

VICTORIA BLUEGRASS ASSOCIATION

Bringing people together for the preservation, enjoyment and advancement of bluegrass and related acoustic music.

Message From the VBA Board

*"Pretty paper on boxes, gifts under the tree
Lights on the houses, why it's Christmas you see!"*

The best of the season to you all! Where does the time go? One day we're making sure we have enough sunscreen, and the next we're shopping for snow tires! Well, it's a beautiful time of the year for getting together with friends in warm homes and sharing Christmas cheer and music... and in a couple of more weeks, those sunny days will start to get longer again.

It sure felt cheery at feature night last month at the Orange Hall. It was practically standing room only to take in the great show by James Whittall and Friends, and we had a very full open stage to kick things off. It happened to be James's birthday as well, so everyone was treated to a wonderful birthday cake made by Elizabeth Bergen especially for the occasion – thanks so much, Elizabeth.

This month, on December 20th, it's our Annual Holiday Potluck, Auction, Band Scramble and Jam Extravaganza! Yes you read it right, last year's impromptu fundraiser auction was a real crowd pleaser, so we've added it to the evening's agenda again. Auctioneer, Doug van Dine will have some highly desirable bluegrass related items, so bring your wallet and be prepared to outbid your friends on some nice stuff – and it's all for a good cause. If any of you have items that you would like to donate for the auction, please bring them that evening for Doug and he will put them on the block. All donations will be treated anonymously.

In case you haven't been to this annual event before, or ever participated in a band scramble, you can read all about it on the next page. It's a lot of fun! Admission to the event is by donation of non-perishable food items and/or cash and/or warm outer clothing or blankets, all of which will be donated to the Mustard Seed, including the proceeds from the auction. In addition to your admission donation, please bring your favourite finger food (sweet or savory) to share at the potluck table, and of course, don't forget your instrument.

Plan on arriving at the Orange Hall for 7:30pm when the doors open, as it's going to be a jam-packed evening, and we would like to have all the names for the band scramble entered by 7:45. Looking forward to seeing everyone there!

And remember.....**Keep on the Sunny Side!**

Calling Young Musicians! Deadline: December 31, 2011

Each year the Victoria Bluegrass Association awards one week of tuition to a young aspiring musician to attend a BC Bluegrass workshop in Sorrento in late August. To qualify for the Young Musician's Bursary, you need to be 25 years or younger as at Dec 31st, 2011, want to take instruction in a traditional bluegrass instrument at the Sorrento Bluegrass workshop in 2012, haven't attended the subject workshops before, and be a member in good standing with the VBA. Applications are now being accepted: email president@victoriabluegrass.ca indicating who you are, and why you think you should be selected.



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VBA Membership

\$ 25 single

\$ 40 couple

Lots more information at:
www.victoriabluegrass.ca



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VICTORIA BLUEGRASS ASSOCIATION EVENTS

VBA Tuesday Night Bluegrass Jams

Tuesday Orange Hall Jams are at 7:30pm. Slow Pitch, Moderated Circle and Festival Bluegrass Jams at the Orange Hall, 1620 Fernwood Road. Players of all levels welcome.

Players: \$2 for members, \$3 dollars for non-members. Listeners by donation. Contact Al Planiden at president@victoriabluegrass.ca

NOTE: The Tuesday Night VBA Jam will not run on Dec. 27th, 2011, but will resume again Jan 3, 2012

Annual Holiday Potluck, Auction Band Scramble & Jam Extravaganza

Tuesday, December 20, 2011, Orange Hall, 1620 Fernwood Road. Doors open at 7:30pm

Admission is by donation of non-perishable food items and/or cash and/or warm outer clothing or blankets.

Contact: Colleen O'Brien at 250-388-4520 for info.

Come for the whole evening and enjoy snacks and festivities with friends new and old. All proceeds from the evening's activities will be donated to the Mustard Seed. Besides your admission donation, bring: your favourite finger food to share (savory or sweet); your instrument if you plan to jam or enter the band scramble, and deep pockets for Doug's fabulous bluegrass oriented auction.

The deadline for signing up for the band scramble will be 7:45, so don't miss out. As an FYI, the Band Scramble is a fun event where bands will be randomly formed from the participants. They have a few minutes to name their group, work up a song and later perform it on stage. You won't want to miss this event.

Special Concert: Tony Furtado together with Luke Price

Tuesday, January 10th, 2012, Orange Hall, 1620 Fernwood Road. Doors open at 7:30pm

Admission: \$20 General, \$15 VBA Members

Tickets: Reserve at tickets@victoriabluegrass.ca or purchase at all VBA events

Contact: Alan Law at 250-388-4520 for info.

Banjo and slide guitar virtuoso, Tony Furtado is performing with Luke Price, a two-time US National Fiddle champion. Dubbed Hot Acoustic, the pair will bring a multi-genre performance fusing Bluegrass, Country, Rock, Blues, Jazz and Folk. Furtado's skill on the banjo is well known having won two National banjo awards early in his career and when he decided to learn slide guitar, he mastered that to the same level as well.

Luke Price is a talented young multi-instrumentalist known for his great balance of taste, rhythm, and technical ability. He is known for pushing genres, styles, and fellow musicians into new territory while delicately respecting the great musical traditions that have come before.

This will be an entertaining show that will leave you in awe.



January Workshops:

Tony Furtado: Banjo Workshop and Luke Price: Fiddle Workshop Wed., Jan. 11th, 2012, 7:30pm Location TBA.

\$30 General, \$25 VBA Members. Contact Alan Law at 250-388-4520 for info or to reserve.

Don't miss this golden opportunity to learn from a couple of masters. These workshops are directed towards more advanced players but listeners and novices (without their instruments) are invited too. Space is limited. Pre-registration is required and we suggest registering early to avoid disappointment

Chris Herbst: Guitar Workshop Sat., Jan. 28th, 2012, 2:00pm Location TBA. \$25 General, \$20 VBA Members

Eschew the G: Learn to play bluegrass and country guitar classics in keys other than G, without a capo!. Tabbed runs and licks in keys of E, D, A & C to be provided. Space is limited. Pre-registration is required.

January Feature Act: The Sirens

Tuesday, Jan 31, 2012, Orange Hall, 1620 Fernwood Road. Doors open at 7:30pm Members \$5, Non-members \$7. Contact Alan Law at 250-388-4520 for info.

Pickin' Interview: Who is Mary Day?

By Victoria Pang

We're following up last month's profile with the other half of the relationship so you can see the whole picture. This month, Mary Day gives her side of the story.

Watching Mary play bass now, you'd never know that up to about 12 years ago, she would have told you she hated bluegrass music. She couldn't understand why the instrumentals were played so fast so that it took the tune right out of them. How did she become the Mary we know today?

Mary grew up on a farm in Prince Edward Island. There, she met Eric, began farming together, and started a family. Today, their son Philip is a healthy dad of twin boys. But 48 years ago, Philip was born with a congenital heart defect known as Atrial Septal Defect, a hole in his heart. Mary doesn't know how she survived those first 2 ½ years before Philip had the corrective surgery to repair the hole. It took literally around-the-clock monitoring to make sure his body was getting enough oxygenated blood: monitoring his play time (5 minutes play, then 10 minutes sitting up); getting him up and moving in the middle of the night to get his heart pumping; restricting visitors at the door to prevent the risk of infection; making sure that he received the many correct doses of medicine... the list goes on. There was one frightful episode when they came so close to losing Philip due to a bout of double pneumonia.

Mary says that getting Philip ready for the corrective surgery to repair his heart was the hardest thing she's ever done. She knew that if Philip cried every time she left his bedside after the surgery, his health would be at risk, and as a result, she might not be able to be with him at all. She had been with Philip around the clock every day of his entire life and he was pretty attached to her. So, Mary knew she had to prepare Phillip to deal with separation after the surgery. After he was admitted a few days before the surgery was to take place, Mary forced herself to get up, put on her coat, say goodbye, and listen to Philip's cries as she steeled herself to continue down the hallway and out the main door. On that first day, I think Mary would tell you that she cried just as much as Philip. But by the 3rd day of this routine, both of them were able to say good-bye without crying. Everything worked out in the end – last week, Phillip took Mary out for dinner on her birthday. No hard feelings!

It was the retirement of her husband Eric that brought Mary to bluegrass. She figured that he was so obsessed with playing music she might never see him if she wasn't able to participate. So one day she told Eric that she thought she should take up an instrument, too. She decided then and there to learn to play "Big Red", an upright bass Eric owned. She went to the Sorrento workshops, took beginner bass and discovered that she could actually play.

Mary was cured of stage fright in her first student performance that year at Sorrento. Prior to going on stage, she couldn't remember what she was supposed to do, so she hatched a strategy to place herself in the back row behind everyone else. As the group went on stage, she found herself boxed in the middle at the front of the stage with nowhere to hide. Fortunately, everything fell into place during that performance and she's never looked back, joining Eric and others in the Blue Fox group less than 3 months after picking up the bass for the first time. She's since backed up countless others in bands, many ad hoc performances, festival jams, and you can find her keeping the beat at the Tuesday night Slow Pitch sessions.

Mary tells me that she plays "in the pocket". Some bass players play on the leading edge of the beat, some play on the trailing edge of the beat. She's a middle-of-the-beat player that others have nicknamed "the Rock of Rhythm." She also describes her playing as very basic, never wanting to be accused of being a "frustrated guitar player". She says she will jam with anyone, but before getting into the jam, will look for the "good guitar player" to see the pattern.

Mary's bass is a 200 year-old German flatback solid wood instrument rescued from a closet. Extensive restoration work was carried out by James Ham, who spent two years in lovingly finishing the project. She had the bass personalized by having a former Larrivee employee do the inlay work on the lower fretboard to show PEI's provincial flower, the lady's slipper. She's had many offers for her bass because of its beautiful custom finish and big sound, but she's clear in telling me it's not for sale.

When she's not jamming, though, Mary doesn't take it easy. She admits, she never practices bass, but she walks almost every day, loves to cut grass (her lawn is her pride and joy) and makes an endless amount of crafts. Mary and Eric will be celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary next year, an amazing milestone. But there's no risk that they'll be returning to finish their retirement in PEI. They've been on the west coast for so long that all their friends are located here and they've long since sold their old farm. Lucky for us, they're here to stay.

So what does Mary think about bluegrass music now? Well, if you haven't figured it out, she likes it very much and she particularly likes playing fast because it's easier for her to keep the beat.



Bluegrass Happenings in British Columbia and the Pacific Northwest (all events in Victoria BC, unless otherwise indicated)

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	SATURDAY
<p>Afternoon Hootenanny at <i>Logan's Tavern</i> 1821 Cook St., 4:00pm Hosted by Carolyn Mark. Free admission More info: 250-360-1832</p>	<p>Old-Time String Music Jam at <i>Spiral Cafe</i> 418 Craigflower Rd., 7-9:30pm</p>	<p>VBA Bluegrass Jam at the <i>Orange Hall</i>, 1620 Fernwood Rd., 7:30-10pm Slow Pitch and Circle Jams. Players of all levels welcome. Closed Dec. 27th, 2011. Admission: players \$2 (non-members \$3), listeners by donation. More info: Al Planiden, apache@shaw.ca</p>	<p>Cornerstone Bluegrass Jam at <i>Cornerstone Cafe & Resource Centre</i> Fernwood at Gladstone 7:30-10pm. Featuring premier acoustic string band musicians. Enjoy hot coffee or chocolate while listening to local top acoustic roots musicians jam it out. Organized by the Fernwood Bluegrass Coalition, a group of local business/promoters/musicians. More info: Larry Stevens at larrystevens@shaw.ca</p>	<p>Bluegrass Brunch with the <i>Stowaways</i> at <i>Logan's Tavern</i> 1821 Cook St., 1:00 - 4:00pm every Saturday. Admission Free. More info: 250-360-1832 Brunch begins at 11:00. Great food, music and friends.</p>
<p>Sooke Legion Bluegrass and Acoustic Jam 6726 Eustace Rd., Sooke 1st and 3rd Sunday 2:30-5:00pm (new time!) Contact: Al Planiden, 250-642-3395</p>		<p>The Sweet Lowdown at <i>The Fernwood Inn</i> 302 Gladstone Ave., 8-11pm. More info: www.myspace.com/the.sweet.lowdown</p>		
<p>Bluegrass Night at <i>Spinnaker's Pub</i> 308 Catherine St., 8-10:30pm. Performers: Dan Weisenberger and Oliver Swain</p>				
<p>Bluegrass Night with The Moonshiners at <i>Swan's</i> 506 Pandora Ave., 8-11pm. Performers: Zev, Miriam, Chris and Cluny</p>				

Grassified Ads:

FOR SALE: 2008 Gibson Granada 5 string banjo. Lifetime Gibson warranty. Gold Trim. \$5,500. Contact: Linda @ 250-752-0383

FOR SALE: 1937 Gibson A-Model Mandolin. All original except case. Maple with Spruce top. \$1,350. Contact: Barny 250-595-1120

Musicians Wanted:

Music Lessons with Chris Herbst: Guitar, Dobro and Music Theory. 250-885-5999

Guitar and Mandolin Lessons with James Whittall: Ten years experience teaching bluegrass. Beginner to advanced players. It's never too late to sound better. 778-430-7729 or mandolinjames@gmail.com.

Victoria Mandolin Orchestra: New members on various instruments including guitar and bass welcomed. Intermediate level playing and music reading. Practice: Tuesdays 7:30-9:30pm. Contact: Chandra at chandrac@shaw.ca. Check out: <http://www.members.shaw.ca/cmvarcoe>

Seen Around VBA

