folks have a way of bringing the abnormal out of you.



BBQ is Back at Turner Hall

Festival Tickets go on sale Feb. 1, 2023. for **\$30** per night or **\$50** for both nights. Purchase online or visit www.friendsofhistoricboonvillemo.org
Or call 888-588-1477 or 660-882-7977

Terry Smith's smoky goodness will flavor the afternoon, and patrons can enjoy the food and companionship in the friendly confines of Turner Hall, and thanks to **David and Lesley Oswald** for making the hall available. The Big Muddy Barbecue is sponsored and operated by the Friends of Historic Boonville board of directors and is the organization's major fund raiser. Plates, sandwiches, and take-home packs will be available.