



# Fiddlin' Around

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

Winter 2007

## Hometown Concert Series

# Bearfoot group to perform with Fiddlers

By Will Warner

It's back to bluegrass for the Saline Fiddlers 13th annual Hometown Concert!

Our guest artists will be a fast-rising, young, acoustic band, **Bearfoot**, from Anchorage, Alaska. At the 2001 Telluride Bluegrass Festival, Bearfoot won the Band Competition, an honor they share with past recipients Nickel Creek (1995) and the Dixie Chicks (1991).

This young band of three women and two men features vocal harmony, solid rhythm and soloing on mandolin and guitar, twin fiddles, and acoustic bass. Their unique sound, ranging from traditional bluegrass to original jazzy compositions, has captivated audiences across the nation.

**Bearfoot** grew out of a group of teenaged music camp counselors working in Cordova, Alaska. In the seven years they have been playing together, the band has performed all around America while its members finished high school and attended college.

These young musicians continue to coordinate and teach at Bluegrass Camps for Kids, sharing their talents and enthusiasm for traditional music with a new generation. While in Saline, they will conduct a workshop for the members of the Saline Fiddlers. You can learn more about Bearfoot by visiting their website at [www.bearfootbluegrass.com](http://www.bearfootbluegrass.com).

As always, the **Saline Fiddlers**

will kick off the concert with this year's magnificent stage show. It will be an upbeat, lively show of music, song and dance from the traditions of American folk fiddle, bluegrass, western swing and Celtic music. Their growing repertoire includes many pieces composed or arranged by an exceptionally talented artistic team, headed up by Artistic Director Ben Culver, and including tunes by alumni Jesse Mason and Brad Phillips, and a couple by *current* members of the group (see story on page 2).

The concert takes place on Saturday, February 3, 2007, at 7:30 p.m. at the Ellen A. Ewing Performing Arts Center at Saline High School, 1300 Campus Parkway. Tickets (\$20/15/10) are available online and by calling 866 257-5333, ext. 603.

See you there!



Come see Barefoot play with the Fiddlers February 3. Bearfoot is Angela Oudean, fiddle; Jason Norris, mandolin; Kate Hamre, acoustic bass; Annalisa Tornfelt, fiddle; and Mike Mickelson, guitar.

## Making arrangements

# Where Does That Fiddler Music Come From?

By Doug Rhine

Throughout the group's history the Saline Fiddlers has faced a continuing challenge: there are no printed musical arrangements on the market for groups like the Saline Fiddlers. The reason for this problem is actually easy to understand. The Saline Fiddlers program is a bridge between two worlds—the world of classical music and the world of folk or popular music. In the world of classical music, composers typically write out a composition for an ensemble made up of orchestral instruments. Classical music often doesn't include folk instruments like the banjo, guitar, dobro and mandolin. In the world of folk or popular music, music is often created in a much more informal process. Creating music is often dynamic, with musicians working together to create something that sounds good to them, which then is often passed on to others through learning by ear. Folk music rarely uses the orchestra's violas and cellos.

As a group bridging these worlds, the Saline Fiddlers incorporates all the string instruments of the orchestra, but includes a variety of folk instruments as well. Ben Culver, the group's Artistic Director, says that there is a conscious attempt to structure the group's rehearsals to make the students rely on both

their eyes and ears as they learn, and that is how the students can learn new music as quickly as they do.

When Bob Phillips, the founder of the Saline Fiddlers, began to teach fiddling to his students, he taught the group tunes by ear and eventually wrote out basic arrangements for the group. He published two groundbreaking books of fiddling tunes for orchestra teachers and students called Fiddlers Philhar-

monic I & II, after the original name of the Saline Fiddlers. But as the students in the Saline Fiddlers were constantly growing in their abilities, there was a continuing need to add new elements to old arrangements and create new arrangements to challenge the Fiddlers. Ben Culver, as a young Assistant Director, began to take on arranging responsibilities and has continued to arrange

and compose amazing music for the group. But keeping up with this task poses quite a challenge for the busy director who wants to put exciting music in front of the students.

In the last several years Ben Culver recruited two Fiddler alumni to help create arrangements for the group. Jesse Mason, a Fiddler alumnus and former Assistant Director for the group, wrote his first arrangement for the group while he was still in high school. That swinging arrangement of "Lady Be Good" sat on the shelf for several years before the Fiddlers tried it out. Jesse has since written several popular arrangements and has composed two original tunes, "Hungry Man #1" and "North Summit," for the group as well. Fiddler alumnus Brad Phillips has also been doing arrangements for the group and had a new waltz composition featured at the last Fiddler Home-town Show.

Creating a new arrangement is a time consuming process. Ben Culver explains that even with profes-

*(Please see Music, page 4)*



Seniors David and Andrew play violin, mandolin and now arrange music for the Fiddlers.

**Fiddlin' Around** is the official newsletter of the  
**Saline Fiddlers.**

We publish four times yearly, or as needed.  
Jen Lahnala, Editor.

Photos courtesy of loving Fiddler families.  
Will Warner, Executive Director

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

# Meet the new Fiddlers

By Beth Bartley

We're proud to introduce here and at our concerts our talented bunch of new Fiddlers. This is only six of the new group. Four more new Fiddlers were featured in the Fall 2006 edition of *Fiddlin' Around*.

**Kevin** started playing guitar a short year ago. He was encouraged by his sister, Jordan, who had joined the Fiddlers earlier. "I saw my sister having such a great time and all of the cool places she got to go," he said. As a member of Saline Fiddlers, he hopes to become a better musician and make new friends. Kevin is also a member of Hornet Light and Sound, a school group that helps students learn how to work sound systems and lighting for stage events, which is his major interest. He finds he has learned even more about sound by working with the Saline Fiddlers. His future plans are to become a professional guitarist or sound technician. Kevin plans to attend Eastern or Western Michigan University to pursue his interests.



**Joe** asked for a set of drums for Christmas when he was six years old. In February of 2006 he tried out for and scored the sole position of drummer for the Saline Fiddlers. Joe moved to Saline in the 8th grade and first saw the Fiddlers when a friend was trying out. Now that he is a member he likes making new friends, tours and the sense of adventure involved



(Please see Joe, page 4)

**Desi** saw a Hometown concert after her sister, Gina, joined the Fiddlers. That was when she decided she wanted to play violin with the group. Of her experiences so far she says, "You learn a lot of cool music, get to perform at interesting places and get to have fun with your friends." Desi's favorite song is "Mäster Ås-lund." She



(Please see Desi, page 4)

**Drew** has achieved varsity status in both high school swimming and water polo. He enjoys playing the piano, writing and playing violin for the Saline Fiddlers. When asked why he wanted to be a Fiddler, Drew said, "I saw them in a Hometown Concert and thought they were really cool." What does he like best about being a Fiddler? "Probably being under the direction of Mr. Culver because he's such a good Artistic Director...just being able to work with him." Drew has played violin since 6th grade. His favorite Fiddler tune is "Callin' Baton Rouge." In the future, Drew would ultimately like to attend the University of Michigan or Stanford and study to be a lawyer.



**Jacob** enjoys being able to perform for people. He began playing violin in sixth grade and was a member of the Middle School Fiddle Club in both sixth and seventh grade. When asked what surprised him most about the group, Jacob said, "It was a bigger challenge than I expected." His favorite fiddle tune is Mark O'Connor's "Olympic Reel." Besides playing violin, Jacob enjoys playing indoor soccer and he likes to lift weights. He and his friends enjoy working with



(Please see Jacob, page 4)

**Ian** has been watching the Saline Fiddlers since he was in preschool. He began playing violin in fifth grade and joined Fiddle Club in sixth, solidifying family hopes that someone would eventually try out for the group they had grown to love. He took lessons from Fiddler members and also attended Blue Lake in order to learn how to focus on music. As a Saline Fiddler, Ian enjoys the friendships and acceptance between the group members and visiting new places when the group trav-



(Please see Ian, page 4)

## Meet the new Fiddlers,

Continued from page 3

**Joe** with being in the group. His favorite tune is "Orange Blossom Special." Joe is also a member of the drum line, which is the percussion section of the high school Marching Band. He likes drumming to rock and roll music, too. Aside from music he is a member of the Saline High School Baseball Team and the Varsity Swim Team. Joe hopes to attend the University of Michigan after graduation.

**Desi** has learned that the group works very hard to prepare for performances with tight schedules and organization. Since her future goals might include Notre Dame and a career in orthodontics, the work ethics she learns here should be a strong asset. Desi's other interests include cross country, church confirmation, and she likes to read.

**Jacob** robots, which they build, design and program. After graduation, Jacob hopes to attend the University of Michigan where he will study chemical or biomedical engineering.

**Ian** els. When asked about his future goals, he says, "Being a dentist isn't looking too bad. Tyler and I are planning to take over his dad's dental practice and go golfing on Wednesdays." Ian hopes to attend the University of Michigan to achieve this goal. For now, aside from fiddling he enjoys sports, camping, the outdoors, Boy Scouts, reading, and video games.

Hannah and Desi can really fiddle together. They play entwined before their first Hometown Show in November.



## Music

# Making arrangements (Continued from page 2)

sional composing software on a computer each note, each accent, each bowing direction indicator, each change from quarter to eighth to sixteenth note requires an individual mouse click. And simply entering information in the computer is only part of the process. The arranger has to think through how a tune for the Fiddlers should sound and consider the abilities of the group's members. Mr. Culver says it takes around 15 to 20 hours for him to do an arrangement.

This year Ben challenged two of the Fiddlers who are taking an Advanced Placement music theory class from Norma Freeman at Saline High School to try their hand at arranging for the group. The students accepted the challenge and Ben gave each of them a song to tackle. The students loaded some professional composing software (licensed to the group) onto their computers and got started. Ben gave them some guidance along the way as needed. Andrew worked on a tune called "Mäster Åslund" written by the Swedish group Swåp. David worked on a Natalie

MacMaster tune called "Volcanic Jig." Both students spent hours on these tunes listening to the music and working through the scores one note at a time on their computers.

David remarked that it was a challenge to take what another artist had written and stay true to it while injecting something that is unique and original.

Andrew said, "I thought that it was a lot of fun . . . The tune wasn't all that hard to arrange, but it did demand a lot of time. I was fortunately able to learn more about writing parts for the guitar, which will probably prove to be useful in the future. The best part of arranging this tune will be hearing it performed."

Ben Culver is pleased with what the students have accomplished. He said, "The results have been fantastic. This is some of the best student work ever seen by the Saline Fiddlers or even the Saline Music Department." Both these arrangements are winners and the Fiddlers are looking forward to performing them at their upcoming Hometown Concert.

*Fiddlers use part of their winter break from school to polish up the pieces*

## Retreating with fiddles?

By Doug Rhine

Snow was scarce the first weekend in January, but music was abundant at the Saline Fiddlers' first Winter Retreat. The Fiddlers packed themselves, their luggage, sleeping bags, instruments, and sound system into the Grass Lake home of Prof. Bob Culver for an incredible fiddling 'surround sound' experience. The Fiddlers used the weekend to prepare for what may be the best Hometown Concert ever.

Lead by Artistic Director Ben Culver, the Fiddlers have prepared five new tunes for this show, and in the Fiddler tradition, they are full of energy and excitement. The new pieces are so engaging that the parents in the kitchen (who hear this stuff all the time) were drawn out into the rehearsal room just to listen. The music is usually difficult and challenging for the students. Working together as a group they all feel pushed to excel. But as they work through the music and begin to hear it come together, there is a growing sense of excitement. The Fiddlers realize that they can master it, and there is a sense of pride in their accomplishments.

The Fiddlers always work hard to polish the Hometown Concert from start to finish. They not only practice the music, but they also like to add some visual fun to the

show for the audience as well. At the retreat they worked on some new choreography, especially for the new music. Many of the stage ideas originate with the students themselves. The group also works out all the logistics involved in getting people to the right microphone at the correct time. There is often a complicated dance happening on stage between numbers that the audience never notices.

Since uncooperative weather cancelled snow activities at the retreat, the Fiddlers had fun playing games, listening to music, watching a movie, and just hanging out. Several Fiddler girls were reportedly seen applying some kind of blue facial mask one evening and the Fiddler guys appeared to have no shortage of Nerf weapons on hand. When bedtime rolled around the Fiddler girls retreated to a giant loft and the guys spread out all over the basement rooms.

On the final day of the retreat, the Fiddlers did a complete run-through of the upcoming Hometown Show and discussed what they can still improve. Their commitment to their music and their performance for their audiences means that all their upcoming shows this spring are going to be something special. They hope to see all their fans again soon so they can share some more of that Fiddler magic.



**This is what much of a retreat looks like. Violinists Andrew, Emily and Drew in the foreground, and Brendan on bass concentrate on getting the new tunes into memory.**



**...And this is also what a retreat looks like, through a mirror. Andrew observes while Jacob, right, tries out the mask with (from left) Sarah, Jordan, Desi, Gina, Marie and Kelsey.**



**Hometown Concert!  
Coming February 3**



**SALINE  
Fiddlers**

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

**For bookings call: 1-866-257-5333**  
**www.salinefiddlers.com**

**Upcoming Public Events**

- February 3, 7:30 PM, Saline, **13th Annual Winter Hometown Concert** featuring guest artist **Bearfoot**. Saline High School's Ellen A. Ewing Performing Arts Center. Tickets are \$20, \$15 and \$10 and can be purchased online (see below) or by calling toll free 866-257-5333.
- February 11, 4:00 PM, **Auditions for 2007-08 Saline Fiddlers**, Saline Middle School.
- March 9, afternoon, Brighton, **Brighton/Spencer School**.
- March 17, 7:00 PM, Dexter, **Fundraiser for Dexter Orchestra**.
- March 23, Ann Arbor, **Glacier Hills**.
- May 19, Saline, 12:30 PM, Rentschler Farm Open House.

For the latest info visit our website:  
**www.salinefiddlers.com**



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**Bearfoot & Fiddlers in concert Feb 3**