

Fiddle Flashbacks: Fiddle Contest ?best in years?

From the August 15, 2003 Free Press and Economist

In what might have been the over-all best Canadian Open Old Time Fiddle Championship contest in recent years, the 53rd annual, Rotary-sponsored Shelburne event adopted a totally new format for its Saturday night (August 9) finals.

The format, said Rotary secretary Cindy Sabo, was more youth-oriented ?as it is truly a family event.? As well, the final acts were interspersed throughout with crowd-pleasing entertainment.

Rotarian Dennis Scace indicated the change would not have been possible in previous years as CBC Radio had virtually set the stage. ?Now we have more control over the time.? Before the show got rolling, he promised it would be more varied, more entertaining, and longer than before.

He was probably right. Friday's lead-in, featuring 120 fiddlers, didn't end until nearly 1:00 a.m. Saturday morning. The finals, including a rousing and almost incredible finale by a packed stage of fiddlers who switched styles, tempos and keys upon impromptu cues in unison, weren't over until about 11:30 p.m. Saturday.

By then, Shane Cook of Dorchester, Ont., had won the Shelburne Kinetite's \$1,500 award plus a Yamaha electric violin and a Town of Shelburne fiddler portrait. He had defeated Scott Wood of Fergus (second place) and Mark Sullivan of Bowmanville (third) in the Championship category.

Scott received \$1,000 from Yamaha Canada Music Ltd. Plus a Rotary Club trophy. Mark got \$500 from Dufferin Windows plus a Rotary trophy.

Also by the end of the contest, ages of competitors had ranged from 5-year-old Brendan Bawm of Toronto to 92-year-young Roma McMillan of Ottawa. And contestants had come from as far west as B.C. and as far east as New Brunswick.

Yamaha this year had replaced CBC Radio as a major sponsor. The withdrawal of CBC from the contest had resulted in what many in the attendance, including 53-year faithful attendee Agnes Brown, said was a more entertaining final night because of a more varied content.

Rotary secretary Cindy Sabo said the major change was inclusion of the age 12 and under finalists in the Saturday night show. Perhaps, but spectators noted they were treated to the novelty performances of Megan Fitzgerald (winner of Most Entertaining) and of 9-and-under winner Philip Provencher -- as well as to the interspersing of some solid foot-stomping fiddling by Calvin Vollrath along with championship-class step-dancing by his wife, Rhea. No one was predicting whether or not the new format will bolster attendance for the 54th event next year.

These are the winners of all categories:

Championship: 1. Shane Cook; 2. Scott Wood; 3. Mark Sullivan; 4. Chuck Joyce of London; 5. Mathew Johnson of Stratford; 6. (tied) Pamela Yakabuskie of Pembroke and Ian Hamilton of Coboe, Ont.

Duet (Bell Canada trophies and awards): 1. Linsey Beckett and Tyler Beckett of Kemble, Ont. 2. Krista Rosien and Steven Rosien of Pembroke; 3. Patrick Wieler and Erika Wieler of Brampton.

Novelty (McIntosh memorial trophy and Royal Bank awards): 1. Megan Fitzgerald of Maple Leaf, Ont. 2. Mathew Johnson; 3. Roma McMillan of Ottawa.

Junior Championship (18-and-under): 1. Greg Henry of Sombra, Ont., \$500 and Drury trophy; 2. Terri Surette of Salisbury, NB,

Mountford trophy and \$300 Ostic award; 3. Kyle Cook of Dorchester, ON, Hardick trophy and \$200 award.

Age 45-65 (Kinsmen trophies and awards): 1. Clifford Manley of Oshawa; 2. Margaret De Long of Embro, ON; 3. Terry Little of Parry Sound.

Age 19-45 (Burnside trophies and awards): 1. Paul Lenelin of Hanmer, ON; 2. Tammy Yakabuskie of Pembroke; 3. Kendra Norris of Staffa, ON.

Age 12 and under: 1. Lyndon Coulas of Round Lake, ON, Grant Bell trophy and \$300 Lions award; 2. Janelle Dupuis of Memramcosk, NB, Elmer Campbell trophy and \$200 award; 3. Patrick Wieler of Brampton, Ottawa & District Fiddlers trophy and \$100.

Age 9 and under (Shelburne Legion trophies and awards): 1. Philip Provencher of Oshawa \$150; 2. Emily Yarascavitch of Oshawa \$100; 3. Madeline Speller of London \$75. All 18 contestants in this category received the \$25 Ward Allen memorial award.

Age 65 and over: 1. Bob Arbuckle of Newmarket, McDowell trophy and \$200 Crewson Insurance award; 2. Bob Plant of Blind River, ON, Bob & Evelyn Hicks trophy and \$150 Dennis Scace award; 3. Keith Wilson of Abbotsford, BC, Bristol & Ivy Barber memorial trophy and \$100 award.

Roma McMillan received the Albert Mews memorial trophy as the oldest contestant; Greg Henry got the Johnny Mooring memorial trophy and \$100 award as the contestant under 21 with the most points.

Lindsay Whiting of Shelburne, in the 9-and-under category, received the \$100 Carr Gordon Ltd. Award as the contestant from Dufferin with the highest number of points.

The "most entertaining fiddler" of the contest, Megan Fitzgerald with her first-place novelty act, received the Invincible Vince Mountford trophy.

Had there been a trophy for fiddlers with the longest history of competing, it might have gone to Scotty McHardy of Brampton. He competed this year in the 65-and-over category, and had been in the competition when it all started in 1951.

Corporate sponsors of the 53rd annual event were Yamaha Canada, TD Canada Trust, KTH Shelburne Manufacturing, Bagin's IGA, Dufferin Mutual Insurance, Pete's Donuts, No Frills, and Johnson Controls.

By Wes Keller