

Field Notes

News from Traditional Arts Indiana

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In this issue:

Arts Fair on the Square

Volbrecht Luthier Exhibit

Bernice Enyeart Quilt Exhibit

Indiana Festival

Marion Oktoberfest

TAI at the Indiana State Fair

Rotating Exhibit Network

David and Joel Straubinger, flute builders

Note from the Director

Welcome to our new full-color newsletter highlighting Traditional Arts Indiana's research, projects, and events in 2006. You can find more current information about our activities in our forthcoming blog at <www.traditionalartsindiana.org>. Thank you for your continued support of Indiana's folk and traditional arts.



Roy Spight playing his tongue drum at Fair on the Square.

TAI Collaborations...

TAI in Bloomington's Fair on the Square

For the second year in a row, TAI collaborated with the Bloomington Area Arts Council to bring artists to Bloomington's annual Arts Fair on the Square in June 2006. The event featured musical instrument builders, including guitar maker Randy Lucas, tamburitza maker Milan Opacich, African drum maker Julius Adeniyi, drum maker Roy Spight, and luthier Larry Hopkins.

Volbrecht Luthier Exhibit

Curated by IU graduate student Deborah Justice for Traditional Arts Indiana, the exhibit of master luthier Ron Volbrecht's guitars took place in July 2006 at the John Waldron Arts Center in Bloomington. A craftsman obsessed with perfection, Volbrecht builds guitars slowly, finishing only four or five instruments each year.

The Waldron show provided a rare pleasure: seeing fifteen Volbrecht guitars displayed in the same space. In addition to displaying the finished masterpieces, the exhibit offered glimpses into his building



Ron Volbrecht molds the body of a guitar in his workshop.

and inlaying processes. Owners of Volbrecht guitars performed in two noon concerts during the run of the exhibit, allowing visitors to experience the full aural and visual beauty of Volbrecht's creations.

“My Art Will Keep You Warm”: The Quilts of Bernice Enyeart

The Wabash County Historical Museum collaborated with TAI to present a retrospective exhibit of Bernice Enyeart's quilts. From her farmhouse in rural Huntington County, Bernice has been creating quilts for thirty-four years, many over eight feet square and stitched by hand. The exhibit will run through March 2007.



TAI fieldworker Butch Ross and quilter Bernice Enyeart at the opening of her exhibit.

Along the Heritage Corridor

TAI at the Indiana Festival

TAI collaborated with Conner Prairie Living History Museum to bring several artists from the I-69 Heritage Corridor to demonstrate their traditional arts in the second annual Indiana Festival in June 2006. This two day event featured nine demonstrators, including glassworker Joe Rice, Treeing Walker coonhound breeders Kip and Trent Gordon, ukulele builder Geoff Davis, rag rug weaver Mary Jane Stackhouse, canjo maker Eli Jackson, quilter Marguerite Cox, gourd artist Patria Smith, walking stick maker Ronald Davis, and a



Ron Davis, walking stick maker, demonstrates at the Indiana Festival.

— Photo by Ilze Akerbergs

number of players from the Hamilton County cricket team.

The event was participatory and interactive. Eli Jackson's canjo-making workshops drew a crowd of grownups and children eager to make their own instruments. The air was sprinkled with the twangy sound of the small stringed instruments made from sticks and metal cans. Young and old tried hitting a

cricket ball with the sport's unique bat in a gleeful pick-up game of cricket. A narrative stage presented the artists to the public, allowing gourd artists, ukulele makers, and glass artists to compare similarities and differences of their creative endeavors.

*I-69 Project at Marion
Octoberfest*

TAI, in collaboration with the Grant County Visitors Bureau brought eight traditional artists from along the I-69 corridor to Marion's Octoberfest celebration on October 7, 2006. Tools of their trade were on display, as well as examples for the public to handle and ask questions about. Joe Rice's colorful glass paperweights at the front of the exhibit drew the public into the exhibit area, as Carol Powers and Guadalupe Ryder decorated eggs according to their Ukrainian and Mexican traditions, respectively; Marguerite



Eli Jackson showed children how to use one of his wooden toys at Marion's Octoberfest. — *Photo by Ilze Akerbergs*



Wooden carousel horses made by Willis Hoke, exhibited at the Marion Octoberfest. — *Photo by Ilze Akerbergs*

Cox quilted all afternoon long; and Geoff Davis, with unfailing energy sawed, bent, and glued together more new ukuleles. Willis Hoke brought along his beautifully carved wooden model carousel horses that glistened in the noonday sun. Drum maker Roy Spight exchanged instrument building experiences with canjo- and toymaker Eli Jackson.

Sheep Shearers, Swine Producers, and Ukulele Makers

TAI at the 2006 Indiana State Fair

For the past four years, TAI has hosted the *State Fair Fiddle Contest*, a competition that attracts some of the state's top fiddlers. From western swing and bluegrass to old-time and Irish fiddling, spectators heard players from a wide range of musical backgrounds. The winner in the open division was Julane Lund from Mooresville, who played a Norwegian hardanger fiddle. Winning in the old-time category for the second year in a row was Harold Klosterkemper, a master fiddler from Greenfield, Indiana.

The year 2006 marked the 150th anniversary of the Indiana State Fair, and on this occasion, August 10th was delegated as *IU Day*. More than sixty booths lined Expo Hall Street, highlighting various opportunities available at Indiana University. Among the presenters was Traditional Arts Indiana, showcasing traditional instrument makers. Ukulele maker Geoff Davis, kannel maker Ain Haas, African drum maker Julius Adeniyi, tongue drum maker Roy Spight, violin maker Tom Sparks, and guitar maker Ron Volbrecht were on hand to demonstrate the process of instrument-making, to discuss their traditional art forms, and to perform short musical pieces.



Geoff Davis teaches children the rudiments of ukulele technique at IU Day at the State Fair.

Traditional Arts Indiana also presented three acts on the Main Street Stage at *TAI Day at the Fair*. Jay Fox and the Bavarian Showtime Band played German American polka music for the many enthusiasts on hand to support them and join in on a dance. Bluegrass fiddle master Kenny Stone and his apprentice



Master sheep shearer Bill Harshbarger holds one of his many State Fair awards.

Shannon Doolittle demonstrated Shannon's accomplishments during her apprenticeship year. In addition, Brad Leftwich and the Humdingers made their first appearance at the Fair, playing old time fiddle tunes that Brad learned from his musical mentor Tommy Jarrell.

Lt. Governor Becky Skillman and Interim Executive Director of the IAC Michelle Anderson joined TAI at the Fair to honor two outstanding and longtime State Fair participants as *State Fair Masters*: Bill Harshbarger and Jack Rodibaugh. Bill Harshbarger began showing sheep on the

County and State Fair levels, exhibiting until the early 1960s. The year 2006 marked his fifty-second consecutive year competing in the State Fair Sheep Shearing Contest. Jack Rodibaugh and his family operate a hog business where they produce swine for breeding, market, and 4-H. Rodibaugh has spent the last sixty-three

years perfecting breeding stock and competing at the State Fair. TAI produced and distributed over 1,000 documentary DVDs at the Fair, honoring their life's work.



Master swine-breeders Jack Rodibaugh and family, honored at the Indiana State Fair.

TAI Projects ...

Rotating Exhibit Network grows to meet demand

In 2006, Traditional Arts Indiana launched a free exhibit program, offering large format exhibit materials to organizations across the state. The seven-foot-high panels feature colorful photographs and descriptive text, profiling individuals and communities who maintain a commitment to the artistic and traditional expressions of their family, community, and/or region. Some of these artists include glass builder Joe Rice in Elwood, who makes glass paperweights following the methods developed by his grandfather;

Mary K. Borgman, whose competitive entries in candy making became legendary at the Indiana State Fair; and Jim Cooper, a hoop net maker along the Ohio River. Organizations interested in joining the exhibit network can download an application from the TAI website at <www.indiana.edu/~tradarts/programs/exhibit.html>.

Creating, Changing, Renewing

Portraits of Indiana's Traditional Artists: David and Joel Straubinger – flute builders

David Straubinger and his son Joel are innovative builders of highly prized handcrafted concert flutes. David learned the basics of flute manufacturing from Bickford Brannen, formerly of the Powell Flute Company; however, his brief apprenticeship was only part of his training. Long before he learned to build flutes from scratch, he was perfecting his knowledge and skill by repairing and rebuilding flutes.

“I am in a way self-taught, because I didn’t go to a repair school, as such,” muses David. “I learned on the job with the

Indianapolis Public Schools doing basic repair and then I started my own business.

“Well, then, I had to learn from somebody, so I say it was on my own; but in a way it really wasn’t, because I observed every flute that came in. I would look and see what the people before me did. And I noticed what worked and what didn’t work. In observing, you’re learning from them.”



Father and son flute makers David (on right) and Joel Straubinger.

The TAI Team

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