

# Folk committee supports Shindig on the Green

By Alex Hammond

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Several hundred people gathered at the old Colonial Theatre in Canton last Saturday for a \$20 show. Considering who showed up to play, that price was a bargain.

"We're not funded by anybody. This committee has to raise its own funds, so the Mountain Dance and Folk Festival, the profits from that and also from this fundraiser go to make it possible for Shindig to be free," said Glenn Bannerman, one of the two masters of ceremonies at Saturday's "Celebration of Mountain Traditions."

Bannerman, a member of the Canton-based Folk Heritage Committee that hosts Shindig on the Green every year, said the event needs all the fundraising help it can get.

Shindig on the Green is an annual concert series that started more than 40 years ago, Bannerman said. It consists of any number of random pickers selected from the crowd to get up on stage and play a few songs for the people listening.

"They jam all over the place, and we'll go up to a group and say 'Do you want to be on the stage tonight?' and they'll say yes or no," he said. "With that, we've not had a bad night in three or four years."

The Folk Heritage Committee consists of 17 members who understand the importance of mountain culture and tradition. The group includes musicians, dancers and vocalists and considers Shindig on the Green a vital element in preserving mountain heritage, Bannerman said.

This year's Shindig series will meet in front of the courthouse, in the spot where it always met before construction displaced everything. Bannerman said one of the issues the Folk Heritage Committee faced was the logistics of the change.

"We just had a meeting the other night of the Shindig on the Green committee, and we talked about how we're going to make the transition from the Martin Luther King Park to the city park," he said.

While the Shindig performances are not official, the acts Saturday were a little more concrete. The opening act was a 10-song set list headed by Laura Boosinger and Bobby Hicks. Boosinger is a folk and bluegrass performer with strong ties to the area, and Hicks is a 10-time Grammy award winner.

"He has retired to this area, and we are delighted that he chose this area to retire, because we have utilized his skills in music at the festival, the shindig and



Katie Saylor - Staff Photographer

The Cole Mountain Cloggers perform at the Shindig on the Green fundraiser in Canton, hosted by the Folk Heritage Committee.

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a master of ceremonies at "Celebration of Mountain Traditions"

the fundraiser," Bannerman said. "At the very first fundraiser, Bobby Hicks was part of that."

Throughout the set list, Hicks and Boosinger set up a teasing banter. She joked about a recent invite Hicks received to teach at Harvard University, and he joked about how Boosinger kept going for a drink of water. Of course, she was singing.

"It's too early in the day for me to sing," Hicks joked. Then he started up singing a song of his own.

The second performance of the evening was a youth group named the Cole Mountain Cloggers. They led a called dance going into the intermission, then came back to demonstrate their clogging chops.

"You won't find a better youth group clog dance team," Bannerman said. "They are superb."

The headline act of the show, Balsam Range, was also the last act of the night. A regional mover in the bluegrass world, every member of the band had the chance to show off a little and have a little bit of fun to support a cause they cared about, Bannerman said.

"They (the Folk Heritage Committee) do it for the love of this music," Darren Nicholson, the band's mandolin-player, said to the crowd. "I absolutely love it."

His mandolin sounded like it loved it, too. Every member of the band had plenty of chances to show off their picking skills, except for the stand-up bassist for the night, Buddy Melton. Instead, he flexed his tenor pipes, and Nicholson joked with him about winning an award for female vocalist of the year.

"So many folks appreciate the music they bring to the state," Bannerman said. "When Shindig on the Green first started, the chamber and the city helped out a lot."

Then, the money dried up, he said, so everyone who could donate a little bit of time or effort came together to help keep things going. That approach has been working for 44 years now.

"I've been connected with it since the beginning," Bannerman said.

*The Shindig on the Green concert series will take place in July and August.*

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