

## MUSIC FROM THE CROOKED ROAD

Virginia Arts Festival

Roper Performing Arts Center

April 18, 2010

For tickets: (757)-282-2822

Hello, I'm Edgar Loessin with Loessin at Large.

Unfortunately, this troupe of string plucking musical artists was in town for only one performance. However, on some pretty spring week end you can head to southwestern Virginia and get on Highway 58, also known as The Crooked Road. Most of the folks who played and sang for us at the Roper are either from, or still live, in one of the small towns or communities that dot the three hundred miles of winding road. Out of these remote places have come an abundance of extraordinary folk musicians. What's more they are still there and will be quite happy to tune up the fiddle and play for you. Here's a chance to see a rare concentration of high-caliber musicians who bring to life some of the joyous tunes of our musical heritage.

The famed folklorist Alan Lomax called the area of Grayson County "the nation's richest breeding ground for national music." This tour pays homage to the whole region where the culture of old time music, that has influenced so many other styles, still survives and thrives

We learn a lot about the origin of the musical instruments the mountain folk play. Slaves brought memories of musical concepts and styles and introduced banjo-making skills. Guitars were aristocratic instruments until cheap factory methods of producing them were introduced after the Civil War. The same means of mass production had made the fiddle popular decades earlier. Today bluegrass uses these instruments plus the mandolin and bass and the technology of amplification. There's too much of the latter for my taste but that's another story.

These friendly old boys and gals deliver over two hours of non-stop foot tapping pleasure. They all blend together masterfully, but Wayne Henderson, Sammy Shelor, Kirk Sutphin and Eddie Bond are particularly memorable. So is vocalist Elizabeth La Prella whose haunting style is like an echo of long ago times.

Wayne, by the way, has a festival on the third weekend in June. Yawl are all invited, not only for the music, but for food at his house after the playing is over.

Brilliant Galax fiddler, Greg Hooven, was only 17 when he heard the question being asked of why there was so much music in the region. He thought for a moment and replied, "I think it may be because we like music better than football."

This is Edgar Loessin with Loessin at Large and I'll see you at the next opening..