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13th Annual Kalamazoo Fretboard Festival Returns to the Museum March 2-3

The 13th Annual Kalamazoo Fretboard Festival, hosted by the Kalamazoo Valley Museum, features performances by stringed instrument virtuosos, instructional workshops for those who want to learn to play, and family-oriented activities. This yearly event is a salute to all stringed instruments – especially those that are crafted in Michigan. The Festival, which takes its name from the portion of a stringed instrument that allows a variety of notes to be played, will spotlight guitars, banjos, hammered dulcimers, ukuleles, and mandolins, along with musicians who use them and the craftsmen who make them.

The Festival kicks off on Friday, March 2, with a 6 p.m. concert by The Corn Fed Girls. Kalamazoo's beloved acoustic Americana favorite will enchant the audience with their earthy sound, innovative use of traditional instrumentation, and lush vocal harmonies. One part salty breakup, two parts bear hug, The Corn Fed Girls are an original acoustic Americana band from Kalamazoo, Michigan. Their sound is earthy and innovative, traditional instrumentation with lush vocal harmonies and a folky aesthetic. Members have played in many of the region's favorite bands over the years, including Knee Deep Shag, Daddy Long Legs, Red Sea Pedestrians, Doxie, Thunderbolt and Lightfoot, Sundog, and others. The Corn Fed Girls are a favorite on the Michigan folk festival circuit.

The festival continues on Saturday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. with free music, workshops, industry vendors, and more.

Food will be available for purchase at The Spot at Anna Whitten Hall, where performances, workshops, and demonstrations will also take place. The cafe will be open from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. and will serve snacks, beverages, and simple sandwiches.

Panelists for the 10:15 a.m. Coffee & Donuts with Luthiers Discussion Panel will have five minutes to introduce themselves and their art, and then the moderator will turn it over for audience questions. The panelists are: Kjell Croce with Elderly Instruments, Fred Tellier with FE Tellier Guitars, Ry Charters with Kal-Tone Musical Instruments, Rock Bartley with Rock Built Banjos, and Rob Doolittle with Kalamazoo Guitar Company.

A total of 15 bands will perform throughout the weekend:

Mark Sahlgren & the Fragile Egos take the stage at the Museum at 12:30 p.m. on Saturday, playing rootsy Americana tunes with stories and laughs. Stringband and bluegrass music has been a near obsession for Sahlgren his entire life. He has led his own band, Sweetcorn, for many years and has developed recording projects, produced music festivals, taught guitar workshops, and hosted the radio program Grassroots on public radio for over 30 years.

Bob Rowe and the Green Valley Boys perform on the Festival stage in the Museum at 2 p.m. One of the longest-running bands in Michigan and members of the Michigan Country Music Hall of Fame, Bob Rowe and The Green Valley Boys are widely known for their blend of traditional country, folk, and gospel music. They have performed for thousands over the span of many years

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and won numerous awards, accolades, and acclaim throughout the Southwest Michigan region and beyond.

Grand Rapids-based Mark Lavengood Band plays folk music at 3:30 p.m. Lavengood has toured the regional, national, and international music circuits for more than 10 years. Wearing a multitude of hats as multi-instrumentalist, singer/songwriter, band leader, mentor, active member of Michigan's Earthwork Music Collective, and emeritus member of Lindsay Lou & the Flatbellies, Lavengood employs his skills to engage and collaborate with communities through song and voice. He has released three LPs and a 7-inch vinyl under his own name in conjunction with several albums with Lindsay Lou. He is currently touring and promoting his projects while writing and recording new music.

May Erlewine, a folk musician from Big Rapids, performs at 5 p.m. with her bandmates Tyler Duncan, Eric Kuhn, Michael Shimmin, and Max Lockwood. One of the most prolific and passionate songwriters of her generation, May's music has touched the hearts of people all over the world. Her words have held solace for weary hearts, offered a light in the darkness, and held a lot of space for the pain and joy of being alive in these times. May began writing songs and playing them for people at a very young age. Her journeys have taken her all over the world; from street corners to renowned stages, May has performed for all walks of life. In her travels, Erlewine came to know the land and the pulse of the people. Her songs show a very real connection and concern with everyday folk.

Kalamazoo's The Moxie Strings, described as new-age contemporary Celtic, perform in the Stryker Theater at noon. The band includes violinist Diana Ladio and Alison Lynn on the electric cello. The Moxie Strings compose the majority of their pieces and arrange melodies from many traditions, resulting in a genre-blurring blend of catchy melodies and foot-stomping, rock-influenced rhythms. Their polished, high-energy show and unique sound are redefining strings' role in contemporary music and have quickly made the band one of the country's most promising instrumental acts.

Grand Rapids native Delilah DeWylde plays rockabilly at 1:30 p.m. in the Stryker Theater. She sings and plays the upright bass with Lee Harvey on electric guitar. Delilah DeWylde got her start in 2004. Just like rockabilly originators Johnny Cash, Bill Haley, and Carl Perkins, this Michigander cut her teeth on steel guitar-driven country in the style popularized by Hank Williams, Ernest Tubb, and Webb Pierce. But the draw of the big beat was irresistible, and over time, the band's approach has become sharper and tighter. Not self-consciously retro, Delilah remains committed to handcrafted American music that stands at the crossroads of creativity and craftsmanship, liberally drawing from honky tonk country, rockabilly, and surf music.

Portage resident Joel Mabus brings his folk performance to the Stryker Theater stage at 3 p.m. He picks a mountain banjo to accompany an ancient ballad, sings a witty song about modern life, plays a sweet Irish melody on guitar, swings a hot jazz number, and then reaches deep for a soulful expression of values in a troubled world. He tops it all with a fiddle tune or old Carter family song – all skillfully blended into a seamless flow. He has 24 albums to his credit, the latest being *A Bird In This World* (2015), original songs that take on the blues, and *Pepper's Ghost* (2013), an award-winning five-string banjo album. He has performed in concert with such folk music stars as John Prine, Joan Baez, and Tom Paxton, and has been featured at the top folk clubs and festivals.

Channing & Quinn of Grand Rapids perform at 4:30 p.m. in the Stryker Theater. Channing & Quinn are an indie folk duo who craft music that blends quirky with creepy, and theatrics with sincerity. In a live setting, the two do the work of several musicians by playing guitar, ukulele, accordion, drums, glockenspiel, banjo looping vocals, and even tap dancing all at the same time.

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Small Sounds (Family Performance) begins at 10 a.m. at Anna Whitten Hall. Small Sounds Big Beat Band will debut at the 2018 Kalamazoo Fretboard Festival, adding drums, bass, and more guitar than audiences have heard from Small Sounds in past shows. The performance will feature high-energy, interactive, and hands-on activity with catchy, quirky, and upbeat songs. The band's music spans genres of rock, pop, bluegrass, and more.

Boulevard Billies, a St. Joseph-based Americana, folk, bluegrass band, takes the stage at Anna Whitten Hall at 11:30 a.m. The Boulevard Billies are an acoustic trio that incorporates elements of various American roots music styles, including classic country, roots-rock, folk, and bluegrass, resulting in a distinctive sound that highlights over a century of musical experiences. Over the years, they have shared the stage with Drew Emmitt, Steep Canyon Rangers, Corn Meal, Pure Prairie League, Little Jimmy Dickens, Commander Cody, Peter Rowan, and the Dillards.

The Go Rounds perform at 1 p.m. at Anna Whitten Hall. The Kalamazoo quartet The Go Rounds has been a dominant force in the Michigan music landscape for the last five years, releasing four LPs, four EPs, and playing countless Great Lakes music festivals, including Wheatland Music Festival, Blissfest, Hoxeyville Music Festival, Earthwork Harvest Gathering, Farmblock Fest, Short's Anniversary XII, and Holler Fest. In August 2016, they released a new EP, I Promise I Won't Get Hurt, and have another EP ready for release in March of this year. They are also working on their next full-length, due out before the end of 2018.

Thunderbolt & Lightfoot, an indie folk duo from Kalamazoo, plays at 2:30 p.m. at Anna Whitten Hall. Their sound draws from the rich heritage of the folk revival, earthy and original, featuring finger-style guitar and close harmony vocals. With their sophomore release, Songs for Mixed Company, Thunderbolt & Lightfoot maintains the earthy, close-harmony vocal approach from their self-titled EP, mixed with a healthy amount of experimentation in the studio.

2018 Kalamazoo Play-In Contest acoustic winner Sarah Lynn Band of Paw Paw performs at 11 a.m. on the Museum stage. Sarah Lynn's music is a darker form of country. She brings both new and old country together for a sound that is very haunting. Sarah Lynn has played all around Kalamazoo, as well as Grand Rapids. Sarah has been playing guitar/singing ever since she was little. She always had a passion for music and writing stories, so she decided to bring the two passions together. Sarah's music will take you to another place.

2018 Kalamazoo Play-In Contest electric winner Cosmic Knot plays at 4 p.m. at Anna Whitten Hall. Cosmic Knot was founded in 2015 by bandleader Tom Wall. Members have either jammed or shared the stage with the likes of P-Funk All Stars Muruga Booker and Tony P-Funk Strat, Jazz Great Perry Robinson, Joel Cummins from Umphrey's McGee, and Rock & Roll Hall of Fame inductee Billy Davis. Teaming up with world-touring drummer Hayaman Tzach and the recording team for Bill Chrysler, frontman Tom Wall manifested Cosmic Knot's debut album, Inner Space, over the course of the past year.

Workshops will include:

Dan Geib's Bluegrass and Flatpicking Guitar, 2 p.m. in Anna Whitten Hall room 307.

Participants will learn about flatpicking strumming styles for the guitar as popularized in bluegrass music.

Exploring Instruments with Your Kid, 1 p.m. in room 306 at Anna Whitten Hall with Paul Bauer. Explore music and sound through the use of everyday items, electronic synthesizers, hand drums, and a variety of other instruments. No musical experience required. Paul will lead a

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discussion about sounds, music, and the types of instrument families, followed by different "stations" set up in the room that families can explore.

Right Hand Picking and Strumming Technique for Acoustic Guitar Styles at 11 a.m. in room 307 at Anna Whitten Hall with facilitator Matthew Borr. Participants are encouraged to bring their own instruments for a hands-on experience.

Fingerpicking Guitar: Styles and Approaches with Joel Mabus, 12:30 p.m. in Anna Whitten Hall room 305. Beyond the strum, there are many ways to pluck the strings of a guitar with the right hand. In this workshop, participants will look at simple pattern picking and more complex patterns, Kentucky Thumb Style (aka Merle Travis Style), blues and ragtime picking, chord melody style, and songwriting incorporating the fingerstyle guitar.

Navigating the String Wall, 3:30 p.m., Anna Whitten Hall room 308 with Jon Moody, Manager of Digital Brand Development and Product Development at GHS Strings. This workshop will cover the basics in terms of string materials, gauge, tonality, etc., and how they all fit together. At the end of the workshop, the attendee will be able to look at any string wall, cut through the marketing jargon, and make a decision based on the needs of their instrument.

Making Special Where Art and Music Meet, 11:30 a.m. in room 305 at Anna Whitten Hall with educator and musician Mike Krieglstein. This interactive lecture explores the connections between art, music, musicians, and society through the ages. What are the roots of music in evolution? Music doesn't feed or clothe us, but it's found in virtually every culture around the world. Understanding the social and philosophical history of music can help us find deeper meaning in our own art.

Basic Mechanics for Resonator Guitar, 2:30 p.m., Anna Whitten Hall room 306 with Al Bates. Participants will learn about the basic mechanics and tuning techniques for the resonator guitar.

Expand Your Solo Act: Electronics for Music with Joel Coburn, 4 p.m., room 307, Anna Whitten Hall. Participants are encouraged to bring their own electric or acoustic guitar to learn about the application of harmonizers, samplers, and guitar synths to live or studio recordings.

A total of 24 local vendors will also be on hand on the first and second floors of the Museum and at Anna Whitten Hall. Vendors include:

Broughton Music Center
 The Music Hop Kalamazoo
 Satellite Records
 Joyce Brumbaugh, Author
 Local Spins
 Jonathan Marshall Guitars
 Kalamazoo Sportswear
 FE Tellier Guitars
 Kalamazoo Bach Festival
 Iconic Images, LLC
 Crescendo Academy of Music
 Kalamazoo Valley Blues Association
 Sludge Factory Effects
 Great Lakes Acoustic Music Association
 Kal-Tone Music Instrument Company
 W. Michael Siegel – Luthier
 Grand Rapids Guitar Workshop
 Aaron's Music Service

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Elderly Instruments
Rock Built
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K'Zoo Folklife Organization
Kalamazoo Guitar Company
Heritage Guitar, Inc.
Kalamazoo Recycled Steele Amplifier Company

Related exhibits on display in the Kalamazoo Valley Museum include a ProCo exhibit and a Guitar Pick Guards exhibit. The evolution of ProCo, Inc. as a leading resource for professional musicians is told through this exhibit of images and artifacts from its 40-year history. Etching a Legacy gives Gibson Guitar enthusiasts a rare chance to see hand-etched, pre-production pick guards, including the iconic Hummingbirds, which were part of designer Snider Hartford's personal collection.

All Fretboard Festival events are free and open to the public.

The Kalamazoo Fretboard Festival is sponsored by the Kalamazoo Valley Community College Foundation.

The Kalamazoo Valley Museum is operated by Kalamazoo Valley Community College and governed by its Board of Trustees. Admission to the Kalamazoo Valley Museum is free.