



# COLORADO FIDDLE REPORT

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE COLORADO OLD TIME FIDDLERS' ASSOCIATION

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[www.coloradofiddlers.org](http://www.coloradofiddlers.org)

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## The 2012 Colorado Fiddle Championships Are Near!

*Start getting excited about the 2012 Colorado Fiddle Championships! Following is some useful information that you'll want to know about the contest, but if you have more questions, you can contact Linnea Kenney at (303) 771-4421 or [Bijoucreek@aol.com](mailto:Bijoucreek@aol.com), or check on the website at [www.coloradofiddlers.org](http://www.coloradofiddlers.org).*

If you haven't registered yet, now is the time. Everyone who signs up before January 4th gets free admission to the National Western Stock Show for both days of the contest, January 7th and 8th. This alone saves you \$24 dollars. As an extra bonus, by signing up before Jan. 4th, you're avoiding a five dollar late fee. So the moral of the story is, register now! Simply go to the COTFA website and under the *Colorado Fiddle Championships* menu you'll find the page for online registration.

The Colorado Fiddle Championships (CFC) will be held in the Beef Palace at the National Western Stock Show this year. Here are a few things you might want to know about when you're heading to the National Western Complex in Denver:

**Parking:** Just like any other large event, you are more likely to get a parking spot that involves less walking if you arrive early. If you aren't the early sort, then be ready to either pay a bit extra for close-in parking or do a bit of walking. Remember, too, that even if you're parked a ways from the Arena, the NWSS has a nice parking lot tram system, which will get you to the entrance for free.

**Eating:** Those of you looking for anything besides hot dogs, fries, and sugary finger foods might have to look a bit harder, but there are some delicious options at the Stock Show. The little cafeteria upstairs has some fresh

sandwiches, and there are other delightful dishes scattered all over the grounds. Many of us have made a tradition of getting the Red Beans and Rice from a stand in the old Stadium Arena, and there is barbecue right behind the Beef Palace that is quick and good. Watching calories? Skip the bun! There are a few stands selling fresh lemonade which is amazingly close to home-made, and just outside the doors to our practice area is a stand with good coffee. Enjoy!

*Here is some information for fiddlers who will be competing at CFC this year. Be sure to check out the schedule and full list of rules at [www.coloradofiddlers.org](http://www.coloradofiddlers.org).*

- If you are competing in an age division, make sure to remember that there is a 5 minute time limit in the first round. Watch out! There's a penalty of 10 points for every 30 seconds of fiddling past 5 minutes. Aside from the first round of age divisions, there are no time limits.

- The judges this year will be Amy Carwile, Luke Price, and Rick Youngblood. Anthony Mature & Darin Meeks are the staff guitarists this year. • In all divisions except for the championship, twin fiddle, and novice, contestants will play a breakdown, waltz, and tune of choice.

*Contestants and fans, make sure you look at the Lodging information on the website, as we have a new sponsor-hotel this year, the Quality Inn Central, on West 48th Avenue. The hotel is less than a mile and a half from the Stock Show, and will have shuttle service for those who choose to stay at the hotel for the weekend.*





## Volunteer to Help Put on the Championships

To change things up, I've included a haiku:

*Contest Volunteers  
Always appreciated  
Call Linnea Kenney*

Yep, that pretty much says it all. Here's your opportunity to do your good deed for one or even two days! The Colorado Fiddle Championships still needs volunteers to be runners, register contestants, move musicians to and from the stage, and time contestants. If, deep down inside, volunteering at a fiddle contest is what you've always wanted to do, now is the time to realize your dream! If volunteering at a contest isn't your secret reverie, don't worry. You can still find happiness by volunteering at one of the positions I mentioned above. Are you a people person? Volunteer to register contestants. Do you prefer to listen to the fiddlers compete? Volunteer to be a timer. Or are you a scrooge? Fine, be that way. But you're missing out on a lot of tune-sheet-taking fun. By now, I'm sure you've decided that volunteering at the Colorado Fiddle Championships sounds like a blast. "Sign me up!" you're saying to yourself. But you don't know how. I'm about to tell you, but you don't think you can wait... Okay, I've had enough fun. If you haven't died from the suspense yet, you can pick up the phone and call Linnea Kenney at (303) 771-4421 or send her an email at [Bijoucreek@aol.com](mailto:Bijoucreek@aol.com).

## Contribute to our Newsletter:

Want to submit an article for the next COTFA newsletter? Sure, the pay isn't that great. In fact, it's nonexistent. But, the satisfaction you will get from contributing to the newsletter is priceless! It could be about anything related to music. Here are some ideas:

- A Teacher Feature- Interviews with a CO music teacher
- The lyrics and/or history of an old fiddle tune
- The inside scoop about any place where folks can go to jam or play for a charity event or...

Your article doesn't have to be one of the suggestions above; it just has to be associated with music. The article can be as long or as short as you want. When you're done, send it to [airplaygraphics@earthlink.net](mailto:airplaygraphics@earthlink.net).

## Congratulations, Eischen!

Coloradan Eischen Harkins is the 2011 National Junior Fiddle Champion. She got a head start on music. She started playing the violin when she was 2 ½, and has been playing Texas style fiddle for seven years. She recently moved from Canon City, Colorado to Austin, Texas. "There's loads more music here, so I'm pretty much in heaven," she said of her new home.

Eischen is an old pro when it comes to competing in fiddle contests. She played in her first contest when she was about ten and has played at the National Fiddle Championships six times. Her first Weiser competition ended on a high note; she won fourth in the Junior-Junior division. After placing in the top three of the Junior division a couple times, she took first place this year.

You might be surprised to hear that Eischen's practice technique is different from many other fiddlers'. "I have a hard time playing a song same way twice. Lots of stuff I play is improv; it's not rehearsed." Instead of memorizing each detail of songs, Eischen takes the basic melody and adds whatever she comes up with on the fly. She practices 1-2 hours each day, which contributed to her title this year.

Eischen has gotten more out of music than just knowing her scales. "Music makes you think about things so differently. If you screw up on something, so what? Try and try again. That's such an important life lesson. If you mess up, keep going. When you're practicing, you have to experiment and that's how life is. And music makes you very self-disciplined."

Eischen's advice to fiddlers: "Experiment with stuff! Try something new and expand your horizons. Have fun!"

"There should be no 'by the book' way to play Texas style fiddle; it's made for improv and for you to try new stuff." said Eischen. Maybe experimenting and not playing 'by the book' made Eischen the national champion. We will all be waiting for her experimentation in the Young Adult division.

*A special "thank you" goes to Celeste Johnson, who, commencing with this issue, is now principal writer for COTFA's Colorado Fiddle Report. Celeste is 13 years old, and began playing violin at age 5. She won 1st Place at the Nationals in 2010-2011 as a Junior Junior. Celeste plays volleyball, skis, swims and generally loves the outdoors. Early on she developed a love for writing, which will show in this and future newsletters. (If you have any jams, she'd love to be on the guest list!)*



## Taking Care of Your Fiddle and Bow

The following article was contributed by Von Bailey, the owner of Von's Violin Shop. Von is really knowledgeable and friendly, and is as honest as the day is long. In short, he is someone that you can completely trust with your fiddle. Von's Violin Shop is located at 1869 South Pearl Street, Suite 201 in Denver, 80210. The phone number is (303) 778-1349.

The recommendations I will write here are not new and many of you may find the repeating of them an imposition on your time. Please be patient for those who may think otherwise. Some readers may find something listed here as useful and some may simply like or need the reminder of things forgotten. Also, you should know that I will knowingly and unknowingly commit plagiarism.

And so now, a list without rhyme or reason to the order given...

### **The Bow:**

The bow hair should be loosened when not in use and a dust cloth used to wipe off rosin from the stick and frog after playing. The thumb screw should never be removed and the frog should not be taken off unless by a qualified repairman for bow servicing. The bow tip should not be placed in carpeting or on the floor as if it were a cane. The ivory can be damaged by this and it is expensive to be replaced properly. The bow will need to have the hair replaced occasionally as well as the thumb leather and the bow itself may need to be straightened occasionally as well.

### **The Fiddle:**

Some problems that you may encounter are more serious than others. If the fingerboard should fall off, do not glue it on yourself. Super or Crazy glue is especially serious and the expense of removing and replacing an improperly glued fingerboard can greatly exceed the cost of simply re-gluing it by a qualified shop and take much more time in the shop to complete.

Open seams are common and considered by repairmen as routine. In fact, it is normal. Check for open seams by looking at the top to side and back to side joints as well as looking at the top and back center seams especially under the tail piece and fingerboard for the top. Tapping the top and back over the ribs and listening to the difference in the sound produced can identify an opening. Also, if the instrument has a buzz or sounds "off" it may be an open seam.

### **Buzzing:**

What causes a fiddle to buzz can be very difficult to identify. An experienced repair person may be able to identify the cause right away, but it can be a challenge even for them. Open seams are the common cause of most buzzes. Keep polish, rosin and dirt out of any openings, seams, cracks, etcetera.

If a corner or an edge breaks off, try to find and keep the piece of wood so it can be glued back on by a qualified repair person ASAP and protect the edges of the damaged parts. This is less expensive and time consuming than new wood fitted to the missing area. Watch for rough edges as they can catch on sweaters, cloth or skin and break off.

There is a tendency for the bridge to lean towards the fingerboard. A bridge can last a very long time and usually needs replacement when it becomes warped. The side of the bridge facing the tailpiece is the back and should be at a right angle to the fiddle. If the bridge is leaning forward or backward set your fiddle on a table or in your lap and with the thumb and fore fingers of each hand, gently move the top of the bridge towards the tailpiece. You may need to loosen the strings. Graphite from a soft pencil in the string grooves will help.

Putting the graphite from a soft pencil in the string grooves at the nut and the bridge will extend the life of your strings and help with tuning and keeping the bridge straight.

When in doubt take your fiddle to an expert violin repairman to help with this and all other repairs or adjustments.

Clean the rosin off the fiddle after each session. A dry cloth can be used and a lightly damp cloth can be used to clean the fiddle. There are many commercial products you can use to clean and polish your fiddle. A professional cleaning may be needed periodically as well as having the instrument 'French Polished'. Also, wiping the excess rosin of the strings with a clean, dry soft cloth is a good idea too.

Have your instrument inspected for fingerboard wear, bridge warping or misalignment as well as the placement and tightness of the sound post. Your repair person will look for openings, ungluing, cracks, wear and how your pegs are performing.

Pegs' performance may be improved by some simple procedures. If the wear is more profound you may need to have them replaced. The holes in the peg box may need to have bushings installed and the old pegs refit or new pegs fit with the new bushings.

Humidity or lack thereof can be a problem and the solution



can be problematic. Colorado humidity can be very low during the fall and winter seasons especially. We often hear that 50 to 55 percent humidity is recommended but this is too high for Colorado. If your fiddle is in a home environment with high humidity and you play a fiddle festival in Lyons you will probably have problems. 35% may sound low, but for this area it does well. The local changes in humidity from home to a gig will be less of a shock. You have to work hard to achieve 50% and need to avoid over humidification. There are commercial products to use for humidification such as the "Dampit".

Avoid hot or cold indoors and outdoors in trucks, cars, etcetera. Some fiddle players will put the instrument case under a light colored cloth in the auto to deflect heat and to insulate the case and its contents. Hot, bright lights on stages and in studios may be a danger. Avoid direct sunlight and or heat registers.

Shoulder rests may cause damage too, if they are in poor condition or improperly installed.

Placing your fiddle on a chair or couch may be convenient, but let's say there is a conversation regarding the virtues of Aristotle or what's for dinner or some such topic and someone may just sit down without looking to see if a fiddle or bow is there. Some shops keep this danger a secret as it is a good source of income for them.

Inform your insurance agent you have a fiddle and bow; you may have some coverage through your home owner's or renter policy. Take photos from several different angles to help identify the fiddle.

This is not a complete list of things to do, and mainly a little common sense and observation will help take care of your fiddle.

## Introducing Linnea Kenney

Linnea Kenney, the President of the Colorado Old Time Fiddlers Association, has been an active member of COTFA since it was founded in 2002. She has been a board member and an active participant in fund raising, assisting with coordination of performances, local contests, the Colorado Fiddle Championships, and Colorado workshops including Randy Elmore and Wes Westmoreland III, and Jimmy Don Bates and Joey McKenzie.

Linnea has been an active fiddle mom for 14 years. Her daughter, Kaitlin, began playing at the age of 6. They traveled together multiple times to attend the National Fiddle Championships in Weiser, Idaho, Fiddler's Frolics in Hallettsville, Texas, Wyoming contests, Colorado contests, and Randy Elmore's Fiddle Camp. Linnea developed a love for this aural tradition of fiddling. She has been fortunate to get to know many of these talented fiddlers and musicians over the years. Linnea has sponsored numerous jam sessions at her house and is continuing that tradition.

Linnea works for IBM as an Industry Delivery Executive in the Global Technology Services division, responsible for distribution accounts in the western region. She has been in the IT profession for the last 32 years. She has been happily married for 28 years and is blessed with four children, a son in law and a granddaughter!

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## Visit the new COTFA Website

**[www.coloradofiddlers.org](http://www.coloradofiddlers.org)**

COTFA's website has been undergoing substantial changes in recent months, and we invite you to visit often. We have simplified certain aspects and are trying to make the site a lean and streamlined affair, while retaining the maximum amount of information about fiddling in Colorado and the Rocky Mountain Empire.

You will, as in the past, find on-line and printable forms to join COTFA; register for the Colorado Fiddle Championships; officially sponsor COTFA and the Championships; get COTFA sanctioning for a local contest, and a form to make a donation as a "Friend of Fiddling."

In addition, our new calendar is updated by members and teachers to make sure our members are able to find jam sessions, concerts, contests and other activities related to fiddling in the state. Please feel free to contact Doug Johnson ([airplaygraphics@earthlink.net](mailto:airplaygraphics@earthlink.net)) to add events of general interest to the calendar.

Please remember that this is your website as a member of COTFA, and that your suggestions are always appreciated and welcome.