

The Las Vegas Mandoliers Story

The Mandoliers began forming in 2004 with core members Dave Carroll and Lisa Fiorenza. The mission of the group has been to preserve a piece of American history by developing a mandolin orchestra for the state of Nevada.

At present we are the size of a chamber orchestra with our core number at five instrumentalists: One acoustic bass player, one guitar, one mandocello and two mandolins.



Mandolin orchestras are enjoying renewed popularity throughout the country today. Our style of music centers around the mandolin ragtime rage in the 1890's-1920's. We also perform traditional Italian Folk music, bluegrass and popular movie theme music and songs that featured the mandolin from our modern culture.

Because the history of the mandolin orchestras is seldom noted, we like to include a small commentary in our concerts on the origins and history behind the mandolin rage of the 1900's of early America. Here is a concise history...

Mandolin History in Early America 1900's

Mandolin popularity started in about 1880 when a Spanish troupe of students performing on bandurrias(similar to mandolins) played throughout New York. Italian immigrants copied the style and formed groups in New York and elsewhere on Neapolitan mandolins.



Pictured are traditional Italian Bowlback or Neapolitan mandolins circa 1890's.

From www.mandolincafe.com-

The mandolin, in the 1890s, was most popular in those "fashion-conscious eastern cities of Boston, Washington, DC, and Philadelphia, and also New York" . It was also popular in other cities such as Kansas City. It was so popular that, to give off a false impression that they were Society ladies, shop-girls would carry around mandolin cases.



From www.theflatpickpost.com/blogspot article by Lee Griffith 2007-

"In the 1890's, in Kalamazoo, Michigan, Orville Gibson designed a mandolin which was a radical departure from the mandolins which had been produced in Italy for hundreds of years. The Italian mandolins had a deep, bowl-shaped back similar to a lute. Orville's mandolin featured a very slightly arched top and back and a longer fretboard than that of the Italian models. Orville used two body shapes for his unique mandolins: the simple pear-shaped *A* model, and the *Florentine* style with fancy points and a scroll.



Small Mandolin groups were also popular in the 1920's. Two players on the left are holding Florentine style or "F" style Gibson Mandolins, at center back row is a mandocello.

In about 1910, the Gibson Company came up with a very innovative marketing plan. Gibson introduced an entire mandolin family, each member being a different size with a different range of notes. These instruments corresponded to the various instruments of the violin family. Gibson's mandolin family consisted of the mandolin, the mandola, the mandocello, and the mandobass. To promote these instruments Gibson introduced the concept of the mandolin orchestra. The mandolin orchestra could play the full range of orchestral music—all on these members of the mandolin family.



Rare photo circa 1915 with a mandobass on the left, mandocello on the far right.



Schenley String Orchestra circa 1920. Gibson mandolin player on the Left seated row next to a traditional Italian Bowlback Mandolin player. Mandocellos are on the far right. Center is a harp-guitar.

The Gibson Company implemented a program whereby music teachers, on a commission basis, would sell a host of Gibson instruments by organizing a local mandolin orchestra—much like “Professor” Harold Hill in *The Music Man*. Mandolin orchestras sprang up all over America, and most of them played Gibsons. These orchestras were quite a fad in American culture for about a decade, boosting Gibson’s bottom line considerably.



Early America Mandolin Orchestra circa 1918. All Gibson instruments



All girl mandolin orchestra circa 1912

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Please Mention Popular Mechanics

Images are from www.harpguitar.net



Mandolin clubs popped up all over America in the 1920's

In the 1930's the mandolin orchestra disappeared for unknown reasons. Some speculation has been the disfavor Americans had towards political activities happening abroad in Italy. Also other instruments were coming to the forefront such as the Big Band Swing instruments.

The mandolin re-emerged as a solo instrument in bluegrass bands with Bill Monroe's influence and virtuosity in the 1950's. In Las Vegas History, virtuoso Russian mandolinist, Dave Apollon, lead a troupe of mandolins strolling style in the Desert Inn Casino in the 1960's-70's.

Las Vegas Mandoliers Bios 2008

Dave Carroll, co-founder of the Las Vegas Mandoliers, is a multi-instrumentalist and luthier from Southern California. Dave performs on the mandocello, octave mandolin and occasionally a mandola or mandolin with the group. He also is credited for making most of the Mandoliers' musical arrangements. Dave traveled during a long career in the military, picking up musical influences from around the world. Dave's repertoire ranges from the folk, rock, and surf influences of California in the 1960s to truly ancient and exotic pieces he has collected from around the world. Dave has written numerous instrumental and vocal compositions. In his local workshop, Dave repairs all kinds of stringed instruments, constructs mandolin- and violin-family instruments on a custom basis. Dave's other musical projects include a local barn-dance band called Sagebrush Stringband and a traditional bluegrass band called Backward Glance.

Lisa Fiorenza, co-founder of the Las Vegas Mandoliers, is a mandolin player in the group. She has also contributed to some of the musical arrangements and the artwork for the Mandoliers. She has a love for ragtime as her first piano teacher, Richard Smith, was a student of ragtime great Uke Blake, and himself a pianist for the Jimmy Dorsey Band. She also performs in a swing band called Swingin' Sister, and a celtic trio called Celtic Cove. She teaches piano and performs on piano and organ for all services at Christ the Servant Lutheran Church in Henderson each weekend. Her grandfather, who was a mandolinist and bandleader, influenced her love for Italian Folk music for the mandolin.

Tom Flagg, mandolinist for the Mandoliers is originally from western New York, and has lived and played music in Southern Nevada since 1978. A multi-instrumentalist, he has played upright and electric bass, guitar, and mandolin with several award-winning bluegrass and acoustic music bands over the years, starting with Dry and Dusty in the early 1980s. He currently plays with The Yucca Mountain Boys (bass) and Stuck in Reverse (mandolin and guitar) bluegrass bands, the 112 and Then Some contra dance band (mandolin), and the acoustic trio Stewart, Flagg and Rhee (bass), in addition to the Las Vegas Mandoliers (mandolin). He has recorded three well-received CDs of bluegrass and acoustic fusion music with Junior Hot Cell and the Yucca Mountain Boys, and performed on trumpet and contra bass with the Las Vegas and Henderson civic symphonies. He also performs Western music as a cowboy singer/guitarist. Tom has a great love a traditional American music and a long-time interest in jazz, classical music, and old country, rock, and blues.

Carolyn Forester, acoustic bass player for the Mandoliers grew up in the Smoky Mountains of East Tennessee listening to folk, mountain, "hillbilly" and gospel music. She was trained, however, in classical piano and voice, but returned to her roots when she began playing the upright contra bass fiddle. She was a founding member of the women's "Ribbons 'n Straw" bluegrass band and played with them until they disbanded. She has played with the Mountain Music Band, and currently plays with the Backward Glance bluegrass band and the Sagebrush Stringband. She enjoys the variety of music with the Las Vegas Mandoliers.

Curt Jensen, guitar player for the Mandoliers, grew up in Alaska, loves music, the outdoors, animals, and is a 39-year veteran in the airline business. He started playing clarinet at the age of 8, later moved on to drums and tuba, and sang in local children's choir groups. Curt appreciates a wide variety of music genre; bluegrass, rock, country, classical, Americana, and music from countries around the world. He also plays guitar for local Contra-dances with two other bands, The "112, And Then Some" and the "Sagebrush String Band".

Las Vegas Mandollers Concerts

Las Vegas Guitar Society Concert 2005

Borders Books and Café 2006

Relay for Life Cancer benefit 2006, 2007,2008

Christ The Servant Lutheran Church Concerts 2006,2007,2008

Boulder City Spring Jamboree and Antique Car Show 2007, 2008

First Ladies of Nevada , Help of Southern Nevada Charity Tea 2006

Opportunity Village's Magical Forest Concert 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007

Siena Italian Deli 2007

Pignanelli's Pizza restaurant 2007

Health South Rehabilitation Center 2007

LDS Ladies Relief Society Lunch 2007

Del Mar Gardens Nursing Home Chrstitmas Concert 2005

Grand Court Retirement Christmas Concert 2006, 2007

Radio Play

Monday, April 9th, 2007 8:00am-8:30am Las Vegas time
Radio Airplay on KRFC 88.9 Fm Fort Collins, Colorado

Mandolin Radio on www.live365.com (on rotation)

Mandoliers Radio on www.live365.com

Recordings:

Mandolin Favorites 2006

Christmas Compendium 2007

Demonstration DVD 2008

Website

www.Mandoliers.com

Review Quotes

"We really enjoyed your group's performance last year and hope you can join us again." Chuck Dobbs, Entertainment Chairman for the South Valley Relay for Life.

"The Mandoliers music is so relaxing to listen to, and so enjoyable during dinner ..." Owner of Pignanelli's restaurant, Vicki

".. the music is really beautiful from the Mandoliers", Jill Lagen, Boulder City Chamber member

"The Cd is great! My father knows every song. Keep it up!..." Anna Castano (fan)

Article features

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