

19th Century Dance Manuscripts For Violin

The Aurora Violin Manuscripts, from the Aurora Colony, a 19th century communal society of nearly 600 people, mostly German and Swiss immigrants in Oregon's Willamette Valley, who had an amazing musical heritage of brass bands and violin-based quadrille bands. 166 dance tunes selected from six manuscripts: waltzes, polkas, schottisches, galops, mazurkas, quadrilles, marches, polonaises, a varsouvienne, a tyrolienne, and a redova.

The Peter Beemer Manuscript, Warren's Diggins, Idaho. 124 waltzes, quadrilles, schottisches, mazurkas, polkas, quicksteps, etc. collected in an Idaho gold mining camp in the 1860's, for a dance band of two violins, flute, banjo, and accordion.

The Haynes Family Manuscript, written by seven different fiddlers from pioneer families who came to Oregon's Willamette Valley in the 1840's and 1850's. 65 dance tunes, including mazurkas, waltzes, quadrilles, varsouviennes, polkas.

Many of the tunes in these three manuscripts have not been played for over 100 years. This is the lost dance music of the Victorian era in the pioneer West!

The John Neilson Music Book, dated 1875, written down by a fiddler in Cuilhill, Scotland. 120 tunes, some not found elsewhere, including popular 19th century dance forms and traditional Scottish tunes.

Standard notation with suggested chords. Historical information about the manuscripts and the tunes. Difficulty ranges from easy to technically challenging. Researched and edited by Vivian T. Williams.

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Fiddle-icious Traditions

A musical weekend – April 2019

By Joanne Toone

As soon as the musicians started arriving for registration, instruments in hand and big smiles on their faces, we knew we were in for an amazing weekend. All the hard work had been worth it. After 18 months of planning, the inaugural Fiddle-icious Traditions weekend was finally coming to fruition.

Described as a weekend of classes, community, music, and dance, it is the latest brainchild of Don Roy, nationally recognized champion fiddler and musical director of Fiddle-icious. You may have read about Fiddle-icious, Maine's largest fiddle orchestra, in the Spring 2018 edition of *Fiddler Magazine*. Don, never one to rest on his laurels, wanted to do more to give back to the Fiddle-icious members and to provide an opportunity for other musicians to come together for a special weekend. Don's vision was that the techniques and knowledge learned or developed over the course of the weekend would enable attendees to take new skills away with them to benefit their community in some way. The benefit might be starting a community band or orchestra, performing at a nursing home or community event, teaching others how to play, or forming a local jam session.

In Don's own words, "Fiddle-icious Traditions provides an opportunity to expand your knowledge and love of traditional music, get a glimpse into the soul of its roots, and realize its importance to the well-being of local communities."

The lineup of instructors was outstanding. We were fortunate to have the cream of Maine and New England area musicians in attendance as well as four well-known guest instructors hailing from Cape Breton. Andrea Beaton, Troy MacGillivray, and Wendy MacIsaac provided stellar fiddle instruction and performances, while Mac Morin kept everyone spellbound with his amazing piano skills. All instructors gave classes, led jams, played for the dance, and wowed everyone at the final concert on Sunday.

Classes ranged from learning by ear, improv 101, step dancing, tune writing, basic music theory, jazz fiddle, and Cape Breton reels, to dance leadership and calling, panel discussions to learn more about public performance, teaching others, creating a community orchestra, and becoming a professional musician. The instructors were generous with their time and knowledge, sharing authentic stories about their tradition and the joys and chal-



Troy MacGillivray, Andrea Beaton, and Wendy MacIsaac performed and taught at last year's event.

Photo: Molly Haley (www.mollyhaley.com)

lenges of being a musician. The evenings were just as fun-packed as the days. The weekend began on Friday night with a “Meet and Greet” to get to know the instructors over hors d’oeuvres, followed by an all-comers mega jam. A contra dance on Saturday night featured the New England instructors as the first dance band and Cape Breton instructors and friends as the second band. Sunday morning saw a Sacred Music and Song session led by Greg Boardman and Pam Weeks.

To top off the weekend, we hosted a final concert featuring all the instructors in many different formations. The final concert alone was worth the price of admission to the weekend. The fact that most of the acts were unrehearsed further confirmed just how talented these musicians are. Several highlights that come to mind are Rob Flax asking the audience to call out three random notes that he used to improvise a Fiddle-icious Traditions tune on the fly using a fiddle and many electronic foot pedals. Another highlight was the amazing dueling piano players, which began with Mac Morin and Neal Pearlman, who were later joined by Troy MacGillivray and Cindy Roy. Two pianos and four maestros! Needless to say, the concert ended with many encores and standing ovations.

Word of the weekend had spread around in the local musician community and we had several curious and well-known local professionals stop by to check us out, and of course they didn’t want to leave. The only complaint I heard about the schedule was that it was impossible to attend every session of interest and could we please offer sessions twice during the weekend next year.

Don’s vision was that this camp would be something new and different: “This is not going to be just another tune-learning camp.”

When I read this quote from one attendee after the event was over I was pretty sure we had achieved Don’s goal: “This was the best workshop I have attended. I came home with skills to work on. Not just a bunch of tunes that perhaps I’ll only like one or two, or maybe never play again.”

The second Fiddle-icious Traditions will take place April 17–19,

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2020, in Lewiston, Maine. There will be even more classes to choose from and options for fiddle, cello, piano, guitar, and other instruments. A great spring option to add to your musical calendar.

[Joanne Toone is a member of Fiddle-icious and a founding member of the Fiddle-icious Traditions Committee. You can find out more about Fiddle-icious Traditions at fiddleicioustraditions.com.]



Dancers of all ages and skill levels enjoy the fun at last year’s Fiddle-icious Traditions.

Photo: Molly Haley (www.mollyhaley.com)