



**Young Fiddler's Forum**  
Newsletter of the  
Young Fiddler's Association of Minnesota  
December, 2006



**Profile of a Young Fiddler:  
Xander Nielson – Learning  
to Fiddle “Knee to Knee”**

*(Editor: How did you get started fiddling?)*

**Xander:** when I first started two years ago, I was taking 15-minute Suzuki lessons. I sort of liked it, but it wasn't my favorite.

Then I went to a family camp where we played a lot of music. My friend Ken Steffenson taught me how to play Shortnin' Bread. That's the first fiddle tune I learned. I ended up loving to play fiddle music, but hating Suzuki.

Right after that, I stopped taking Suzuki lessons, and kept playing with Ken. He wasn't really my teacher, but he was showing me tunes.

*(So would you say you two were jamming?)* Yeah.

*(What kinds of tunes did you learn from Ken?)*

At first he showed me the tunes everyone knows, like the Girl I Left Behind Me, Angeline the Baker, and Molly's Wedding. Ken also showed me a lot of songs that he wrote—I liked those the best. Or sometimes I taught him tunes, like from the YFA book.

*(So he showed you some old timey tunes, and some Irish tunes?)* Yes.

*(What is your favorite fiddle style?)* Well, I like bluegrass. Ken isn't wild about it, but he likes it.

*(Did you get Ken to show you some bluegrass tunes?)* Yes—he showed me June Apple, that's my favorite. Ken also showed me the Temperance Reel and the Swallowtail Jig.

*(Did Ken play Swallowtail differently than it appears in the YFA book?)* No, it was pretty much the same.

*(Were you also listening to CDs to learn tunes?)* Sometimes—not very often.

*(Which CDs do you remember learning from, and who was playing on them?)* My first fiddle tunes CDs were CDs from my family camp with the Wild Rhubarb band that I played with there. Those were some of my favorite songs, including ones I've already mentioned, and Hole in the Wall, and The Pillow Dance. That's a good one.

*(Were you playing for dancers at camp?)* Yes.

*(That sounds wonderful. Where is this Family Camp?)* In Tyler, MN-- it's a Danish Family Camp. It's a really old camp—my Dad grew up going to it. It has three camps—June, July, and August. Different people go to different weeks. I go to the June one. June camp is known for its band. The other camps don't have bands yet.

*(It sounds like Family Camp gave you an introduction to fiddling that showed you how it can fit into a community. You're very lucky there.)* Yes.

*(At YFA summer camp, you told me that after learning by ear and teaching yourself, you've gone back to a teacher and now take lessons from Laura Harada. Why did you decide to do that?)* I was losing my memories of tunes—my friend Ken was busy, and I needed a real teacher.

*(Is Ken in the Wild Rhubarb band?)* Yes.

*(When you went back to taking lessons, how did you choose a teacher, or even find one?)* One of my good friends also takes lessons from Laura, and they recommended her. She's a great teacher. She doesn't just say, "learn this song." She works on the bow grip, and form.

*(Those are things you can use in any tune.)* Yes. And now my lessons are 30 minutes, and I like that.

*(What I know about Laura is that she can play so many different violin and fiddle styles.)* Yes—whenever I play a tune I think she doesn't know, she'll just start to play it with me. She's so good.

*(What are your hopes for YFA? What do you like best about YFA?)* Well, I like that everyone's included in everything. It's hard to say what I'd like to change.

*(After Lisa Fuglie's great October bluegrass music, you know that the 2007 YFA jams will include your favorite fiddle music. See you there!)* OK.

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**Welcome, New YFA members & friends!**

Even if you missed October's Bluegrass fiddling workshop, it's not too late to join the fun. See the YFA News on page 2 for our 2007 schedule.

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## RUMOR HAS IT. . .

**HOT-** Lisa Fuglie's Bluegrass fiddling workshop at the end of October, which touched on improvising on breaks (using a pentatonic scale was one tip), playing fills in a song, and back-up techniques—lots of them! The workshop was a big hit.

**LUCKY** for YFA members who hated to miss last year's Klezmer Fiddle workshop because it conflicted with the Jewish Sabbath, YFA will offer another Klezmer workshop this spring—on a Sunday, not a Saturday. Sign up at the website.

Catie Jo Pidel and Kent Sommer were seen winning an award at the State Fair Fiddle contest this past fall.

RUMOR HAS IT that YFA members were present at the the Cedar Cultural Center's annual Celtic Fiddle Festival in November. The concert featured Kevin Burke, Christian Lemaitre, Andre Brunet and special guest Gilles Apap (classical violinist turned fiddler!) Find other cool Cedar events by checking the calendar at their website: [www.thecedar.org](http://www.thecedar.org)

Speaking of the Cedar, HOW MANY YFAers took advantage of the Cedar's annual Nordic Fest in September? It was brimming with fiddles and nyckleharpa (keyed Swedish fiddle). If you missed it, there's always next year's fest. Fiddles are COOL in Scandinavia...

PRESERVING THE TRADITION is the purpose of the film Black String Revival, now being made by a local filmmaker. In November, a crew filmed the African-American stringband Carolina Chocolate Drops in concert at the Cedar Cultural Center. This band features fiddlers Joe Thompson and Rhiannon Giddens. Joe is 86, Rhiannon 29. Their band is about preserving the black stringband tradition "knee to knee." Watch for the release of this exciting film!

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## Upcoming Events of Interest

### 2007 Grass Seeds Academy, MBOTMA Winter Weekend, Friday-Sunday, March 2-4, 2007.

The Minnesota Bluegrass and Old-Time Music Association's annual Winter Weekend at Radisson Hotel and Conference Center in Plymouth (I-494 and Hwy 55) will once again host the Grass Seeds Academy for young pickers and singers ages 8-18.

This year's faculty band is **Tangled Roots** [www.tangledrootsbluegrass.com](http://www.tangledrootsbluegrass.com), featuring Marty Marrone (guitar), Chuck Millar (mandolin & fiddle), David Tousley (bass) and Barry St. Mane (banjo). Chuck Millar has agreed to teach fiddle at Grass Seeds, so you lucky mandolin players will be taught by former Tangled Roots member Chris Silver. You can find out more about Chris at [www.chrissilvermusic.com](http://www.chrissilvermusic.com).

Space is limited to fifty students (ten per instrument). Register early, as they expect to fill up quickly (especially guitar and fiddle). Registration includes admission to the weekend festival and tickets for Saturday evening's 7pm feature concert. For more information about the Grass Seeds Academy, please contact Sandi Pidel at [grassseeds@minnesotabluegrass.org](mailto:grassseeds@minnesotabluegrass.org) or 763-784-5286. For registration only, call MBOTMA at 1-800-635-3037. Please be sure to leave your email address and phone number so we can get the music to you.

See [www.minnesotabluegrass.org](http://www.minnesotabluegrass.org) to find out more about the Winter Weekend, a GREAT place to jam!

## Music Around Town

Dulono's Pizza, 607 W. Lake St, Minneapolis, serves bluegrass and acoustic music weekends from 8 pm to midnight with no cover charge, and they serve a full menu of food as well. Hear your favorite local bluegrass fiddlers this winter:

Jan 5-6	The Blue Drifters (bluegrass)
Jan 12-13	Hello Stranger (bluegrass)
Jan 19-20	Bitter Ridge (bluegrass)
Jan 26	The Recliners
Jan 27	The Fish Heads (Duluth string band)
Feb 2-3	Drive Time (bluegrass)
Feb 9-10 (bluegrass)	The Middle Spunk Creek Boys
Feb 16-17 bluegrass)	Backroads Junction (contemporary
Feb 23	The Acoustic Company (bluegrass)
Feb 24	Tangled Roots (bluegrass)
Mar 2-3	The Bluegrass Pals (Iowa bluegrass)
Mar 9-10	Cousin Dad
Mar 16-17	Switched At Birth (bluegrass)
Mar 23	The High 48's (bluegrass)
Mar 24	The Chris Silver Band (contemporary
bluegrass)	
Mar 30-31	Blue Wolf (bluegrass)

## Other music listing websites:

For concert listings all over the state, check out Minnesota Bluegrass & Old-Time Music Association's site, [www.minnesotabluegrass.org](http://www.minnesotabluegrass.org)

Don't forget to keep checking the calendar of The Cedar Cultural Center, [www.thecedar.org](http://www.thecedar.org)

Jim Whitney's Twin Cities Acoustic Music Calendar is at <http://jimwhitney.com/tcamc>

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## YFA News

### UPCOMING YFA EVENTS:

Meet friends for fiddlin' fun. All events held at Tapestry Folkdance Center, 3748 Minnehaha Ave S., Minneapolis, MN 55406, 612-722-2914.



Jan 20, 2007, 10am-1pm Scandinavian Fiddling workshop

Feb 24, 2007, 10am-1pm Irish Fiddling workshop

March 17, 2007, 10am-noon, YFA JAM SESSION (first jam is free to newcomers)

April 15 (Sunday), 1-4pm, Klezmer Fiddling workshop

May 19, 2007, 10am-noon, YFA JAM SESSION

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### YFA Contact & Membership Info

To join YFA, register for workshops, or find out more about us, visit our website at [www.youngfiddlers.com](http://www.youngfiddlers.com)

For more information, contact: [youngfiddlers@yahoo.com](mailto:youngfiddlers@yahoo.com)

Young Fiddlers  
2161 County Road B West  
Roseville, MN 55113

YFA STUFF: T-shirt for \$15.00 plus S&H  
CD and Tune Book for \$20.00 plus S&H  
NEW MEMBERSHIPS: w/ t-shirt, tune book & CD:  
SINGLE \$40 FAMILY \$60 (2 or more)  
RETURNING MEMBERSHIPS:  
SINGLE \$25 FAMILY \$40 (2 or more)

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### THANK YOU, YFA FOUNDERS AND BOARD!

As 2006 draws to a close, we'd like to thank the founding teachers and parents of Young Fiddlers Association of Minnesota.

Twin Cities fiddle teachers Christine Whyatt and Lisa Fuglie started the idea. Thanks to Christine for her long hours of organizing other teachers, hosting meetings to brainstorm YFA's structure and schedule, and hosting board meetings. Thanks to Lisa Fuglie for her long hours in recording the YFA CD and laying out and publishing the YFA Tune Book!

Thanks to parent Kim Kelly Sommer for her long hours in compiling and keeping our membership database and website. Thanks to Kim's husband for designing the wonderful website. Thanks to YFA member Cody Sommer for designing our YFA logos. Thanks also to Kim for signing up members for YFA events, and for coordinating the delicious food served there.

Thanks to current and former board members Nelson Whyatt (our tireless first-year secretary, scribing minutes for each board meeting), Judith Eisner, and Sandi Pidel for all their work during YFA's crucial start-up period.

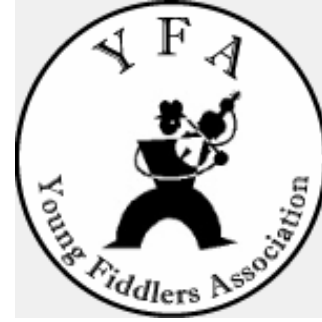
And finally, thanks to the current YFA BOARD:

Christine Whyatt, director  
Lisa Fuglie, assistant director  
Membership, Kim Kelly Sommer  
Teacher Outreach, Judith Eisner  
Newsletter/Outstate contact, Rachel Nelson  
Treasurer, Sandi Pidel  
Webmaster, Steve Sommer  
Parent Volunteer Coordinator, Candace Pilon

as of this writing, we still have  
board openings for:  
Secretary  
Publicity and Marketing

Interested parents and teachers, please contact us at [youngfiddlers@yahoo.co](mailto:youngfiddlers@yahoo.co)

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### Who Are We?

### Young Fiddlers Association of Minnesota

Providing Workshops & jam sessions  
for fiddlers ages 8-18

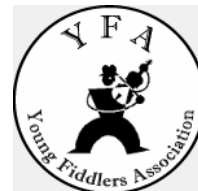
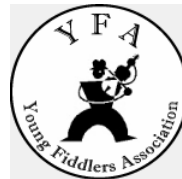
YFA provides a monthly gathering for young fiddlers from October-May each year, excluding December.

Three of these monthly gatherings are workshops taught by area teachers on specific fiddle styles. Jam sessions on alternate months allow young fiddlers to get acquainted, play together, and make those connections that may lead to playing partners or bands.

We seek to build a community of young fiddlers who can support each other and share their love of music.

YFA's website also has an information section listing area teachers who can provide mentoring/instruction on various fiddle styles.

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**WE'VE GOT MAIL!**  
in the YFA mailbox . . .

A letter from a web browser who found our site! He had a question about cross-tuning:

Hello,  
Exactly what all can be done in the GDGB tuning? Is this a good cross-tuning to use? Are scales as easy to play as the traditional GDAE tuning? I enjoyed the article on the website. I wished it had a little more info on this tuning with that really low B on the first string.

Thanks,  
Don Moore

Hi Don,

GDGB, or the more commonly played AEAC# tuning is interesting because it has the third of the chord in the top open string. What is this good for? It has a haunting sound when you double-note the open high B (or C#) with your second finger on the high G string. Commonly played tune in this tuning is "Drunken Hiccups" (see Tommy Jarrell or many other recordings to hear this.)

The best way to discover the fingering in this tuning, or any open tuning, is to try it yourself. Experiment. Tune your fiddle to GDGB. Play a G scale, and discover which fingers are now unison with the strings above. (It won't always be your fourth finger, the way it is in GDAE tuning--and that's the fun of it. New, often easier-to-finger double stops become easy and available in cross tunings.)

FINGERING: Using do, re, mi terminology, DO in GDGD is G. SOL is D. So your fingering on the low G string is exactly what it is in GDAE tuning. The fourth finger is unison with the next string, D. On the next string, D, you also finger as you do in GDAE, but--your 3rd finger is now unison with the string above, which is another G string. On that string, you can finger as you did the low G, but your 2nd finger will be unison with the top B string. Try playing a 2nd finger-open string double stop on the top two strings, G and B. It's a unique sound.

In the YFA workshop we used the GDGB tuning to play the tune I call "Shaggy Dog" which has a second part where people usually go, "HOO!"

"HOO!" along with the fiddle when it double notes that B note.

A good resource for classically trained note readers who want to explore cross-tunings is Marion Thede's The Fiddle Book, available at Homestead Pickin' Parlor and other fine folk stores. Thede notates the tunes she has collected in the Ozarks, and when those tunes are in cross tuning, she writes them twice: once as it sounds, and once for the fiddler to read easily, played and fingered AS IF you are still in GDAE tuning. The great thing about this book is that you can just do it (as opposed to reading it or talking about it), and I think playing is the quickest way to learn your way around new tunings.

In Thede's book, I recall a tune called "The Drunkard's Dream" in this tuning. She probably collected it from someone who tuned AEAC#, but the fingering will be the same in GDGB.

So experiment, and have fun!

Rachel Nelson

P.S. ON CHOOSING GDGB OR AEAC# TUNING: The fingering for GDGB tuning is the same as the most commonly played open tuning, GDGD (or AEAE), except for the top string. I use the lower GDGD and GDGB tunings to put less tension on my fiddle and increase its longevity. I also have "beater" fiddles that I tune up to AEAE, which is what is played in old-time circles, as most of these tunes are traditionally in the key of A. I just don't do that to my good fiddle.

Rachel Nelson

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