



# Fiddlin' Around

## Hometown Concert Series

# Fiddlers to host Celtic musicians and stepdancers .....*Canadians coming end of January*.....

By Will Warner



Chanda Gibson

The Saline Fiddlers Philharmonic continues its Ninth Annual Hometown Concert Series with shows on January 31<sup>st</sup> and February 1<sup>st</sup>. These concerts feature Pulse, a Canadian group of young Celtic stepdancers and musicians. The group's name describes its act: driving beat, furious feet, surging, rhythmic energy.

The ensemble includes six young Canadians, led by Chanda Gibson. Miss Gibson is choreographer and principal dancer for the group. She runs her own dance school in Orangeville, Ontario, and travels to conduct workshops at Mark O'Connor's Fiddle Camp and other venues in the U.S and Canada. She starred in the 1998 production of *Rhythms of the Celts* in Edinburgh, Scotland. Chanda was principal dancer and choreographer for a production of *The Needlefire* at the Princess of Wales Theatre in Toronto.

In recent months Pulse has been the featured act at the Stonehill Irish Festival in Massachusetts, the Saline Celtic Festival, and the Newport Irish Festival in Rhode Island.

Among its members are two sisters from Ontario. Erin and Meghan Heinluck have performed the Canadian art of stepdancing their whole lives, winning numerous solo awards. The two danced for

an ensemble from Perth County that was a five-time winner of the Canadian Clogging competition.

Another dancer, Jon Pilazke, has toured the U.S. with the Chieftans. Mark Sullivan accompanies the dancers on fiddle and guitar. He is a former two-time Canadian Junior Fiddle Champion, and more recently, a winner of the Canadian Invitational Grand Masters Fiddling Championship. He has three CDs to his credit.

Pulse will take that second half of two performances at Saline High School. As usual, Saline's own fiddle clubs and Fiddlers Philharmonic will open



the shows.

**Chanda Gibson and Pulse**

Shows begin at 7:30 PM on January 31<sup>st</sup> and February 1<sup>st</sup>, in the auditorium at Saline High School, 7190 N. Maple Rd., Saline, Michigan. Tickets are \$12 for adults and \$5 for students through grade 12. To reserve yours, call (734) 429-7210.

## Life in show biz

# A visit with *Barrage's* Cori Smith

By Jen Lahnala

The Saline Fiddlers like to boast that their very own alumna, 2001 graduate Cori Smith, is now a member of the Canadian fiddling sensation, *Barrage*. Cori joined Barrage in May of 2002 and has been performing with them since October. She has been back in the area twice recently, once for a performance in Chelsea, Michigan, and once for a break from touring. **Fiddlin' Around** was able to catch up to Cori during her break and find out what her life is like these days, traveling and performing with a world-class stage production:

**FA:** *How many trips have you been on so far?*

**Cori:** We took a few small trips in Alberta and one out to Vancouver, B.C. and have just finished a five-week tour of the U.S. east coast.

**FA:** *How many cities?*

**Cori:** It's tough to count - I'm sure all of the Fiddlers can relate to the old story of "whenever the bus stops, we get out and find out where we are later." It's been roughly 40 performances, so I'd say probably 30-35 cities or so.

**FA:** *Do you get out and see any of the cities?*

**Cori:** Occasionally we'll have some time off either in the early afternoon or once in awhile we have a whole day. On this last tour, we had a free day close to New York City, so we all went there for the day.

**FA:** *How many people travel with Barrage?*

**Cori:** There are thirteen performers, two tour managers, and a crew of four more people, and occasionally more management will accompany us, so its usually about 20 people in all.



Cori Smith

**FA:** *How does Barrage travel?*

**Cori:** Usually we sleep on a full-sized tour bus (reportedly the same kind Reba McEntire and Cher use for their tours). We each have our own little bunk in the bedroom of the bus. Once in a while we do get

hotel rooms for a night, and occasionally a corporate event will pay to put us up in a really nice hotel -- one time we stayed at a five-diamond hotel in Vancouver, which was pretty amazing.

**FA:** *What is a typical day like on the road?*

**Cori:** We usually wake up between 10:00 am and noon, then have between two and four hours off before sound check. This is a perfect time to take a shower, go find some breakfast, or do any business (like shopping!) that has to be done. Sound check takes a couple hours, then we have more time off for lunch, do our physical warm-up on stage, run through our trampoline stunts, and get ready for a show. After the show we do an autograph signing, then get back on the bus for the night so we can get back on the road!

**FA:** *Do you have any cool road stories?*

**Cori:** My best memories are from being on our big tour bus after a show, and nobody can sleep, so we all stay up until who knows what time and just talk and laugh and have fun together.

**FA:** *Do you have different costumes for shows?*

**Cori:** We have a wardrobe box where we keep all of our costumes, and we each have one costume designed for us, but there are a few spare shirts and pants in the box in case something happened to anyone's outfit.

Fiddlin' Around is the official newsletter of the  
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We publish five times yearly, or as needed.

Jen Lahnala, Editor

Ben Culver, Artistic Director

Mollie Nieves, Business Manager

www.salinefiddlers.com

## *Observations from behind the scenes at the Hometown Concert*

# Stage Mom by Will Warner

*Happy he with such a mother!  
Faith in womankind beats with his blood.  
-- Alfred, Lord Tennyson*

The stage at Saline High School ends abruptly with a plunge into the orchestra pit. Right and left, the stage throws out narrow arms of polished boards that partially embrace the pit, then trail outward another ten meters. On these "satellites" gather the 80 members of the Middle School Fiddle Clubs after their performance in the Hometown Concert. In various attitudes of repose, evincing varying degrees of rapture, the youngsters observe as the professional musicians play.

Center stage is brightly lit, but as the light spreads over the satellites it envelops the figures there in quickly fading, sepia shadows. At the extreme, near darkness shrouds the last, looming form, who is not a lounging child, but a standing mother. Even in the gloom, her posture of poised alertness is discernable. With one eye and one ear she takes in the show; with the spares she monitors the children at her feet for incipient unruliness or distress.

In the half-light by the very edge of the orchestra pit, a young fiddler struggles to stay awake. He sits cross-legged with violin and bow in his lap. His head slowly descends until his chin contacts his chest, then jerks up, flinging his eyelids open. For a moment he stares blearily into the brightness in front of him before the head begins to sink again. With each nod the boy's torso rocks farther toward the abyss.

The wisdom of countless centuries of human experience led concert organizers to place a mother among the children on stage. That wisdom is now displayed as she begins her sortie to rescue the nodding boy. Carefully she picks her way through the sprawl of bodies toward the child. As a graceful woman she materializes in the light by his side.

Kneeling, she lays a gentle hand on his shoulder. At her touch the student brings up his head and drags open his eyes. With their faces now only inches apart the boy surely sees that this is not his mother, but she is a

mother, and so he shows no surprise or alarm. Their faces gleam as he takes in her whispered words.

They rise. The boy moves to a place out of the cold light where he slumps against a wall and descends into warm, peaceful slumber. His rescuer returns to her post. The deepening shadows along her path dissolve the concrete woman and restore the mysterious, ideal mother, fount of comfort, protection and love.



## Cori / Barrage fiddler shares her experience

*- Continued from page 2 -*

**FA:** *What have you found totally different from what you expected when joining the group, both positively and negatively?*

**Cori:** Positively- I never realized how many incredible people I'd meet. I love coming out after a show and seeing all kinds of different people who have found something to enjoy in our show, or being introduced to a whole group of little fiddlers who've been inspired by our music. No feeling can quite compare to inspiring another young fiddler!

Negatively- Sometimes the business aspects of the group can be tiring, because all I really want to do is the music. But it all comes with the job, and it would be pretty tough to find a job that didn't have some of that.

**FA:** *What is a typical day like when not on the road?*

**Cori:** We've been having a lot of rehearsals to polish the show when we're not on the road, and those are usually eight hours of music and/or choreography in a day, in two or three hour blocks with breaks for lunch and dinner.

**FA:** *What are the other people like in the group?*

**Cori:** They're awesome - everyone in the group takes care of each other, and we have a great connection that really helps us onstage and off.

**FA:** *Are you like business associates, family, or something in between?*

**Cori:** Definitely family.

**FA:** *What do you like most about being in Barrage?*

**Cori:** The friendships I've made through the group are really something I'll treasure forever. It's great to have such an opportunity to travel all over the world, too.

**FA:** *The least?*

**Cori:** Sometimes its difficult to deal with elements of business, especially when you just want to have fun and play music, and its also really hard to be away from my family and the people I love virtually all the time, but there are downfalls to every job out there, and adaptation will come with time.

**FA:** *Are you currently taking private lessons?*

**Cori:** Unfortunately there isn't much time for that, but Dean Marshall acts as everyone's instructor in our music rehearsals, and as he is a fantastic teacher, I'm getting a lot out of rehearsals musically from him.

**FA:** *Where are you off to next?*

**Cori:** We'll be rehearsing in Banff, Alberta until sometime in February, and then we start off on a world tour that includes much of Asia and the South Pacific and will last until July. I'm pretty excited about that!

**FA:** *How long do you plan on performing with Barrage?*

**Cori:** It all depends on how things go - this is a very unique lifestyle and it takes a lot of energy just to live in this job. I'm having a lot of fun so far though!

**FA:** *When will you be playing in the area again?*

**Cori:** There are a few dates I know of in April when we are supposed to be in Michigan, but as things sometimes change, I'm not sure yet when we'll be in town. We have a web page, [www.barrage.org](http://www.barrage.org), and you can check all of our dates there. Thanks, Jen, and to all of the Fiddlers!



**Cori (lower right) with her Barrage family.**

### Happy Birthday to:

Lauren	January 2
Kevin	January 3
Kim	January 11
Jessie	January 22
Andrea	February 20
Lee	February 25

## *Fiddlers receive feedback*

### Some stuff worth sharing

We have received so many kind comments from letters and our website guest book at [www.salinefiddlers.com](http://www.salinefiddlers.com), we thought we'd share some of them with you:

#### *Nortonville, KS, Dec.12, 2002...*

I attended your annual hometown concert in Saline on Nov 1st. I have started a fiddle program at our middle school in Effingham, KS and we have 30 fiddlers in our group. My hope is that someday, we can build a music program as wonderful as yours.

#### *Las Cruces, NM, Nov.28, 2002...*

I'm over here at Operation Enduring Freedom. I used to play violin. I even went to college on a violin scholarship, but I quit later on. I don't really play much at all any more, guess I traded violin playing for an M 16 A2. It's good to see young people taking an interest in music though. A piece of advice, don't ever stop playing. Keep it up.

#### *Brecon, Wales, U.K., Nov. 22, 2002...*

I was at Brecon High when the Fiddlers visited in 1996 and 1999, and returned to visit you guys in 1999. Thoroughly enjoyed the exchange and made some great friends!! Keep up the Fiddling :)

#### *Manchester, MI, Nov.8, 2002...*

Great music and a reaffirmation of what is right with today's youth.

#### *Ann Arbor, MI, Nov.4, 2002...*

Sat. night was just great! Pete just LOVED it.... keep us posted...we'll become Fiddlers groupies...

#### *Wayne, MI, Nov.3, 2002...*

We saw you for the first time last night at Saline. My husband said after that he felt like he was at Disney World.... everyone in the group was smiling :)

#### *Gaylord, MI, Aug. 17, 2002...*

Can hardly wait to hear you play again! Loved your concerts here in Gaylord and in Cheboygan. Come back up north SOON!

#### *Shaker Heights, OH, July 23, 2002...*

Saw your performance at Cain Park on 7/18/2002 and thoroughly enjoyed the evening! ...Here's hoping you



The clogging group known as the "Solemates" dance during a November Hometown Concert. Pictured are Stefanie, Jessie, Kevin, Kim, Hannah, Lee and Sally.

all return next summer. Wish we had a similar ensemble here in the Cleveland area.

#### *Eastlake, OH, July 18, 2002...*

I saw your performance last night at Cain Park in Cleveland Heights. It was great. I bought the *Down at the Old Mill Pond* cassette and have enjoyed listening to more great tunes. The whole idea of the fiddlers group is fantastic.

#### *Greenville, SC, June 13, 2002...*

I teach fiddle and conduct the orchestra at Furman University in Greenville, SC. When are you folks going to tour down south? I would love to host you here on "the country's most beautiful campus."

#### *Centreville, VA, May 21, 2002...*

Saw your workshop at the Virginia Music Educators' Conference in November and was thrilled. Now my Concert orchestra is playing some of the fiddle tunes from Fiddlers' Philharmonic, and they LOVE it!

#### *Alpena, MI, Apr. 7, 2002...*

When you were in Alpena I saw your show and absolutely loved it. Then you traveled to Cheboygan so I followed you up there to see another show. How I wish you were coming up this way again this year, I want so much to see you perform again. What can I do to get you here??

*Editor's note: The Fiddlers will be touring Michigan during the summer of 2003. You can call Mollie Nieves anytime to schedule a show: 1-866-257-5333.*

**Chanda Gibson and Pulse  
coming to Saline  
January 31 and February 1!  
Tickets may not be available the night  
of the shows,  
so reserve yours NOW by calling  
734-429-7210.**



**Saline Fiddlers Philharmonic**

Ben Culver, Artistic Director  
Mollie Nieves, Business Manager  
Jesse Mason, Assistant Director  
Carl Newton, Technical Director

**Direct booking inquiries to Mollie: 1-866-257-5333**

**[www.salinefiddlers.com](http://www.salinefiddlers.com)**



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