



CRAIG HUDSON | Gazette-Mail file photo

The West Virginia Symphony Orchestra performs to a packed crowd on a warm summer evening during the 36th annual Symphony Sunday on the lawn of the University of Charleston on June 6, 2018.

Living in harmony

West Virginia's hills alive with the sound of music

By Caryn Gresham
For Daily Mail WV

There's music in the mountains. From traditional tunes to classical symphonies, from indie rock to gospel, West Virginia's music scene has something for every musical taste and many opportunities for musicians to play and audiences to listen.

"Music is embedded in our culture," said Joe Tackett, West Virginia Symphony Orchestra president. "Many people enjoy playing music, and that is a strong foundation for audiences who seek out the music they like."

Randall Reid-Smith, West Virginia Department of Arts, Culture and History curator, agrees. "Music is a language that everyone speaks," he said. "Visit any county in West Virginia and you'll find an exciting music scene."

"Every state has marquee music names. Here in West Virginia, we have musicians, composers, songwriters and singers who have flown under the radar," said Michael Lipton, West Virginia Hall of Fame director. "Because of the state's isolation, it nurtured unique people whose music, regardless of genre, reflects that."

West Virginia's music scene isn't flying under the radar now. People from all over the world are coming here for "Mountain Stage" and Appalachian String Band Festival. As they travel to the Mountain State for vacations and getaways, they are enjoying music along the Mountain Music Trail and at festivals around the state.

"Mountain Stage" has been dubbed the state's calling card," said Vasilisa Scouras, "Mountain Stage" associate producer. "For some, coming to Charleston for a show is like a pilgrimage. It's on their bucket list!"

Ron Sowell, "Mountain Stage" music-director and band-leader, says the mix of musical genres that the show offers keeps it fresh and lively. He is especially proud of the opportunity the radio show affords local bands.

"From December through March, every 'Mountain Stage'



CHRIS DORST | Gazette-Mail file photo

Music fans listen to the band Ona play at Live on the Levee at Haddad Riverfront Park in Charleston in 2018.

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West Virginia Hall of Fame director

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show featured a West Virginia band," he said. "Andrew Adkins of Fayetteville introduced his solo album on 'Mountain Stage.' It is No. 4 on the Americana Roots chart, and his single is No. 13."

The Appalachian String Band Festival held each summer at Camp Washington Carver in Clifftop has an in-

ternational following as well. People camp at the site or stay in local hotels. Others drive up for a day.

"There were 300 people here for our first String Band Festival" said Bobby Taylor who coordinates judging and competitions for the event. "Now, there are between 3,500 and 5,000 musicians and music fans there every year. They come from many countries including Australia, France and Japan, as well as the United States and Canada."

SEE MUSIC, 4D

Where do musicians go to listen to music in W.Va.?

By Caryn Gresham
For Daily Mail WV

Ron Sowell, songwriter, soloist, teacher and "Mountain Stage" music-director and band-leader, is excited about the music scene in West Virginia.

"I see a strong movement toward original music, new bands and clubs catering to original music that is similar to the scene in the 1970s," he said. "There is a resurgence of original bands and venues where people can go to hear the music of local and regional bands."

Sowell is not alone in his enthusiasm for the emerging creative music scene and the growing number of places that host

original artists. "Alternative spaces for music are trending throughout West Virginia," said Tim Brady, vice president of Sales and Marketing for the Charleston Convention and Visitors Bureau. "Residents and visitors enjoy listening to new bands at venues where they can connect with the artists."

Where do musicians go when they want to hear music? They go to tried and true venues like the Empty Glass on Charleston's East End and Gene's Beer Garden in Morgantown. They have high praise for the music programming at The Purple Fiddle in Thomas.

SEE LIVE, 3D



CRAIG HUDSON | Gazette-Mail file photo

Sandro Leal-Santiesteban practices with his violin shortly before the West Virginia Symphony Orchestra takes the stage during the 36th annual Symphony Sunday on the lawn of the University of Charleston in Charleston in 2018.



WEST VIRGINIA STATE ARCHIVES | Courtesy photo

String bands are a long-standing tradition in the Mountain State. Above is a photo taken in 1936 at Camp Price, a Civilian Conservation Corps camp at Droop Mountain.



CHRIS DORST | Gazette-Mail file photo

Renee and Dusty Anderson built Jerry Run Summer Theater, in Cleveland, Webster County. From late April through early October the venue features acoustic bluegrass, folk and Americana music on Saturday evenings, and sometimes on Fridays, too.

MUSIC

FROM PAGE 1D

"One of the things that makes the music scene more interesting now is the variety of venues that we have," said Tim Brady, vice president of Sales and Marketing for Charleston Convention and Visitors Bureau. "Outdoor festivals like Symphony Sunday, Festival and Vandalia Gathering can bring many people together, but we have a lot of alternative venues like Rock City Cake Company that are offering opportunities for people to hear local and regional bands in smaller, more informal settings. It's cool to go and watch a band play."

Live on the Levee at Haddad Riverfront Park is a free concert series that runs every Friday evening from Memorial Day weekend to Labor Day weekend. It features national acts as well as local acts.

"In West Virginia, the whole community gets involved with supporting the music they appreciate," Tackett said. "The West Virginia Symphony is excited to celebrate its 80th anniversary this year. And I encourage people who enjoy classical music to look for performances by Charleston Chamber Orchestra at West Virginia State University and the Charleston Chamber Music Society."

The Capitol Theatre in Wheeling hosts musical events from the Wheeling Symphony Orchestra to the Wheeling Jamboree. The 101-year-old historic theater features up and coming country performers as well as gospel, doo-wop, Motown, oldies, jazz, blues and rock concerts.

Music lovers who enjoy quiet mountain time as well enjoy Jerry Run Summer Theater in Cleveland, Webster County.

Jerry Run is a rustic indoor music venue located near Holy River State Park. From late April through early October the venue features acoustic bluegrass, folk and Americana music on Saturday evenings, and sometimes on Fridays, too.

Cafe Cimino in Sutton hosts the annual West Virginia Hall of Fame Garden Party. The outdoor concert will feature John "Some Kind of Wonderful" Ellison along with Larry Groce, Hello June, Jesse Milnes and other special guests.

The Mountain Music Trail provides traditional music fans with information about venues and events along Route 219 in Randolph, Pocahontas, Tucker, Greenbrier and Monroe counties.

"The trail has venues for traditional, ethnic, bluegrass and country options that offer authentic Appalachian music experiences," said Cara Rose, executive director of the Pocahontas County Convention and Visitors Bureau. "The Pocahontas County Opera House in Marlinton and Carnegie Hall in Lewisburg are great local venues for performing arts."

The Purple Fiddle in Thomas is a popular music venue along the trail. "Owner John Bright has developed a great venue for local, regional and national musicians," Rose said. "He hosts events throughout the year. The summer Mountain Music shows on Monday nights are popular with visitors in our area."

The American Heritage Music Hall in Ronceverte is a family-friendly site where local musicians promote American heritage music. Along with live entertainment and dancing, it features open jam sessions.

L.J. Giuliani, owner of 123 Pleasant Street, Morgantown, likes the opportunities he has to showcase local and regional



CRAIG HUDSON | Gazette-Mail file photo

Prepared in case he got a little too close to the Kanawha River, Music Director Lawrence Loh wore an inflatable vest as he conducted the West Virginia Symphony Orchestra through a rendition of John Williams' "Jaws" theme during Symphony Sunday in 2018.

bands and musicians at his historic venue. "I am proud that 99 percent of the music we feature is original," he said. "We try hard to showcase as many types of music as we can so that we don't pigeonhole ourselves and to attract different audiences."

Giuliani believes venues like his are important because they serve as good places for musicians to hone their craft, gain a following and have fun in small settings that always have great energy.

Zack Harold of The Sycamores likes the camaraderie he finds with musicians, re-

Mountain Music Trail
mountainmusictrail.com

Road to W.Va. music

- Mountain State Brewing Company The Purple Fiddle
- Augusta Heritage Center
- Big Timber Brewing
- Gandy Dancer Theatre
- Randolph County Community Arts Center
- Brazenhead Inn
- Last Run Restaurant
- Big Fork Restaurant
- The Fiddlehead Restaurant and Bar
- Music in the Mountains at the Pocahontas County Opera House
- Cranberry Mountain Nature Center
- Pretty Penny Cafe
- Carnegie Hall
- Greenbrier Valley Brewing Co.
- Hill and Holler
- The Irish Pub on Washington Street
- The Wild Bean
- American Heritage Music Hall

gardless of their musical style. His band, which he refers to as Americana Gospel, performs primarily in churches and community venues. It has enjoyed performing at the LaBelle Theater, Festival and at Appalachian Power Park. The band is booked to perform at Haddad Riverfront Park in August at JesusFest.

MT. Nebo, near Summersville, is the place for gospel music fans. The West Virginia Mountain State Gospel Singing Convention is held annually in June, July and September. For more than 60 years, the convention has preserved the traditions of old-time gospel camp meetings. The sings are among the oldest and largest nonprofit sings in the United States.

Ron Sowell is excited about the energy he sees in the state's music scene. "It is reminiscent of the '70s and is great for musicians in the state," he said. Added to that he believes the growing number of local recording studios also is helping West Virginia's musicians.

"We are in for some exciting times in West Virginia. Just get out there and listen!"



Gazette-Mail file photo

Carnegie Hall in Lewisburg is on the Mountain Music Trail.



Courtesy photo

Americana gospel band the Sycomores.



F. BRIAN FERGUSON | Gazette-Mail file photo

Rock City Cake Company in downtown Charleston has expanded from a bakery into a live music venue.

that combines traditional Christian music themes with the sounds of country, bluegrass, folk and rock music, look for musical programs at churches and local community halls. "We have played at many different venues and with bands that play different music," Harold said. "There is a respectful appreciation of all

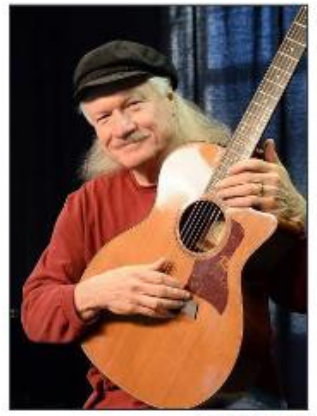
genres among musicians that makes concerts fun." Cara Rose, Pocahontas County CVB executive director, promotes the Mountain Music Trail. "In this area, Pretty Penny Cafe in Hillsboro, Big Fork Restaurant in Slaty Fork and Last Run Restaurant at Cass are a few local sites with live music," she said. Cranberry

Mountain Nature Center and the Opera House in Marlinton also are good bets for live music. Vasilisa Scouras, "Mountain Stage" associate producer, suggests McNemar House in Buckhannon. L.J. Giuliani, owner of Morgantown's 123 Pleasant Street, says that in addition to the offerings at that venue, Black



F. BRIAN FERGUSON | Gazette-Mail

West Virginia Hall of Fame director Michael Lipton.



Courtesy photo

"Mountain Stage" music-director and band-leader Ron Sowell.

Bear Burritos and Cow & Clementine's Bakery are two nearby venues that host local performances.

Matt Jackfert, composer and host for West Virginia Public Broadcasting, suggests The Grove at Secret Sandwich Society in Fayetteville and The V Club in Huntington.

Regardless of where you live, Michael Lipton, West Virginia Hall of Fame director and "Mountain Stage" band member, encourages people to look for small places. "Informal venues where musicians are working on their music and interested in audience reactions are great places to get to know what's happening on the local music scene. You never know where the band you saw on Saturday night might be performing next."

LIVE

FROM PAGE 1D

They like "Mountain Stage," Charleston's ArtWalk, Live on the Levee and FestivALL, the All Good Music Festival at Snowshoe and Cheat River Festival in Morgantown. They are excited to see new venues like Whistle Punk Grill & Tapouse in Richwood, Nicholas County, which is offering live music in a restored 1923 building that was originally Richwood Bakery.

They have suggestions for alternative places to go as well.

"Check your local newspaper for music events," Sowell recommends. "Open mic shows are growing in popularity, as are performance evenings at local restaurants and clubs." Unity of Kanawha Valley,

Charleston, hosts a monthly open mic session that gives new artists a low-pressure place to perform and get comfortable before audiences.

Look for local and regional acts at Taylor Books, Bridge Road Bistro and Bluegrass Kitchen in Charleston. Don't miss new venues like Rock City Cake Company, Elk City Records, Bully Trap Barber Shop and Kin Ship Goods in Charleston or the Olive Tree Cafe in South Charleston. Little India Restaurant in Charleston hosts Open Stage for Songwriters on Thursday evenings.

"The Concerts @ St. John's at St. John's Episcopal Church are wonderful programs for people interested in hearing classical music," said Joe Tackett, West Virginia Symphony Orchestra president.

Zack Harold and Jessica Kirk of The Sycomores, a band

"Old-time music holds center stage at festivals" article is below

Old-time music holds center stage at festivals

Events celebrate traditional music, dance in W.Va.

By Caryn Gresham
For Daily Mail WV

West Virginia's traditional music and dance are celebrated each year at the Vandalia Gathering on Memorial Day weekend at the State Capitol complex in Charleston, and at the Appalachian String Band Festival in late July/early August at Camp Washington Carver in Clifftop.

Sponsored by the West Virginia Department of Arts, Culture and History (formerly West Virginia Division of Culture and History), these events draw attention to the state's history and to its role in traditional music heritage.

"We are proud to promote these festivals, which celebrate our indigenous music and arts culture," said Randall Reid-Smith, curator for the West Virginia Department of Arts, Culture and History. "Bringing the best of our elder traditional artists together with young people who are eager to learn helps us see these traditional arts will continue into future generations."

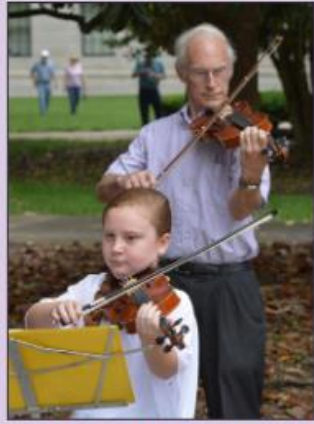
Vandalia Gathering

Since the first Vandalia Gathering took place on Memorial Day weekend in 1977, it has become a mountain heritage homecoming for West Virginians and visitors who come for a weekend of music, dance, storytelling, crafts and quilts.

The festival takes its name from Vandalia, the name proposed in 1768 for the 14th American colony. Benjamin Franklin, one of the organizers of the Great Ohio Company, proposed the creation of Vandalia, which would have included almost all of present-day West Virginia and much of Kentucky.

The name was a gesture to Queen Charlotte, wife of King George III, who proudly claimed descent from the Vandals through her birth to German nobility. The plan fell through at the outset of the American Revolution.

The Vandalia Gathering features concerts and contests, dance performances, storytelling,



CHRIS DORST | Gazette-Mail file photo

Emily Best plays the introduction to "Old Joe Clark" on her fiddle with the accompaniment by her instructor, Fred Meyer, during the Vandalia Gathering in 2017.

activities for young people, arts and crafts booths, and the opening of the annual West Virginia Quilt Exhibition. Contests and concerts are open to West Virginians only, showcasing the talents of state residents. Each year at the opening Friday evening concert, the Vandalia Award and West Virginia Juried Quilt Exhibition awards are presented.

Free and open to the public, the Vandalia Gathering's setting at the State Capitol provides plenty of space for attendees to set up chairs and gather for family reunions, impromptu music sessions and conversations about the stories behind the music.

Bobby Taylor, a West Virginia native and grand master fiddler, helps organize the judging and competitions for the Vandalia Gathering and Appalachian String Band Festival. He believes these festivals are important because they keep old-time music alive.

"We want young people to learn more than the tunes," Taylor said. "We want them to know the stories behind them. Those stories add meaning to the music because they help us know more about the lives, the times and the emotions of the old masters."

Appalachian String Band Festival

Informally known as Clifftop, the Appalachian String Band Festival is a five-day mountaintop



CHRIS DORST | Gazette-Mail file photo

Jerry Lewis and Charlie Meyers on fiddle, Richard Hardman on banjo, Darrell Crites on guitar and Steve Bradley on bass play "From Now On I Won't Be Hang'n Around" on the Capitol grounds during the Vandalia Gathering in 2017.

gathering at historic Camp Washington Carver in Clifftop, Fayette County. Unlike Vandalia Gathering, which highlights West Virginia artists and musicians, Clifftop is open to old-time traditional musicians from around the world.

Each year since 1990, the festival features contests, concerts, workshops, square dances and camping for more than 3,000 musicians and string band fans from almost every state in the Union, as well as guests who travel from more than 20 foreign countries including Canada, Australia, France, Sweden and Great Britain.

Clifftop competitions include traditional band, neo-traditional band, fiddle and old-time banjo in adult and youth categories. One of the festival's unique features is the neo-traditional band contest on Friday in which the highest scores are given to bands that creatively extend old-time music traditional into other musical voices, instrumentation and styles.



KENNY KEMP | Gazette-Mail file photo

Musicians play a tune under an oak tree at Appalachian String Band Festival in Clifftop.

