



Fiddlin' Around

Volume 12, Number 1

www.salinefiddlers.com

Fall 2005

Hometown Concert Series

Mark O'Connor!

With great joy the Saline Fiddlers announce their Twelfth Annual Fall Hometown Concert featuring **Mark O'Connor's Hot Swing**, October 27, 2005 at Saline High School's Ellen A. Ewing Performing Arts Center. This one-night concert will be held on Thursday at 7:00 pm.

The Saline Fiddlers will kick off the concert with their stage show blend of music, song and dance from the traditions of American folk fiddle, bluegrass, western swing and Celtic music.

Ask most Fiddlers their favorite fiddle tune and they will respond with something written by either our own **Jesse Mason** or **Mark O'Connor**. For years Fiddlers have been playing Mark's "Bowl of Bula" and "Olympic Reel," the virtuoso violin piece written in early 1996 for the Summer Olympic Games in Atlanta, GA., and premiered at the closing ceremonies before 100,000 people in the Olympic Stadium. In 2003 Saline High's Chamber Orchestra was the first high school orchestra in America to play his "Fiddle Concerto No. 1," the most-performed modern violin concerto in the world with over 150 performances.

Mark O'Connor is widely recognized as one of the most gifted contemporary composers in America and surely one of the brightest talents of his generation. He has been described as "genius" by the Baltimore Sun, "one of the most talented and imaginative (artists) working in music—any music—today" by the Los Angeles Times, and the New York Times calls his "one of the most spectacular journeys in re-

cent American music."

Mr. O'Connor regularly teaches master classes and has conducted symposia at many schools of music. At the Mark O'Connor Fiddle Camp near Nashville, Tennessee and the Mark O'Connor

Strings Conference near San Diego, California, Mr. O'Connor assembles a world-class faculty (which has included Fiddler alumni **Jeremy Kittel** and **Brad Phillips**) to teach in a number of musical styles. These gatherings routinely draw participants from across the United States and Canada, as well as from Europe, South America and Asia.

Even so, Mr. O'Connor has been best known as a fiddler and is featured on the soundtracks of "The Patriot" and "Gods and Generals." He was the National Fiddling Champion back in 1974 and released his first CD that year.

"Hot Swing" consists of Mark O'Connor, **Jon Burr** on Bass, **Bryan Sutton** and **Howard Alden** on guitars, and vocalist **Roberta Gambarini**. They play tribute to Mark's great friend and mentor, the legendary French jazz master, Stephane Grappelli.

Tickets for the Hometown Concert range from \$15 to \$30 each, and are available by calling toll-free **866-257-5333** or visiting the website at:

www.salinefiddlers.com.



**The Hometown Concert
will be one night only:
Thursday, October 27
at 7:00 pm.
Tickets are sure to go
fast. Please call
1-866-257-5333
or visit
www.salinefiddlers.com
to get your tickets today!**

Artistically Speaking

Culver had a musically privileged beginning

Not many of us have heard the whole story of how Artistic Director Ben Culver got his start in music, so we've asked him to describe his musical beginnings. Ben relates his experience through fifth grade in this issue of Fiddlin' Around. We will look beyond elementary school and at Ben's venture into fiddling in the winter issue, so stay tuned.

Ben: As the son of two accomplished musicians, participation in music wasn't really a choice in my family, but a way of life. I began studying the violin at the age of three, first using a (thawed and emptied) box of frozen peas with a ruler duct-taped to the back, and then quickly graduating on to a 1/10th size violin. My first teacher was Debbie Stanton, a young Suzuki instructor who taught out of the then newly-opened Keynote Music Store in Chelsea. After a year or so (at the age of five or six I believe) I graduated on and traveled 45 minutes to Brighton to study with Geri Arnold, a well established and internationally famous teacher who, using the Suzuki Method, taught two lessons a week (a group class and a private lesson). By that point I was practicing 45 minutes to an hour each day with my mom at my side to help keep things focused.

By the time I was in fifth grade I had finished Suzuki Book 6 and moved on to study classically with Stephen Shipps, then a new professor at the University of Michigan, who had studied with Ivan Galamian, Sally Thomas, and Joseph Gingold (all

immensely successful violinists and teachers). Prof. Shipps is an amazing player (as well as making international concert appearances, acclaimed recordings, and leading many of our nation's biggest orchestras, he is the violinist on the popular Christmas CD by Manheim Steamroller), pedagogue, and friend who helped me to find joy in playing music.

Saline is known across country

The Southeast Tour went very well. The Fiddlers were great. I just ran into a neighbor who heard us at the Opryland Resort. She heard the music and looked around and said, "That looks like the Saline Fiddlers. Oh, but it couldn't be, could it." Sure enough, it was us. Another mom and daughter introduced themselves. The daughter had participated in the workshop we did in Lexington, KY last November. They heard the music from their hotel room and recognized it and came out to say 'hello'. In Gatlinburg a couple from Northville, MI took our business card and said they wanted to get us to play up that way. At the Highland Games at Grandfather Mountain a couple from Lansing thought it was nice to have Michigan represented so well. Small world.

—Event Manager Doug Rhine

Fiddlin' Around is the official newsletter of the

Saline Fiddlers.

We publish four times yearly.

Jen Lahnala, Editor.

Photos courtesy of loving Fiddler families.

Will Warner, Executive Director

www.salinefiddlers.com



Different focuses: Some watch a movie on the bus overhead monitor, and some just chill during summer tour. Pictured from left are Mary, Gina, Jacob, Kathryn, Brian and Kelsey.

Southeast Tour 2005

A summer to remember

Bluegrass trip recap

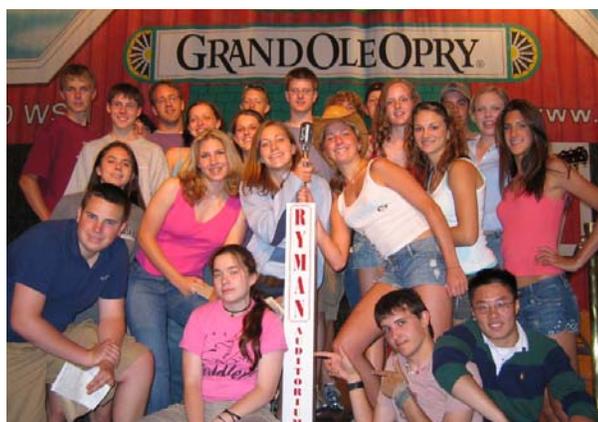
By Kelsey, junior violist

Tour is a magical time of year, a time when the Fiddlers get to fully enjoy the fruits of our labors throughout the the school year. A time when we bid farewell to the “new kids” (With the exception of our senior drummer, new Fiddlers wait until they have been in the group for a year to go on tour.) and head out to exotic places unknown and unexplored. This summer we headed south to the home of bluegrass, from North Carolina to Nashville. By the end of the twelve-day tour, we had played ten times in three different states, and passed through even more states.

We started in West Virginia, stopping, appropriately for Appalachia, for a quick tour of a coal mine en route to Rocky Mount, VA, which was just one of our many stops along the way.

In Gatlinburg, Tennessee we enjoyed Smokey Mountain National Park and all the cute shops and golf courses the town could offer. We played a *steaming hot* gig at the Christus Gardens downtown, which brought joy to the lives of the many bus passengers who were waiting for their busses in the nearby bus shelter. Also while we were in Gatlinburg we had the pleasure of going whitewater rafting on the Pigeon River. Luckily, we only lost two Fiddlers. (Don't worry, we got them back.)

The Fiddlers spent a good portion of their time and had many an adventure in Nashville. We played two gigs in the area, one at a Cracker Barrel (one of our tour sponsors) and one in the Atrium in the center of the Opryland Resort.



Simply Grand: From Grand Ole Opry to Grandfather Mountain, Fiddlers always found time for a photo op.



Fiddlers Rafting Accident!

By Brian, victim of “Big Pigeon Rapids”

(A raft full of seven members of the Saline Fiddlers hit a Class IV rapid, plunging two of them to their joy.)

It was a quiet, still, and boring morning as the Saline Fiddlers set off on their much-anticipated rafting trip on the Southeastern Tour 2005. The groups set out and listened to the guide's instructions intently and with extreme concentration. They practiced the different commands given by her: “FORWARD 2!” or “FORWARD 3!” and “BACK 1!” and so forth.

The waters were fairly calm at first, and then picked up every-so-often when the raft met a length of rapids. The groups enjoyed a few scenic sites as they floated down calmer waters. They went through territories where a recent hurricane had swept away roads and uprooted trees. They also saw the many wooded areas and finely built homes.

All the groups made it through five of the rapids... except one group. As that unfortunate raft, consisting of Stefanie, Sarah, Brian, Dan, Patrick, Marie, and Daniel, approached the rapid, cleverly named “Lost Guide”, their raft hit a small rock and the boat turned sideways. As it happened so fast, the guide was “lost” in thought about turning the boat forward and forgot about the Class IV rapid just 10 feet away. And so, the right side of the boat had its back towards the rapid and as they went over, the raft nearly flipped. It didn't, however, because of the crazy maneuvers the well-trained guide performed. Unfortunately, the raft lost two passengers as they fell

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Camp Phil

A tradition of reaching for excellence



Getting those tunes right: Jordan, Sarah, and Jacob work out the cello parts during Camp Phil in August.

By Doug Rhine, Event Manager

Long-time followers of the Fiddlers have observed how the level of the group's playing keeps improving over the years. Overheard at a recent practice was the comment that what was once the most difficult piece in the group's repertoire is now one of the first pieces learned by incoming Fiddlers. The Fiddlers keep tackling catchier tunes. This is a result of the group's success in inspiring younger students in the Saline Schools to keep aiming for higher goals.

The trend continues with this year's Camp Phil. Fiddle Camp brings the students together for four days of intense rehearsal. This year the Fiddlers worked on learning 12 new tunes to add to their show. Ben Culver, the group's Artistic Director, said this year he introduced some of the most difficult tunes the Fiddlers have ever performed. It may surprise people, but often it is the more difficult songs that the Fiddlers most enjoy playing. Those tunes just have more energy and interest for the audience and the performers. The Fiddlers are polishing several of these tunes for their upcoming Hometown Concert.

Fiddle Camp is also a chance for the Fiddlers to spend uninterrupted time with one another. The students get to know each other better and have some fun inside and outside of the rehearsal hall. The tables in the mess hall this year were covered with an array of puzzles and brain-teasers to keep inquiring minds active. There were even "fabulous" prizes for solving these mind-benders. The Fiddlers found some time in the busy schedule to throw a few water balloons, roast a marshmallow or two in the campfire for s'mores, and maybe even watch for a shooting star in the night sky.

Fiddle Camp continues the tradition of reaching for excellence so that each audience the Fiddlers entertain will leave with a smile.

Rafting / Accident!

(Continued from page 3)

victims to the rushing water. But fortunately, they were Brian, a varsity swimmer for three years and Dan, an outdoorsy gentleman, who let out giggles as they floated down and were brought into boats.

"Hahaha! That was probably the sweetest thing we'll do all tour!" was heard said by Dan to Brian as they re-gathered into their own rafts.

When asked what happened, Brian said, "All I remember was just, 'Oh no, I'm gonna fall in'. And then I emerged and heard whistles and Dan saying quite calmly, 'Hey Brian, can you grab my paddle?' They pulled me in with *the rope* that they said they wouldn't need to use. As they pulled me in, I smiled and blew kisses at the dazzled spectators...no joke."

Dan said, "Yeah, I don't remember exactly why or how I fell in. I think I went to grab at Brian's life-jacket because I was sitting across from him, but just fell out. It was *a lot* of fun."

Luckily, the two survivors only came back with a few scrapes and bruises.



Rafting 'victims' Brian and Dan sit in front of the raft before going down.

Meet the new Fiddlers

We are proud to present the 2005-2006 addition of new Fiddlers. This is a talented group! We are featuring four Fiddlers in this edition and the remaining five in the next edition of *Fiddlin' Around*

By Kristen, senior violist

Tyler

Freshman Tyler joined the group this year on violin. Tyler began playing violin in fifth grade, and also plays the piano. He says he picked the violin because of Fiddlers – he always wanted to be in the group.



So far, Tyler's favorite song is "Catharsis" and he's surprised by the amount of music Fiddlers have. He's enjoying being with and traveling with his Fiddler friends.

When he's not with Fiddlers, Tyler is participating in Boy Scouts, track, taking piano lessons, and is the captain of the Freshmen Soccer team. He enjoys family vacations, Alpine skiing, and hanging out with friends. As of now, Tyler wants to attend the University of Michigan to study something in the medical field.

Jacob



The Saline Fiddlers adds a cello player this year – freshman Jacob. Jacob started playing in the fifth grade and took lessons from Fiddler alumnus Brendan Lapsley. Why Fiddlers? "The hat," he jokes, before saying the reason he joined was the

thrill of performing in front of large audiences and the "cool" music.

Jacob is enjoying the awesome people, the challenge, the music (in particularly the "Farewell Set," "Hungry Man," and "Catharsis"), and basically everything else in Fiddlers.

Jacob is a linebacker for the football team and

plays lacrosse. He also enjoys reading and hanging out with friends. Jacob is sure he will attend college, but is unsure of a major and where he will attend. Look for Jacob on stage rockin' out to "Hungry Man!"

Aubrey

Freshman Aubrey began playing the violin in the fifth grade because she wanted to play an instrument that looked challenging. Seeing the Fiddlers perform at the Celtic Festival, considering her love of traveling and playing her violin were all factors that made Aubrey decide she wanted to be a Fiddler.



So far, Aubrey likes the people, the sights and the performing aspect of the Fiddlers. She noticed that the Fiddlers are a focused, hard-working group that was very welcoming to her.

Other activities that keep Aubrey busy are marching band, playing with her dog, and a high level of involvement at church.

Aubrey is interested in pursuing a career in teaching music. She is only interested in attending the University of Michigan.

Brad

Every year the Saline Fiddlers auditions new members – fiddlers, guitar players...drummers? Last February, for the first time in Saline Fiddler history, junior Brad auditioned and became the newest rhythm section member, on the electric drum



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2005 / Meet new Fiddlers

(Continued from page 5)

set. Brad spent many hours with Artistic Director Ben Culver writing out drum parts for all the Fiddler songs and started performing with the Fiddlers in March.

Brad says he tried out for the group because his friends were in it and he liked the challenge it would be to be the group's first drummer. Brad's favorite tune is "Mason's Ape Ron" and, while performing on stage is a blast, what he likes best about the group are the "fun and caring" people in it, and he is surprised at how smoothly the organization runs.

Apart from Fiddlers, Brad is involved in the Marching Band, Pep Band, Jazz Band, Hornet Light and Sound, and can be found playing in the pit for school musicals. He currently plans to attend either Michigan State or Michigan Tech to study Information Technologies.

An "administrative" summer tour recap

By Lynda Shea, Administrative Manager

We had a great time on tour! With all the activities and gigs we kept busy all the time. We weathered hurricane Cindy, had two people fall out of the rafts while rafting, got the bus into various tight spots, doctored those that got sick, watched fireworks from all over Nashville riverfront, and generally had a blast. A new sport has been created, Power Shopping. We have learned how to really scare the greeters at Wal-Mart! Ask the Fiddlers as you see them about their favorite parts and the best food they had.

Thanks to:

- All the **kids** on tour. They were polite, attentive, helpful and warmly received by all the venues we played.
- **Dave and Priscilla Olsen**, our advance force. They prepared rooms at all hotels and called back with any problems coming up on the road. They shopped for food and supplies as well as took sickies to the emergency room. They did room checks, chaperoned gigs, sold CDs, and cooked and cleaned.
- **Doug and Kathleen Rhine**. Their endless energy, great rapport with the kids and foresight in all matters made this trip smooth.
- **Jim Oliver**, our bus driver. He took us to places a bus that large had not gone before! He was patient with some horrible road signs and still had smiles for our kids. He was great at meeting folks at gigs and selling our group. We have a great friend in Jim.
- **Ben Culver**. We had a lot going on, a lot of seat-of-our-pants gigs, and inexperienced administration folk. Thanks for all your patience with us, the kids and the many little things that you were so good at dealing with. You are the BEST.

Upcoming Public Events

- ♫ September 10: **Art and Apples Festival**, Rochester Municipal Park, Rochester, MI
- ♫ September 17: **West Michigan Bluegrass Festival**, Lowell 4H Fairgrounds, Lowell, MI. Visit www.wmbma.org/wmbma for more information.
- ♫ October 1: **Marshall Field's Day of Music with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra**, Max M. Fisher music Center, Detroit, 9:00 am. Visit www.fields.com for more information.
- ♫ October 1: **Saline Area Fire Department Chili Cookoff**, Washtenaw County Fairgrounds, 4:30 pm.
- ♫ October 22: **Octoberfest**, Tri-County Sportsmen's League, Saline, MI, 6:00 pm.
- ♫ October 27: **12th Annual Fall Hometown Concert with Mark O'Connor's Hot Swing**, Saline High School's Ellen Ewing Performing Arts Center, 7:00 pm.

Saline Events: The Fiddlers are especially excited to have the opportunity to play these performances around Saline:

- ♫ Picnic in the Park
- ♫ Saline Evangelical Home
- ♫ Ms. Hansen's fifth grade orchestra
- ♫ Harvest of the Arts
- ♫ Fire Department Chili Cookoff
- ♫ Octoberfest
- ♫ Hometown Concert

Thank you to everyone in Saline who have made these performances possible.

For bookings call: 1-866-257-5333

www.salinefiddlers.com

Fiddler workshops

Sharing the Fun of Fiddling

By Doug Rhine, Event Manager

The Saline Fiddlers get a kick out of playing for other students and sharing with younger audiences the excitement and fun they have with music. This year the Fiddlers have enjoyed a number of opportunities to perform for and conduct workshops with elementary through high school students.

The Fiddlers performed for elementary students in Whitmore Lake and for an audience of mainly Hispanic students in Arlington, VA. who sang along with a Fiddler arrangement of Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer. They have entertained Saline students, too, at Harvest, Woodland Meadows and Heritage elementary schools.

The Fiddlers help Ben Culver conduct fiddling workshops with teachers and students to show how fiddling can bring a note of fun and a fresh challenge to school string programs. They have held workshops with students in Kentucky, Virginia, in northern Michigan and right here in Saline.

One unusual opportunity this summer was working with students from Switzerland and Italy who were visiting this country as part of an outstanding student orchestra performing at the Ameri-

can String Workshop. The Fiddlers taught them some fiddle tunes then performed the tunes with the visiting students in a joint concert.

Nothing compares to the enthusiasm of an audience of other young musicians. In Kentucky over 800 students gave the Fiddlers standing ovations several times during a concert there. A group of students from one of the local school bands came to the performance and one of them commented that the concert was the most fun he had ever had with the band.

On tour this summer the Fiddlers played at the Cannon Music Camp in North Carolina. They were given a warm welcome and gracious introduction to the audience, but the camp staff asked the audience to be polite and refrain from talking and to be on their best concert behavior. The students sat back in their seats not knowing what to expect. It didn't take long for them to realize this was a concert meant to be enjoyed. There was a lot of clapping, cheering and foot stomping before the concert was over. The camp staff got in the spirit of the performance quickly, too.

The Fiddlers are looking forward to hosting another local Fiddle Power Workshop in conjunction with this fall's Hometown Concert. They hope a lot of local fiddlers will join them for a day of fun.

Recap / **Bluegrass tale is told**

(Continued from page 3)

While in Nashville we visited the Ryman Auditorium, original home of the Grand Ole Opry, and Ghrun Guitars, where some Fiddlers met a member of Tim McGraw's band. In The Violin Shop we learned we had just missed Alison Krauss, but were delighted to be treated with a tune from Stuart Duncan. We attended a show on the General Jackson Showboat, saw the Charlie Daniel's Band as part of the Fourth of July festivities, and we also got to see the Grand Ole Opry, which featured Joe Nichols that night. (It was quite a treat, just ask the Fiddler girls.)

We also played at North Carolina's Appalachian State University, where we performed for a large group of high school students attending the Cannon Music Camp. Playing for kids our own age is always fun, so this was high on the list of favorite gigs for the Fiddlers. From there we went to the Grandfather Mountain Highland Games, where we played *five* times in between exploring the festival and climbing Grandfather Mountain. At a Celtic formal occasion there we saw hundreds of people fully dressed in kilts and long plaid skirts: a magnificent sight.

The summer magic was coming to a close. We headed back to Saline to tell our tales to those whom we left at home and were happy to see once again.



The red, white and blue: Fiddlers play in Atrium of Gaylord Opryland Resort on July 4.



www.markoconnor.com



**SALINE
Fiddlers**

Will Warner, Executive Director
Ben Culver, Artistic Director
Doug Rhine, Event Manager
Lynda Shea, Administrative Manager

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October 27, 7:00 pm.
Get your tickets today by calling toll
free or visiting our website!
Numbers at left.**



The Saline Fiddlers
PO Box 315
Saline, MI 48176

To:



Michigan State Fair, August 14, 2005