



FIDDLIN' AROUND

Saline Fiddlers Philharmonic

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Nov-Dec, 2001

Fiddlers to Host Jazz Violinist Featuring Randy Sabien and Brian Torff

By Will Warner



The Saline Fiddlers Philharmonic begin their Annual Hometown Concert Series on November 2nd or 3rd, at the Saline High School in Saline, Michigan. Appearing with Fiddlers are Randy Sabien and Brian Torff in their show "Playing Tribute—A Salute to Stephane Grappelli."

Legendary jazz violinist Stephane Grappelli and his group, *Quintette du Hot Club du France*, performed and recorded in the 1930s. Their recordings have been called "among the most effervescent, delightful jazz recordings ever made" [*Downbeat* magazine].

Randy Sabien and Brian Torff met while Brian

was Grappelli's bassist and Randy studied the jazz of the swing era with Grappelli's encouragement. Recently they put together their tribute to the great man and took it on the road, with guitarists Mike Dowling and Cliff Fredriksen.

Internationally renowned, and classically trained, Sabien's specialty is improvisational jazz. *Billboard* calls him "...a swinging and technically impeccable heir to the tradition of ... Grappelli." He keeps a full schedule of appearances as guest soloist with orchestras across the country.

Even so, Randy can find time not only to bring the show thorough Saline, but also to spend the week of the concert as artist-in-residence in the school's music department. Randy is a longtime friend of Fiddlers Philharmonic founders Bob and Pam Philips, and knows the Fiddlers. Like a comet, he periodically sweeps through Saline to touch and inspire a new cohort of young musicians.

Not only performers, both Randy and Brian are music educators. Randy, at age 21, created and chaired the jazz string department at Boston's Berklee College of Music. Brian is currently music program director at Fairfield University.

Also appearing will be Saline's Fiddle Clubs. From these ensembles of 6th, 7th, and 8th graders, the next generation of Fiddlers will come. How stirring it is to hear their earnest rendering of America's traditional music.

The preservation and performance of traditional American music—this is the Fiddler's mission. The semi-professional troupe of students from one high

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Brad P. Wins State Fiddle Championship

By Nancy Byers

Fiddler Brad proved old-timers don't necessarily have the edge in old-time fiddling when he topped all the competition Oct. 6 in the 16th annual State Fiddle Championship — including an 80-year-old contestant who was vying for the championship. The fiddle contest is a part of the Huron Township Applefest held in New Boston, MI each year and is licensed through the State of Michigan.

Brad performed three fiddle tunes for the judges and audience; Dusty Miller (which he recorded on the Fiddlers' "Better Than Bingo" CD), Scarborough Waltz and Sally Goodin. In addition to being named the 2001 State Fiddle Champion, the Saline High School junior received a plaque, a medal and \$250. Congratulations, Brad!



Brad with a seal from the recent Northwest Tour

Music Improvisation Class Offered

By Nancy Byers

A recent addition to the Saline string scene is "Improvising for Fiddlers," a Community Education class geared for high school and advanced middle school string players who would like to learn to improvise in the bluegrass and jazz styles.

"The goal is to be able to play all fiddle and jazz styles and to be comfortable listening to chords and improvising to them," said Saline High School Orchestra and Fiddlers Philharmonic Director Bob Phillips, who leads the class along with Ben Culver, Fiddlers Philharmonic Assistant Director. Instruction in the class is based on the music book "Jazz Philharmonic" which Mr. Phillips wrote in conjunction with renowned jazz violinist Randy Sabien.

Despite its 7 a.m. start each Tuesday morning, the class has attracted about 25 musicians ranging in age from one fifth-grader to one 32-year-old.

Mr. Ben Culver calls the class highly experimental. "We'll just have to see where we're going to go with it," he said. Although there are a number of Fiddlers Philharmonic members in the class, Culver pointed out that it fills a void for string players who have gone through Fiddle Club and want to continue to progress but don't go the Fiddlers Philharmonic route.

Brad P., who assists Mr. Culver and Mr. Phillips in "Improvising for Fiddlers," speculates that as a result of the class, improvisation may show up more in future Fiddlers Philharmonic solo efforts. Improv student Mike N. agrees. The instructors "do a good job at making it fun," he said. "They teach a little at a time and make it easy – not like dropping you in the deep end of a pool."

Have You Met These New Fiddlers?

Page 2 of a 2-Part Series

By Barbara Radloff

Kim is a freshman that joined the Fiddlers for the experience she could gain from it. Kim, who is a violin player, is interested in clogging as well as singing with the group. She has a wide variety of dance experiences that include ballet, jazz, lyrical and hip-hop. Kim participated in both cross-country and track while in middle school. Kim would like to be a member of the Michigan Youth Symphony and is interested in being part of the drama club and acting the in the SHS musical. She has not identified an area of study for college, but is interested in attending the University of Michigan, or possibly pursuing a career in the Navy or the Air Force.

Hannah is a freshman this year and joined the Fiddlers because she enjoys fiddle music and liked playing and performing with the Fiddle Club in middle school. Hannah, who was home schooled until high school, likes to cook and read and enjoys the French language. She will be playing the violin with the Fiddlers, but wants to learn to clog and play the spoons. Hannah is undecided on college plans at this time.

Kevin joined the Fiddlers because it “looked really cool.” Kevin, who is an avid music lover, will be playing the viola with the Fiddlers. This freshman also plays the mandolin and guitar. Kevin has participated in the 24-Hour Relay, and is active with the Boy Scouts and his church youth group. He is inter-

ested in participating in the high school musical, the Michigan Youth Symphony and the National Honor Society over his high school year. Kevin would like to attend the University of Michigan and major in Law or Music Education.

Zac is the only new member of the Fiddler’s rhythm section this year. He joined the group in an effort to improve his guitar skills and to travel. Zac

also plays the cello, bass and electric guitar. Zac loves art and won first place at an art fair last year. He enjoys skating and playing hockey. He plans on studying business and computers in college.

Whitney is a freshman violin player. She joined the Fiddlers because she loved their music

and their energy. Whitney is interested in playing the mandolin and would like to be part of the Michigan Youth Symphony. When not performing with the Fiddlers, Whitney can be found riding horses. She placed first in an English riding contest, and wants to participate on the Saline High School Equestrian team. Whitney has participated in the DARE 24-hour relay and is active in her church youth group. Whitney is interested in a career in music and is thinking about Liberty University, the University of Michigan or the Cleveland Conservatory of Music.



Back row left to right: Whitney, Dan, Zac
Front row: Hannah, Kim, Kevin

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Fiddlers to Perform in the Windy City

Midwest Clinic Conference

By Barbara Radloff

When most people think of Chicago in December, they think of shopping on the Magnificent Mile or window shopping in the blustery weather at Marshall Fields. When the Fiddlers think about Chicago in December, they think about their upcoming featured performance at the Midwest Clinic on December 18-20. The Fiddlers were selected from an international field of applicants consisting of bands, orchestra, and jazz bands. The Saline Fiddlers Philharmonic will be one of a few fiddling groups ever featured at this prestigious event.

The rigorous selection process included a written application, a recording and recommendations from other music educators. The Fiddlers were asked to apply by a member of the board of the Midwest Clinic. The Saline group will be performing at 10 p.m. on Tuesday, December 18, which is a featured artist time slot. This spot is usually saved for non-student performers. Randy Sabien, the featured performer at the Saline Fiddlers' Hometown Concert in November, will also perform on Wednesday, December 19 in the same 10 p.m. time slot. The Fiddlers will be sharing the stage with performers from Texas, Florida, Georgia, Utah, Arizona and Japan. The US

Navy Band and the Air Force Airmen will also be performing.

The 2001 Fiddlers are not the first musical group from Saline to perform at this educational conference. A group of fifth grade orchestra students served as a demonstration group when Bob Phillips, the Fiddlers artistic director, taught a clinic about elementary string instructions several years ago. In fact, the very first group of Fiddlers performed for background music at one of the conference's receptions.

Rumor had it that the idea for the Fiddlers was spawned from a previous Midwest Clinic Conference. In fact, this is true, according to Pam Phillips, the Fiddlers' business manager. Bob Phillips saw the Calgary Fiddlers perform at the Midwest Clinic several years ago. He had known the directors, but he had never seen the group perform until that clinic. Mr. Phillips watched and thought, "We can do this." The Calgary group was high school kids from the entire metropolitan Calgary area. Mr. Phillips brought the idea home and got the Fiddlers Philharmonic going from just one high school.



**Next Stop:
CHICAGO !**

Hometown

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school unfailingly amazes audiences with their blend of folk, bluegrass, Celtic, and western swing. Bluegrass fans, especially, routinely express wonder and gratitude for the revitalization of the art in the form of the energetic Fiddlers.

Since early last summer, the Fiddlers have been polishing new songs, staging and dances for this season. You may see some improvisation (we'll have to see what happens). New songs include a jazzy *Sweet Georgia Brown*, a frisky, bluegrass *Used to Be*, and the haunting Stephen Foster entreaty, *Hard Times Come Again No More*.

The November shows initiate the 8th Annual Hometown Concert series. The series concludes with concerts on February 1st and 2nd starring a trio from Austin Texas, *The Hot Club of Cow Town*. Performances begin at 7:30 PM in the auditorium at Saline High School, 7190 N. Maple Road in Saline. Ticket prices: \$12 adults, \$5 students up to grade 12.

!! TICKETS STILL AVAILABLE !!

Tickets may not be available the night of the shows, so reserve yours NOW by calling 734-429-7210.

New Fiddlers

Continued from page 3

Dan is a junior who has joined the Fiddlers in a very different role. Dan is on the technical team and helps with things such as set up and sound. Dan joined the Fiddlers because he says they are "fantastic" and because the life-skills that he is learning are invaluable. Dan is also an avid photographer and has won the Tom Mac Legacy Award for love and appreciation of photography. He enjoys anything outdoors, photography, fishing, playing paintball and having fun. Dan is undecided on his college plans, but is thinking about attending Michigan Tech.

Calendar of Events

Friday & Saturday, November 2 & 3:

Fall Hometown Concerts with jazz violinist Randy Sabien and Brian Torff. 7:30 p.m. at the Saline High School Auditorium. Tickets on sale September 1. Adults: \$12.00: Children (12th Grade and under) \$5.00. Tickets on sale at Saline Community Education Office in Union School or by calling Sherry at: 734-429-7210.

Friday, November 30:

Private performance for the Glacier Hills Retirement community in Ann Arbor. Open to residents and their guests.

Saturday, December 1:

Private Corporation Holiday Dinner Crowne Plaza. Private Event.

Monday, December 10:

If you can't make the Hometown show, here's another chance! An unusual fundraiser for the Fiddlers, courtesy of Briarwood Ford, who want to express their support for the community and invite people to join them in their showroom to watch the Fiddlers up close and personal. 7:30 pm. Donations will be accepted and matched by Briarwood Ford.

Friday, December 14:

Private holiday party.

Tuesday through Thursday, December 18 - 20:

Various workshops and performances at the Midwest Music Conference in Chicago, IL. (See article on previous page).

Visit our Website for Event Updates:

www.salinefiddlers.com

Saline Fiddlers Philharmonic Order Form

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