



Fiddlin' Around

The Saline Fiddlers

Volume 16, Number 1

www.salinefiddlers.com

Fall 2009 II

The Saline Fiddlers are Proud to Present Their 16th Annual Fall Hometown Concert



*We are pleased to host our special guest artists
Dennis Stroughmatt and Creole Stomp*

Saturday, November 7, 2009

7:00pm

The Sandra Nadig Auditorium

Saline Middle School

7190 N. Maple Road

Saline, Michigan

From the “bayous” of southern Illinois, we are thrilled to host Dennis Stroughmatt and Creole Stomp, our first Creole-Zydeco and Cajun band, as our guest artists at our 16th Annual Fall Hometown Concert.

Dennis Stroughmatt formed his quintet in 2002 after living for many years among the French Creole communities in southeast Missouri and Louisiana. The band presents an authentic mix of ancient and modern Mississippi River Valley music from the whole of the old Louisiana Territory. Their concerts include explanation of the Cajun and Creole cultures, history of the songs and translation from the Louisiana French.

The band features Dennis on fiddle, accordion and vocals, Jon Watson—drums/mandolin, Jennifer Stroughmatt—washboard/vocals, Rob Krum—bass guitar/vocals and Robert Russell—lead guitar/steel guitar/vocals.

As always, the Saline Fiddlers will kick off the concert with this year’s new stage show. It will be a lively, upbeat evening of music, singing and dance, crafted by Artistic Director Ben Culver, and will include many tunes commissioned and composed especially for the Saline Fiddlers.

by Will Warner



Tickets are \$15 and \$20
Available online at www.salinefiddlers.com
or by calling 1-866-257-5333 ext. 1

We apologize for neglecting to mention these special friends of The Saline Fiddlers in our last issue of "Fiddlin' Around".

Thank you for your support of The Saline Fiddlers.

We couldn't have done it without you!

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Markus, caught up close at a recent performance.

Selling the Seats

*by Jen Lahnala,
photos by Joe O'Brien*

Markus has helped build up the Saline Fiddlers fan base with his fresh approach to advertising the Saline Fiddlers' Hometown Concerts.

A year ago, when Markus was a sophomore, he organized three mini street performances, where a small group of Fiddlers would play for passers by on busy corners in Ann Arbor. Other Fiddlers would personally invite interested persons to the Hometown show and hand out flyers with concert information. The Fiddlers also played in front of Benny's Bakery in Saline. Markus didn't stop there, however. With the help of some parents, he invited the local newspapers to the events, achieving even more publicity through their ensuing news write-ups.

Markus then wrote a letter to *The Ann Arbor News'* Opinion Page so many more people could read about the upcoming concert.

Markus' efforts contributed to the whole advertising campaign, which resulted in a near sellout audience for the concert.

The success of the Hometown Concert campaign, along with a natural talent and interest in marketing, led Markus to join DECA this year. DECA, an association for students interested in careers in marketing, management and entrepreneurship, has been in existence for over 60 years. This organization provides competitive and educational opportunities in business and self-development for high school and college students, and is made up of alumni and professionals as well as students.

DECA annually holds over 40 competitive events through which students can learn all sorts of professional skills ranging from business operations to hospitality to teamwork.

Markus wishes to compete in the advertising campaign event and has been raising money to cover the cost of the competitions. He plans on working hard and being a winner!

Already he has rounded up the Saline Fiddlers organization with new marketing strategies for the November 7 Hometown Concert, such as sending invitations via Facebook and Halloween treats.

Markus is well on his way to achieving business success before he even leaves high school! Our best wishes for championing the DECA advertising campaign event go out to Markus. And of course, we all can help Markus and the Fiddlers by attending the Fall and Winter Hometown Concerts!



Markus accompanying the 'Lollypop Girls', Rachel B. Rebekah, Allie, Desi and Vicky at a recent performance in Richmond, Michigan.

We Would Like to Introduce Our New Fiddlers.

They are all in the class of 2013, and not only are they talented, they are just a nice group of kids!

Thank you to Cindy O'Brien for interviewing each student and writing their introductions.

Photos by Joe O'Brien



Vince
Drums

Welcome to Vince on drums!

Vince was introduced to the Fiddlers by his brother, Tyler, who graduated in 2009. Vince remembers listening and enjoying the music as Tyler played his violin.

The most fun aspect of Fiddlers so far has been enjoying his friends a lot; the most challenging has been learning the music and keep-

ing a steady beat!

Vince's words of wisdom to aspiring Fiddlers are, *"Practice a ton and practice smart. Don't just play the whole song straight through and call it good; work on one section at a time, then pull it together slowly."*

In addition to being our new drummer, Vince is captain of the freshman soccer team and is on the Saline High School marching band drum line.

It's great to have you as a Saline Fiddler, Vince!

A warm welcome to freshman Amelia on violin!

Amelia says, *"I've been going to Fiddler concerts for a long time, and after my brother joined the group and talked about how much fun it was, I knew I wanted to be in the group, too!"*

Amelia agrees with many of the other Fiddlers that bus trips have been her favorite experience so far. Her biggest challenge has been memorizing all of the music.

Her favorite gig was the Gaylord Alpenfest gig. She enjoyed it because it was a bus trip, and because the Fiddlers got to enjoy rides at the fair when they weren't entertaining the crowd.

Advice from Amelia to a younger student interested in becoming a Fiddler is to join Fiddle Club in Middle School and have good practice habits.

She also plays field hockey on the Saline High School JV team and plans to play lacrosse in the spring. In addition, she enjoys reading, Facebook, sleeping and hanging out with friends.

Welcome, Amelia!



Amelia
Fiddle

The Saline Fiddlers are thrilled to have another member of the M. family join our ranks!

Rebekah says, *"I have watched my three siblings participate in the Saline Fiddlers for years. They always looked like they were having so much fun, so I decided to try out. Since I was little, I always wanted to be in the 'group with the black cowboy hats'."*

For Rebekah, the best thing about being part of the Fiddlers so far has been *"performing for large audiences who enjoy our music as much as we do. The biggest challenge has been learning all the music."*

Her favorite gig was playing with the graduating seniors this past summer at their last show. *"They are all talented musicians and great leaders, which is what I aspire to be."*

Rebekah's advice for new Fiddlers is *"to practice every day, because you will improve faster than if you only practice every once in a while for a long time."*

Rebekah also enjoys playing piano and visiting Chicago.

Welcome to our new talented violinist, Rebekah!



Rebekah
Fiddle

Welcome to our talented new bass player, Eric! Eric saw the Fiddlers perform at several Hometown Concerts and loved the music and the energy in the shows. This inspired him to join the group!

Eric has really enjoyed the social aspect of Fiddlers. *"It has been fun making great friends who all share the same interest in music!"* One of his favorite gigs was the downtown Saline block party; *"I enjoyed having friends in the audience."*

His advice to a student who wants to become a Fiddler is to work hard at practicing, but make sure to have a cheerful attitude so you can have fun at the same time.



Eric
Electric Bass

Eric plays the double bass as well as the electric bass. In addition to his love for music, he enjoys camping with friends, Boy Scouts and participating in his church youth group.

We're glad to have you, Eric!

Freshman Cameron on cello is a fresh and exciting addition to the Fiddlers!

Cameron learned about the Fiddlers and became very interested in the group from his brother, Brendan, a Fiddler 2009 alumnus bass player.

Cameron loves participating in Fiddler performances the most. He enjoys entertaining the crowd! His biggest challenge has been consistency in practicing.

Cameron is very clear on favorite gigs—all bus trips!

As far as advice to new Fiddlers, Cameron recommends working on good practice habits. He says, *"Practice doesn't make perfect, it makes permanent!"*

Cam loves water polo as well as playing the cello and performing with the Fiddlers!



Cameron
Cello



Allie
Fiddle

Well, here comes another L! Welcome, Allie, on violin!

Allie explains that she got interested in becoming a Fiddler because her older three siblings have been Fiddlers: Kim, Kelsey and Dan. *"I saw all the fun they were having!"*

"The most fun part of Fiddlers so far has been getting to know more really cool and ... interesting people.

The most challenging part is keeping up with learning the music and getting to all these events with a busy schedule."

As far as favorite gigs, *"I really liked the Alpenfest in Gaylord because first of all, the bus ride was fun; and second of all, the crowd really liked us, so I had a really good time performing for them. But I also enjoyed the gig where we went to Zap Zone, and I got to "tag" a lot of friends."*

Words of wisdom to new Fiddlers: *"In the first few months, put forth every effort to stay on top of the music. It makes life a lot easier!"*

Allie also enjoys outdoorsy things like kayaking and swimming. She loves gymnastics; experiencing, exploring, seeing new places and things. Also, mission work is great, like her recent trip to Mississippi.

Other interesting "Allie facts" are: *"My favorite subject in school is math. My dream job is to be a heart surgeon; I enjoy helping people. My favorite car is a Ford Ranger; yeah, they are pretty common, but they are so AWE-SOME!!"*

Allie, you are awesome, too! Welcome to the Fiddlers!

The Saline Fiddlers welcome Keith as our newest mandolin player!

Keith was first introduced to fiddling in the fifth grade when he heard a fiddle group at a party his church was hosting. He actually sat out from other activities at the party, being so enthralled with the fiddling. Much to his parents' surprise, he decided at the last minute to switch his fine arts choice from creative arts to violin. Later he went to a Saline Fiddler concert and was impressed by the liveliness of the music, so aspired to join the group. He learned to play the mandolin while in Fiddle Club and discovered that it was his instrument of choice!

So far, the most fun aspect of Fiddlers is the music. Keith says, *"It's what hooked me into the Fiddlers, and I intend to keep working on it."* Since the mandolin is a relatively new instrument for him, the music is still a challenge.

Keith loved the Splash Universe summer Fiddle camp. *"So much swimming...so much just chilling with people and having fun."*

Keith's advice to an aspiring Fiddler would be to be ready to work with people. You spend a lot of time together, so you see how things run well and are organized and how the rough edges get worked out.

As far as other activities, Keith says, *"Lacrosse, totally lacrosse! I also find it relaxing to go for walks in Saline around rivers and listen to the water and just chill..."*

Welcome, Keith!



Keith
Mandolin

The Saline Fiddlers offer a warm welcome to violinist Louie!

Louie became aware of the Saline Fiddlers at a very young age. At five years old, he went to his first Hometown Concert and started playing violin soon after.

As far as Saline Fiddler fun and challenges, Louie is quick to say that *"Learning all the music was super fun, but very challenging!"*

His favorite gig, so far, is the Alpenfest gig in Gaylord, Michigan. It was the first bus trip for new Fiddlers, so was an exciting new adventure!



Louie
Fiddle

Louie's advice to aspiring Fiddlers is *"learn to have fun while playing."*

In addition to music, Louie is an active young man, enjoying water polo, swimming, lacrosse and wake-boarding.

We're excited to have you as a Fiddler, Louie!



Mellissa
Fiddle

The Saline Fiddlers are happy to introduce freshman violinist Mellissa!

Mellissa remembers seeing the Fiddlers at a Hometown Concert when she was younger. She says, *"I thought it was the coolest thing to be able to play on stage and wow an audience!"* And here she is with us today!

According to Mellissa, the most challenging aspect of Fiddlers so far has been learning all of the music. Her favorite part has been getting to play on stage, especially when there's an enthusiastic crowd.

Her advice to aspiring Fiddlers is *"practice a lot!"*

In addition to playing her violin, Mellissa plays piano and is on the High School Girls Swim Team.

Welcome to the group, Mellissa!

A talented freshman joining the group this year is cellist Alyssa!

Alyssa became interested in the Fiddlers after going to several of their concerts. The kids looked like they were having so much fun and the music was exciting.

Alyssa would have to say the most fun aspect of Fiddlers so far is meeting and getting to know all the people in the group. As many of the new Fiddlers agree, the most challenging part of Fiddlers so far has been learning all of the music.

She really enjoyed the bus trip to the Gaylord Alpenfest gig, especially getting to go on some of the rides at the fair there!

Her advice to new Fiddlers is *"practice a lot!"*

In addition to fiddling, Alyssa enjoys camping and canoeing.

Welcome, Alyssa!



Alyssa
Cello

The Saline Fiddlers offers a warm welcome to freshman Ian on guitar!



Ian
Guitar

Ian first heard about the Saline Fiddlers from his guitar teacher, Brad Phillips, who suggested he audition for the group.

So far, Ian's favorite part of Fiddlers has been learning Hungry Man #1. *"It's a great song!"* The most challenging aspect of Fiddlers has been learning so much music so quickly!

The Gaylord Alpenfest gig was Ian's favorite show so far. *"It was my first bus trip!"*

As far as advice for aspiring Fiddlers, Ian suggests *"practice regularly for shorter periods of time."*

One of Ian's other interests besides guitar is building and flying remote control airplanes.

It's good to have you on board, Ian!

Wow, another fantastic member in the viola section! Welcome Patrick!

Patrick learned about the Saline Fiddlers from his neighbor viola tutor, Andrew S., who was also a member of the Saline Fiddlers. His interest was piqued!

His favorite gig was the Ann Arbor UA Block Party, because of all the lights and cool cars on display. It made for a very memorable, fascinating experience!

In Patrick's spare time, he enjoys playing guitar and being active in Saline Area Soccer Association. Patrick says, *"I have also become interested in photography since joining the Fiddlers, because Fiddlers is definitely an experience of a lifetime!"* He wants to remember and share with others the new adventure he is undertaking!

It's great having you as our new violist, Patrick!



Patrick
Viola

Wow, another great Tech Crew Member. Welcome, J.J.!

J.J. was influenced to join the Fiddlers when his twin brother, Eric, and several friends decided to join the group. Also, Tech sounded fun!

The Tech Crew is responsible for making sure the sounds of the instruments are amplified and mixed so that the audience hears an amazing show! J.J. says, *"It's great when everything goes smoothly at a gig and everything sounds great. It's definitely challenging when there are several problems at once. The show goes on while you urgently fix the problems. There are no time outs!"*

J.J.'s favorite gig was the Alpenfest gig in Gaylord, Michigan. *"It down poured a drenching rain for a long time, but we stayed and the rain stopped. It was amazing, a lot of people still came to the show."*



J.J.
Sound Technician

In his spare time, J.J. enjoys listening to music and relaxing.

His advice to aspiring Fiddlers is to *"practice a lot."*

Welcome aboard, J.J.!!

Steppin' It Up!

by Cindy O'Brien

photos by Joe O'Brien

Clogging and dancing is a dynamic part of the Saline Fiddlers show. Here's a little bit about that part of the show.

The Saline Fiddlers first started under the direction of Bob Phillips 16 years ago as an instrumental fiddling group. Shortly thereafter, Bob was inspired to add dance to the show after seeing a performance by a Canadian fiddle and dance group and learning how fiddling and dancing are both integral components of the fiddling tradition.

Historically fiddle music was created for dancing, one of the focal points for social gathering and interaction. Frequently on Saturday nights the locals from the countryside would gather together for socializing, fun and courting where they enjoyed fiddle music with contra dancing, square dancing and step dancing. Many a fiddler was kept employed by the need for music for these socially important dance gatherings.

Clogging is a dance form that combines dance traditions from Irish, English, Welsh, Scottish, Native American, and African American cultures. Many Americans and new immigrants from these cultures started mingling as they came for jobs in the coal mines of the Appalachian mountain states. They shared their dance steps with each other and clogging, the quintessential American dance form was born.

In the 1920s and 1930s, as workers traveled north for city factory jobs, clogging became urbanized and developed into tap dancing. The "beat" was different in the city than the country. Clogging was originally done with leather-soled shoes or bare feet on wood floors. With the advent of tap dancing, metal was added to the bottom of the shoes to match the lively "beat" of the city environment — more noise, a crisper sound and faster movements. Tap dancing also fit well with jazz music that was developing at the time.

Traditional clogging fell out of popularity, seen more as a rural, "hillbilly" dance form compared to the modern tap dance that had emerged in the northern American cities. However, in the 1970s some professional dance groups such as the "Green Grass Cloggers" from North Carolina, "The Fiddle Puppets" from Maryland and "The Costabella Cloggers" from Michigan emerged, starting a revival of Appalachian clogging.

The Saline Fiddlers dance choreographer and instructor, Sheila



*The Saline Fiddlers Clogger Girls—Steppin' It Up!
Vicky, Rachel B., Desi, Rachel M. and Meredith*

Graziano, is delighted to teach clogging to the Fiddlers, seeing the importance of passing knowledge of American traditional dance to the next generation. Sheila first became aware of clogging when she attended the Wheatland Music Festival in 1977. Over the years she has collected a vast knowledge of clogging steps and routines. She started a metro Detroit area dance troupe called the "Crosstown Cloggers," and for ten years was a spotlight dancer for "The Raisin Pickers." Most recently she created a traditional style dance ensemble called "The Commonwealth Dance Collective," designed to accommodate a variety of seasoned and emerging dancers including many of her former students, some of them Saline Fiddlers alumni. She is also part of the duo, "Matter and Ghost," with multi-instrumentalist, singer, and songwriter Neil Woodward, Michigan's official State Troubadour, whose shows feature traditional music and dance. The "Matter" of the duo refers to the actuality of their shows and the "Ghost" refers to the ancestors who are silently "watching" and encouraging the perpetuation and evolution of the music and clogging/dance styles they created.

Artistic Director, Ben Culver, agrees that clogging is an integral part of the Saline Fiddlers show. He says, "Clogging is part of America's rich cultural heritage. By perform-



ing fiddling and clogging, we help keep that tradition alive while the kids have fun entertaining our audiences! Our choreographer and dance instructor, Sheila Graziano, does an excellent job in emphasizing and maintaining the traditional nature of clogging and teaching this to our Fiddler students. Clogging offers the audience variety in our shows and adds a fuller dimension to many of the tunes that are originally dance tunes. Traditional clogging also offers Fiddlers a keener vision of the musical roots and the heritage they have received. I would like to see everyone learn to dance!" Ben also notes that dance helps the students from a musical standpoint with an increased sense of internal rhythm.

The type of clogging that the Saline Fiddlers do is called "precision clogging," or team clogging. Sheila says, "For many of the Saline Fiddlers dance students, clogging is their first dance experience. It takes about a year for a new dance student to be ready to take the stage as a dancer. Many are learning dance for the first time, as well as learning steps to specific routines." Much of the choreography is written by Sheila specifically for the group and is a mixture of mostly original choreography infused with historical routines. According to Sheila, one of the challenges in choreography is creating a dance that is workable with a fluctuating number of dancers. The number of dancers changes from year to year, and can also vary from performance to performance. Besides all the benefits for the students in terms of learning and performing traditional clogging, she also notes that clogging is aerobic and good for the heart!

The dancers practice and perform their dance routines on a series of nine large wooden squares called "step-a-tunes" which can be configured in different arrangements according to the choreography of the dance, number of dancers, and space available at the venue. Small microphones are placed at the edges of the dance floor to amplify the percussive sounds from their feet. One little known fact is that the Saline Fiddlers rarely dance on the actual floor. Many hard surfaces, such as tile or cement, will damage the dancers' legs. Carpet is too soft and non-percussive and the percussive pounding from their shoes could damage other types of floors.

Some of the dance tunes currently performed by Saline Fiddlers Cloggers are: "Big John McNeil," "Sidetrack Jig Set," "Childhood's End," "Octoped," and "Vladimir's Replacement."

Some of the current dance students share their thoughts...

Junior cellist Dan says, "This was my first time learning to dance. It's fun. It's a new and different activity within Fiddlers. You get to bond with other Fiddlers. It's physical and involves the whole person, and is interactive, too!"

Fellow cello player, Meredith, agrees, "Being a cello player, which I love, I am pretty much rooted to my chair and am seated in front of the other Fiddlers so interaction during a performance is limited. When I get up to dance, it's an opportunity for me to use my whole self to perform and also gives me an opportunity to interact more with my fellow Fiddlers on stage."

Clogger violinist Rachel M. says, "I think dance helps us perfect our rhythm." She jokes, "I definitely have gained 40 lbs of leg muscle and now have superior jumping ability!"

Junior Clogger Rachel B. says, "I was first inspired to become a Fiddler by seeing older Fiddler Cloggers perform. I enjoy participating as a Fiddler as a violinist, singer, and clogger!"

Sophomore violinist Vicky says, "Clogging is a unique skill and I like having the opportunity to be in a smaller group, Cloggers, within the bigger group, Fiddlers!"

Senior Dance Captain, Desi, says, "I know the audience is really entertained by the clogging! It helps make the music come to life, to see it in physical form. It's also a good opportunity to perform as a Fiddler in a way that's additional to one's instrument. And it's fun!!"



Desi

Fiddlin' Around

The official newsletter of
The Saline Fiddlers
We publish four times yearly
or as needed.

Susan Cummings, Editor
Will Warner, Executive Director
www.salinefiddlers.com

Would you prefer to get the
newsletter in color by email?
Please email your preference to
webmaster@salinefiddlers.com.

What They are Saying About the Fiddlers

Go to www.salinefiddlers.com and click on "Guestbook" to leave your own comments.

June 29, Wangen im Allgäu Germany—It is a pleasure seeing young people enjoying their work and taking pride in what they are doing.

July 4, Lindenberg, Germany—It was a joy for our ears, our eyes and our hearts.

July 12, Hartland, MI—We saw your concert in Howell and we gave it an F grade. It was **Fabulous, Fantastic and Fun!** Great job!

July 13, Howell, MI—You should be on the TV show "America's Got Talent!"

July 16, Flushing, MI—YOU GUYS ROCK!

July 22, Plymouth, MI—Amazing! The best show we have seen in the series.

September 21, Ney, OH—After enjoying your music and happy faces last year, I started taking violin lessons. Thank you for sharing your music!!

September 13, Memphis—I was absolutely blown away by your performance! Thank you and I am definitely buying a CD.



The Dancing Feet of the Saline Fiddlers!

Ben Culver..... **Artistic Director**

Will Warner..... **Executive Director**

Brad Phillips..... **Assistant Artistic Director**

Doug Rhine..... **Event Manager**

Mark Visovatti..... **Administrative Manager**

Ed Brosius..... **Technical Manager**

Mark Kuykendall..... **Business Manager**

Sheila Graziano..... **Choreographer**

Dianne Newberry..... **Vocal Coach**

For Bookings Call: 866-257-5333

www.salinefiddlers.com

Opportunities to See the Fiddlers

Saturday, November 7th, 7:00 pm

16th Annual Fall Hometown Concert

Guest Artists Dennis Stroughmatt and Creole Stomp

Saline Middle School Auditorium

7190 N. Maple Road, Saline, MI

Tickets: 866-257-5333 ext. 1 or www.salinefiddlers.com

Sunday, November 22, 3:00 pm

Romeo District Library Concert Series

Romeo Library (Graubner Branch)

65821 Van Dyke Road, Washington, MI

More info at www.libcoop.net/ROMEO

Friday, December 4th, 7:00 pm

Christmas in Ida Festival Concert

St. Joseph Catholic Church

8295 Van Aiken Street, Ida, MI

More info at www.christmasinida.com

Saturday, December 5th, 7:00—8:00 pm

Saline Holiday Parade

Historic Union School Auditorium

200 N. Ann Arbor Street, Saline MI

More info at www.salinechamber.com/holiday_sponsorship.htm

Friday, December 18, 7:30 pm

Tibbits Opera House

14 S. Hanchett Street, Coldwater, MI

Order tickets from the opera house at www.tibbits.org

Check Our Website for Calendar Updates



Fiddle Ensemble, Inc

The Saline Fiddlers

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