

## Fiddlers attract few fans

By Rex Henderson

It was a good old fashioned hoe-down this weekend for the contestants in the first North American Fiddle Championship. But for the producers of the event it was nothing but low-down.

About 125 fiddlers, including some of the best in the nation, gathered Friday, Saturday and Sunday in the arena of the Omaha Civic Auditorium. The sounds of "New Broom," "The Festival Waltz" and hundreds of other old-time fiddlin' songs filled the arena and the hallways around it.

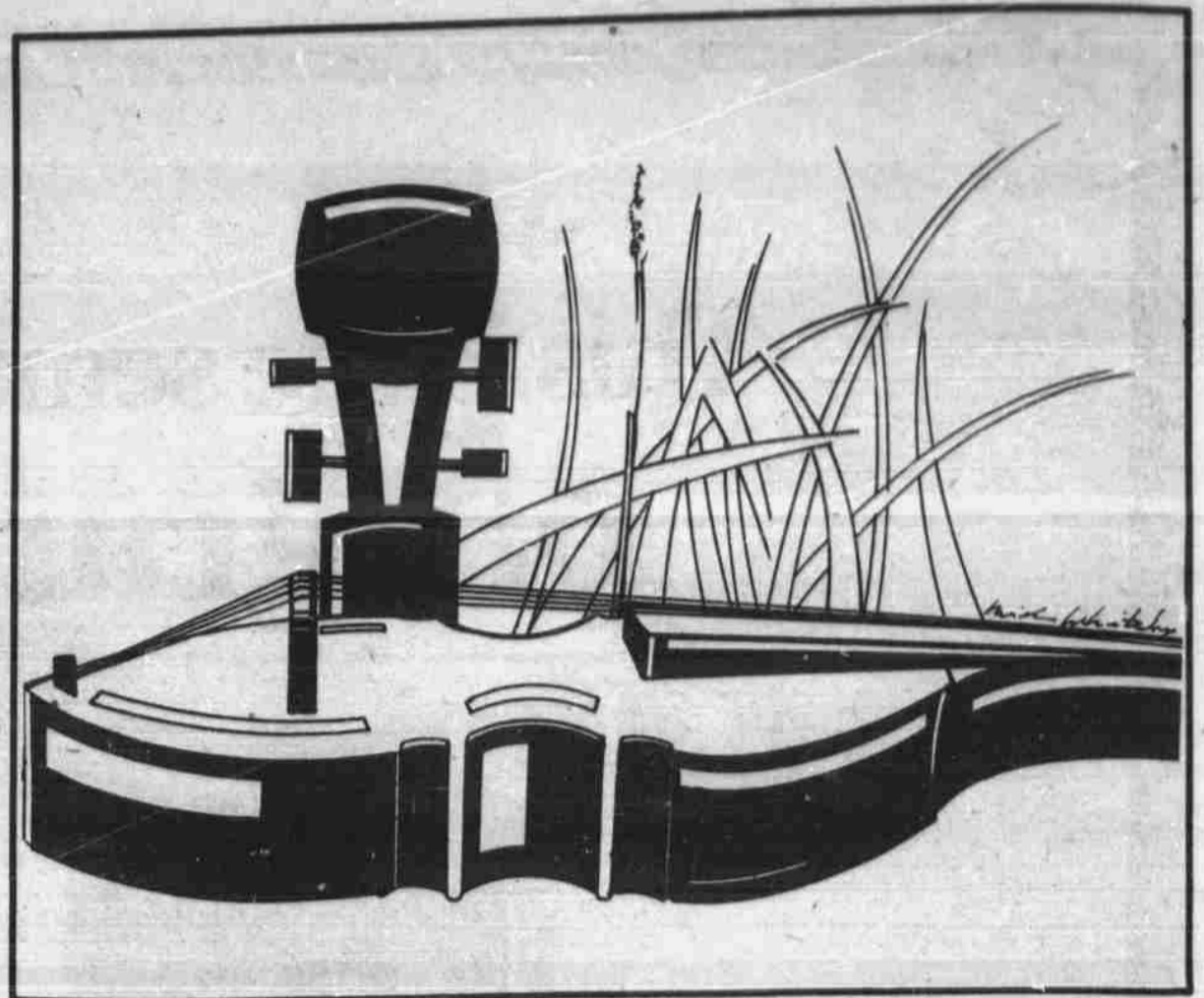
Unfortunately, that was all that filled the arena. The spectators filled about 300 seats Saturday afternoon in a cavernous 12,000 seat arena.

For some of the contestants, fiddling is more than just a hobby, or even a profession. For Mitchum it's a family tradition.

Mitchum learned to play sitting on his daddy's knee on the family farm in Batesville, Ark. He has made a living of fiddlin' for the past fifteen years, cutting ten albums in Nashville, playing at the Grand Ole Opry and at fiddle contests around the U.S. and Canada.

The oldest contestant, Frank Sonnenfelt from Oakdale, Neb., has been playing for 70 years.

"Get-ups" entertaining  
Sonnenfelt said, "fiddlin' is what keeps me alive."



## arts & entertainment

But the poor turn out couldn't suppress the enthusiasm of the fiddlers. Some big-time bluegrass artists, like Frazier Moss from Cookeville, Tenn., and local bands like Lincoln's Sandy Creek Pickers played between contestants.

Outside in the halls the contestants clustered in little groups for jammin', dancin' and a good time.

### Had audience bouncing

The fiddlin' ability of the contestants varied.

Mary McPherson, a sociology professor at Doane College in Crete has been playing for a year and a half. She bravely played three numbers, accompanied by her husband.

But people like Jeff Prichard, who came from Kansas to participate, had the audience bouncing in their seats.

One of the old pros of fiddlin', Johnny Mitchum, said fiddlin' has been booming the last 20 years. He attributed the poor attendance to the newness of the contest in Omaha.

Some of the "get-up" of the contestants was as entertaining as the music.

Contest director Laurier Birginal wore what he called "the only genuine bow-tie in the world."

Birginal sported a shirt with a yoke shaped like a violin and dangling from his neck, both front and back, was a violin bow.

Mitchum proudly displayed his home-made fiddle, put together with a hand-carved neck and a body made from an Armour canned ham tin.

### Four categories

For novices in fiddlin', the contestants are judged on their fiddlin' ability, (technical proficiency), ability to keep up a good, danceable rhythm, intonation and their expressiveness.

The contest was divided into four categories. The junior's division was open to those under 18. Senior's division was open to those over 65.

A ladies division and championship division was open to anyone.

## Earthworks trio separates

By Charlie Krig

It was old friends and free beer, almost like a family reunion. But under the surface of good times and good music was the reminder that it wasn't a marriage but a separation.

The Roxy Theatre was full last Wednesday night for the last public concert by Earthworks, a trio of Lincoln musicians. The mood was surprisingly light. No maudlin memories, no sense of defeat, just lively talk and excellent music.

Liz Lewis, the group's female vocalist, warned the crowd, "You guys gotta' keep talkin' or else we'll be real obnoxious." The audience complied and the musicians asked for more.

Dar Horrigan played his guitar and harmonicas with ease, throwing in a few quick comments between each song as if this was any other performance in a bar rather than a movie theatre.

Even Steve Hesh, the trio's most reserved member, seemed at ease knowing that Earthworks had one week left. From August 29 to September 1 they will record in Kansas City.

Horrigan said he will be back in Lincoln to do some solo singing. For Lewis and Hesh it will be off to San Francisco to

whatever fame their music can continue to build.

But Hesh said he and Lewis won't remain a duo. In time they'll find a third partner "for ease of work and so we can do more things," he said.

But the group will never be the same. "No matter how far the miles, I'll still love you," sang Horrigan and Lewis. During the song they exchanged warm smiles and after the song they embraced emotionally.

Still, the emotion didn't detract from the music. Their style, a kind of bluegrass-blues characterized by extremely tight vocals, could give and take with every selection.

Through it all, the audience was loose. People exchanged addresses, renewed old acquaintances, shared the cups of beer and brown-paper-bagged liquor. There was laughter and conversation but an obvious dedication to the music echoed by frequent applause.

"Tonight's going to be hysteria," Lewis said before the concert. But it was a respectful affair. Probably because the audience knew Earthworks so well and they admired Lewis when she told them, "You've all heard these songs so many times before. When you recognize them, sing along and we won't be so lonely."



Photo by Steve Boerner

In dim lighting with free keg beer, Liz Lewis played her last performance as a member of Earthworks in a crowded Roxy Theatre last Wednesday night.

## Auditions begin, play dates posted

So you want to be a star?

The UNL Theatre Department is holding auditions for the four first-semester main stage and Studio Theatre productions. Auditions are from 2:30 to 5:30 p.m. and 7 to 10 p.m. today and Tuesday.

However, all interested persons must sign up for a specific audition time. To do this, applicants should check the bulletin boards in the lobby of Temple Building, 12th and R. Streets. Prospective actors should note the particular audition requirements set by each director.

First semester plays on Howell's Stage will be *Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare, directed by UNL Theatre Department Chairman Rex McGraw, and *Travesties* by Tom Stoppard, directed by William Morgan (a UNL theatre professor).

The Studio Theatre selections are Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*, directed by Harley Lofton, and *Reynard the Fox*, a children's theatre piece by Arthur Fauquez and directed by Douglas Street. Lofton and Street are UNL graduate students in the theatre department.

Street also is conducting auditions for *On The Spot*, a class devoted to rehearsal and production of several small musical shows. Class size will be limited to six to eight students who can register for one to three hours of credit for participation in the class.

Auditions for *On The Spot* will be from 7 to 10 p.m. on Aug. 29 and 30, but try-outs are by appointment. A sign up sheet is on the bulletin board in Temple Building.

## up and coming

### Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery

Art Shop  
Watercolors by W. Donald Boe, Omaha.  
Union Program Council  
East Union Program Council movie,  
*The Sting*, Aug. 28, East Union Great  
Plains Room, 8:30 p.m.

Welcome Wingding, Sept. 1, afternoon and evening on the plaza north of the Nebraska Union.

### Nebraska State Fair

Mac Davis with comedian Don Rice III, Sept. 2, UNL Sports Complex, 8 p.m.

## Artist draws promising picture

Describing himself as one who's "been the route himself," Gary Kamenicky said he has plans to ease some of the struggling artist syndrome in Lincoln.

Kamenicky owns Flight, 118 North 14th St. The store is a head shop that presently thrives on the sale of smoking paraphernalia, but it will take on a new look in the coming month.

"We will move the head shop downstairs, enabling us to turn the main store into an art gallery," Kamenicky said. "It will be an outlet for local artists, mostly students, and we hope to explore all mediums, including photography, sculpting, jewelry, and painting."

Kamenicky expects to have a group of six judges, including himself, examine the works and determine what goes into the gallery. This is necessary because the gallery will handle several art forms in a limited space, he said.

"We want to take a fresh approach with the gallery," Kamenicky said. "Hopefully, we'll have a system in which we rotate stock once a month, yet try to play it by ear as it progresses."

Kamenicky said his reason for opening the art gallery is to help artists, especially those who've had no outlet for their work.

Being a combination gallery-head shop, Kamenicky explains that moving the head shop downstairs is necessary to not offend anybody.

"Actually the head shop will be our prime money maker and play an important part in keeping the gallery open," he said. "But in time we hope the gallery will catch on and be able to support itself."

"We have a good contract that protects the artist and the gallery," Kamenicky said. "We are taking only 20 per cent commission, and I feel our set up is one that artists will really appreciate."

Kamenicky plans special features by artists and to have some do work in the gallery along with their exhibits.

Prices at the gallery will range from a few dollars to a few hundred dollars. Kamenicky said he hopes to invite people who normally buy art — bankers, lawyers, and doctors — to visit Flight. But he said he thinks it will attract anyone interested in unique and creative art in all forms.