

BIG MUDDY

SOUNDINGS

Folk Festival April 5-6, 2002

Winter has been a half-hearted visitor to the Vine Clad City and its environs these days. Mild air lingered late and kept the tree buds guessing. A few irises bet wrong, blooming in early December. The construction season stretched to allow local roofers to catch up after the hailstorm in the spring. Our first little snow was like a winter post card scene, and lasted about as long.

Over at Main and Vine, the seats came out and the scaffolding went up as soon as the Festival of the Arts crowds emptied out of Thespian Hall. Thanks to the Missouri Cultural Trust and the City of Boonville, the ceiling has been re-plastered, including the echo-dome, the interior has been repainted and all those seats are in Columbia refurbished and waiting to be re-installed. (A little tip: We're leaving a little more room between rows and so are losing 30 or so seats. We sold out both nights last year, so you might consider reserving seats earlier.)

Down at the Missouri River, where the ice flows dot the shallow, muddy brown water, heavy construction work has been going on for quite some time. Now, the Isle of Capri has floated the only casino in Central Missouri and lit up the sky with searchlights since early December. Its grand opening was scheduled for this month, and the Isle has graciously agreed to celebrate its opening with us to present the sound of traditional Cajun music at our festival. At the very time of this writing we are still in the process of confirming a band, but we have a good idea they're fine folks with the good chank-a-chank sound. Accordion fans, this could be your festival as we present an eclectic mix of national and regional artists for this, our 11th Big Muddy Folk Festival.

Twisted Duet Humor

Peter and Lou Berryman showed up for our festival back in 1995 with their many, wordy, witty songs and a beautifully twisted sense of humor. I think some folks up in the balcony were actually stunned. The "Double Yodel" simply was beyond their expectations. For more than 20 years, this formerly-married duo has shared a vision of the world both profound and hilarious, creating a backlog of songs destined to be classics in the drop-dead-funny genre, to which belong the likes of sardonic sages Tom Leher and Mark Graham. Some songs take new perspectives on everyday life – looking through a glass, cracked – while others seem to come from a very different place. Maybe we don't want to know where that

place is; maybe there's not much room for a lot of people where they go; and maybe you have to twist yourself up to get in there.

Welcome Cathy's Dulcimer Hero

Cathy began her life with the hammered dulcimer one Saturday morning in 1974 when KOPN radio played some tunes by **Bill Spence**, on an instrument she had not heard before and on an album Bill recorded in his living room on a 2-track machine. Until that time, there were virtually no recordings of hammered dulcimer music available. This lively, feel good recording has since become the source of inspiration for hundreds of new hammered dulcimer enthusiasts. It also marked the beginning of Front Hall

Records, and for more than 20 years, Bill recorded many popular folk artists, including Michael Cooney, Alistair Anderson, Louis Killen, John McCutcheon and John Roberts and Tony Barrand.

In the 1970s, Bill toured the East Coast with his band Fennig's All-Stars String Band, mostly with fiddler **George Wilson**. A talented, multi-instrumental virtuoso and singer, George's repertoire samples a wide variety of traditional and folk styles. As a fiddler, he has nearly 300 tunes for dancing and listening—tunes from New England, Quebec, Cape Breton, Scotland, Ireland and Shetland. Put a banjo in his hand, and George can channel Uncle Dave Macon, cackling enough to send you to the kitchen in search of country ham and cornbread. With a 12-string guitar George can conjure up Hudie Ledbetter, "Leadbelly," one of the most beloved singers in American folk music.

**Funding assistance from
The Missouri Arts Council**

All Grown Up With A Set Of Their Own

Leela and Ellie Grace have been part of our festival for many years singing and playing with their parents, and others, joining in song workshops and tapping some fancy steps for our finales. This year, these two dancers, singers, multi-instrumentalists and songwriters will put together a set of their own. Since graduating from college in 2000 (Leela) and 2001 (Ellie), they have traveled to festivals and camps and have collaborated with esteemed performers on stage and in the studio. The two have grown up hearing old-time and modern folk styles; now they lend their voices to the tradition. Their variety of music and dance style, their singing and writing make for quite a dynamic performance.

From the Polka Hall of Fame

"Polka" Don Lipovac is a world-class accordionist who hails from the Strawberry Hill neighborhood of Kansas City, Kan., and his musical inspiration has always come from the people of that area: Slovenian, Croatian, Serbian, Polish, Hungarian, Greek, German, Italian, French and Russian. He won the American Accordion Association National Championship in 1958 and placed fourth in the world competition in Brussels. He has degrees in theory and music education from

the Kansas City conservatory and has appeared on the Lawrence Welk show. His love for traditional ethnic music brings him here, for Don has spent his life helping to preserve the music of Slovenia and Croatia by playing, teaching and arranging hundreds of folk melodies for his pupils. He directed the St. John's Tamburitians Orchestra for 30 years, giving 30 concerts a year and has the unique distinction of being inducted in both the Tamburitza Association of America Hall of Fame and the Polka Hall of Fame.

Mr. Coffeehouse

If the folk music revival that shone so brightly in the 1960s ever spawned traditions of its own, then the coffeehouse would be one of them (though it was a revival of its own from the Renaissance). These intimate, dark-lit settings with simple tables and chairs let the local bards sing their rhymes and wandering troubadours bed down for a few nights. **Matt Watroba** found music in this context. As the '70s turned into the '80s that tradition had waned, and Matt started producing the "Folks Like Us" show for Detroit public radio, WDET, which he has done for 15 years. He is still able to sing in some of the best listening rooms left around, and he enjoys opening for well-known acts at The Ark, in Ann Arbor, one of the best folk venues in the U.S. Matt picks his songs for what they say about the human condition, and his resonant voice and mellow guitar mark a warm and friendly show.

No Category Will Fit

She sings with lovely and powerful voice, writes songs with feeling and wit, and plays some pretty hot licks on the guitar. Katy Moffatt has been around for some time making music which occasionally finds the mainstream but always keeps to a current of her own choosing. She has recorded for Columbia Records, been nominated best new female vocalist by the Academy of Country Music, had her songs covered by Hoyt Axton and Janie Fricke and outsold Garth Brooks in the U.K. But Katy has kept her focus wide and her career broad, playing great music for people who like to hear music without labeling it. The American music machine, however, thrives on labels, and it doesn't accommodate well a woman who can play the country blues and write songs about Dylan Thomas. She is always ready to experiment with

different musical styles. So I don't have to call her a folksinger, because Katy can play and sing whatever she wants, and she does it so well and her audiences know that.

Rosin the Bow, Rattle the Bones

A three-time national fiddle champion, **Byron Berlin** is huge player in the world of bluegrass. A native of Oklahoma, Byron spent 26 years operating in the Los Angeles scene as a prominent session and sound-track musician. His "track-list" includes recording with The Band, the Eagles, The Rolling Stones and Tammy Wynette. He has been the fiddler for Bill Monroe's Bluegrass Boys, Doug Dillard, the Country Gazette and California. A few years ago he moved back to Oklahoma and opened the Double Stop Fiddle Shop in historic Guthrie. Most recently, he has been teaming up with his nephew **Barry Patton**, an excellent bones player and have recreated in their own style a sound they knew from their grandfather, Lue Berline, who played with the bones player who gave Barry his first set of bones and taught him his first taps. This combination makes for a very entertaining duet, and is possible only because two of finest musicians are doing the work.

Let's All Sing Like the Birdies

Born in the country around Festus and Crystal City, Ralph Duren played the drums in the school marching band and later in a country western band to pay for earning a degree in animal husbandry, but he won't be drumming for us. You see, Ralph is a Grand National Champion Gobbler, and in 1997, he was judged to be able to call quail better than anyone else in the world. The imitation of the sounds of nature could very well be the oldest of our oral traditions. During his solid career with the Missouri Department of Conservation, Ralph has enjoyed his work as an outdoor, hunting and public relations specialists. Ralph appears monthly on KOMU-TV's "Pepper and Friends" and other shows around the state. He has also been on shows for National Public Radio, The Nashville Network and CNN, as well as guested for Tom Snyder, and the NBC Tonight Show with Jay Leno. Ralph is a highly sought for heritage festivals, rendezvous and school and church programs.

Missouri Folk Arts Program

Again this year we feature a presentation from the Missouri Folk Arts masters/apprentices program, one of the highlights for traditional folk arts at our festival. The session last year at the Presbyterian Church went very well: The more intimate space and the interview format conducted by program directors Lisa Higgins and Deborah Bailey enabled the audience to get closer to the artists and to their crafts. So far, artists planning to participate include Joe Patrickus for Western cowboy bootmaking; Jan McMichael for Native American porcupine quillwork and lazy stitch beadwork; Angelia Stabler for Native American jingle dance dress making; and the Sitze Family, a bluegrass gospel group from Frederickstown. Two family members are in the apprenticeship program this year learning the regional style of bluegrass mandolin playing their grandfather plays.

Local Folkie River Rats

Cathy Barton, Dave Para, and Bob Dyer, festival organizers and popular Missouri minstrels, will be back for concert sets on both nights. Bob has released his third solo album, "The River Runs Outside My Door," which includes one of the festival's favorite song, "One Last Time." Dave and Cathy's busy schedule took them across the U.S. and up the Missouri River last year and included Folk Music Week at the esteemed Pinewoods camp in Massachusetts. All three enjoyed work on the river for the Delta Queen Steamboat Co., but that work is in limbo while the company reorganizes this year.

Laissez Les Bon Temps Roulez

Some of the employees at the Isle of Capri who hail from Louisiana may not quite appreciate how lucky we are to have Cajun music in Central Missouri, but we thank the Isle very much for presenting music from one of the richest folk traditions in America.

Cajun music was in danger of being lost in the American pop culture jungle some decades ago, but a cultural revival in the region has nurtured new generations of musicians paying homage to the masters they learned from. The descendants of the likes of Dewey Balfa, Nathan Abshire and "Bois Sec" Ardoin are playing well and breathing new life into the music.

The hot mix that is the Cajun tradition offers everything a culture could want for fun: fine fiddle music with strong rhythms for great dancing and heavy on the squeezebox; song traditions that remain indigenous and yet absorb styles and sources from everywhere; and great food to revive you when you're all played out.

A Call for Volunteers

Even though we're confined to the 600-plus seats at Thespian Hall, the Big Muddy has been able to expand during our 11 years, as we have been able to use Turner Hall and First Presbyterian Church for programming and gathering. As such, we're in need of volunteers, for things like ushering, concessions, album sales at Turner Hall, some site management, and Maryellen McVicker could use a little help at the Friends office as we get close to the festival date. If you have the time and energy to spare, please call the office of the Friends of Historic Boonville, 660-882-7977, so we can get back to you.

Festival Events: A Rough List

Our **Friday evening concert** at Thespian Hall will include Cathy Barton, Dave Para; Matt Watroba; Bill Spence and George Wilson; the Berrymans and Byron

Berline and Barry Patton. An old-time dance at Turner Hall will follow the concert.

The tentative schedule for **workshop sessions on Saturday** will include: a song-writers' session with Bob, Peter and Lou and Katy; a fiddle session with Byron and George; and accordion holiday with Don, Lou and Dirk; a wildlife presentation by Ralph and the presentation by the Missouri Folk Arts Program.

On **Saturday evening** the concert lineup will include Polka Don, Ralph Duren, Katy Moffatt, Bob Dyer, Leela and Ellie Grace and Special Cajun Guests.