

The following is a snapshot of Mark Sullivan's interview with some of BC's Canadian Grand Masters Competitors! Please note that some of the competitors were unavailable at the time, thus, they will be included in future newsletters. Good luck, everyone!

Sarah Tradewell – Hometown – Victoria, BC

Tell me about your playing. When did you start playing, who are your heroes, is it in your family, what kind of playing do you do, where do you play?

I grew up in Northern Saskatchewan playing piano and singing with my mother. I started learning the fiddle from Dean Bernier when I was eight years old. Some of the first tunes I ever learned were Don Messer tunes, so his music has been important to me throughout my time as a fiddle player. I played and listened to a lot of country music growing up, which is how I first learned how to improvise and play in a band with others. I've always loved the music of the East Coast, so of course Natalie MacMaster and Ashley MacIsaac are favourites as well. JP Cormier is probably my favourite multi-instrumentalist - his fiddle playing is incredibly smooth and his guitar playing is fantastic. I moved to Victoria when I was 15 and learned a whole new repertoire of tunes thanks to the wonderful BC fiddle players. There is a widespread love of Celtic music out here, which led me to explore that tradition more extensively. I play in an Irish session at a local pub called Spinnaker's as well as performing at the Irish Times Pub every month with BlackAngus. My fiddle has brought me a lot of opportunities to work in theatre. I was the fiddle player for Hank Williams: The Show He Never Gave and A Closer Walk with Patsy Cline. This let me explore the great fiddlers of 50's country and learn to be comfortable accompanying and soloing in that style.

You have recently been chosen to compete at the CGM. What are you most excited about? What does it mean to you?

I have attended the CGM for three years before this and my favourite part is always meeting and playing with all the fantastic fiddle players from across Canada. The CGM is a contest, yes, but it is also an opportunity for the Canadian fiddle community to come together and share in what we all love. I've made a lot of friends from across Canada thanks to this contest, and throughout the competing process everyone is really supportive regardless of placings. I love the adrenaline of competing, but the best part is jamming with all the talented fiddlers, sharing in tunes everybody knows and finding some new ones too!

Do you have anything upcoming that you would like to share with our readers? Are you performing somewhere or any other musical highlights coming up?

I'll be planning a new CD this summer as well as performing around Victoria. I'll be playing at the Irish Times Pub and at Butchart Gardens with BlackAngus throughout the summer. In September I'll be heading into my final year of my Music Performance degree. I'll be performing at the Coombs Jamboree in September, as well.

Deni Stone – Hometown – Quesnel, BC

Tell me about your playing. When did you start playing, who are your heroes, is it in your family, what kind of playing do you do, where do you play?

Continued over

I started playing fiddle when I was about seven years old. My hero and inspiration was my grandfather Roy Throssell, but I also had my other family members and some friends to help push and guide me (one of them being you, Mark ☺). When I was younger, I did pretty much everything that I could to learn and become better, and I have the Gavin Lake Fiddle Camp to thank for that because they have their yearly, week-long camp that provides musical instruction, jam sessions, workshops, etc. Another contributing factor was being able to travel around British Columbia to compete at fiddle competitions. I've always said that getting up on a stage to play in front of people and judges, should just be thought of like it is a jam session, because when you think past the fear, the judges, the people....a jam session is really all that a contest is.

You have recently been chosen to compete at the CGM. What are you most excited about? What does it mean to you?

I'm excited about the fact that the CGM has finally moved towards the west! Every year it has been in eastern Canada, which is fine, but it doesn't really get a lot of really good western fiddle players eager about coming. Being that the competition is in the halfway point of Canada, one) it'll be a new place to travel and spend some time in, and two) there'll be a bigger and better chance that we'll see more talented people from the West.

Do you have anything upcoming that you would like to share with our readers? Are you performing somewhere or any other musical highlights coming up?

As a matter of fact, I do have a special highlight coming up! Hopefully by the end of May/middle of June, my new (and first ever) album, "Perseverance" will be out and available for all my family, friends, teachers, and of course, the public. I'm really excited about this as it's my best work, and I really hope that the people who are fans of mine, will buy a copy and enjoy it!

Gabrielle Jacob – Hometown - Prince George, BC

Tell me about your playing. When did you start playing, who are your heroes, is it in your family, what kind of playing do you do, where do you play?

I've been playing the violin since I was a preschooler. I started learning the violin in the Suzuki Method with my mom as my teacher. I've been learning fiddle tunes from the very beginning. I enjoy playing with the Prince George Old Time Fiddlers on Thursday nights and have competed in numerous contests around B.C. In June, I will be travelling to Kelowna with my dad to compete in the contest. I play classical music as well and recently performed as a soloist with the Prince George Symphony Orchestra. In the fiddle world, I am learning Keremeos Waltz and would like to be able to play like Trent Freeman one day!

You have recently been chosen to compete at the CGM. What are you most excited about? What does it mean to you?

I am most excited to hear everyone else play. It will be really cool to hear new tunes and get new ideas. I am also excited to visit Saskatoon as I have never been to Saskatchewan. I am looking forward to meeting fiddlers from across Canada.

Do you have anything upcoming that you would like to share with our readers? Are you performing somewhere or any other musical highlights coming up?

I am going to St. John's Newfoundland in August, before the CGM, for a chamber music program!