

Sayre to play antique, unusual instruments

By Cindy Wostrel
Staff Reporter

Ever meet a man who plays a saw with a cello bow?
Chris Sayre does.
He said he puts the saw between his knees to play it. He described the sound it makes as a high-pitched wailing sound, like the sound of an

opera singer past her prime or a sick cat.

Sayre, 36, plans to play some of his antique and unusual instruments at Summertime Nebraska.

"I like all kinds of musical sounds," Sayre said. "For me, a lot of the new instruments just don't have that (likable) sound."

So, he turns to antique instruments

and reproductions of them.

Playing antique instruments allows Sayre to combine his two loves, history and music.

Sayre, who spent two years at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln studying music theory, said he plays a lot of ethnic music -- everything from Swedish, French, Irish and Hawaiian to 1920s and 1930s African-Ameri-

can bottleneck.

He plays traditional music with not-so-traditional instruments, he said. Like a on a saw.

Or playing French music on an English or German instrument or Irish music on an Italian instrument.

Sayre, who was in a high school rock band, said his musical family helped spark his interest in traditional music.

His oldest brother liked folk music, and that affection rubbed off on him, Sayre said.

At about age 20, he said, he went to Boston, where he saw young people playing traditional music.

"I always kind of associated it with older people," he said, but seeing them fueled his desire to play the music.

Now, he said, "I just can't seem to give it up."

He said he limits the number of instruments he owns to 12 because he doesn't have enough time to practice them. He is "generally just self-taught" on about 10 instruments, he said, and will never stop learning new techniques.

"Each instrument has been sort of an adventure," he said.

During the summer, he performs for weddings, programs in Antelope Park and other events.

During the school year, Sayre travels to about 350 schools, he said, teaching even die-hard rock 'n' roll fans about the antique instruments.

Sayre performs Friday at 6 and 7 p.m., Saturday at 12:30 p.m. and Sunday at 4:15 p.m.



Michelle Paulman/Daily Nebraskan

Chris Sayre uses a cello bow to play a tune on a saw. The music sounds like an opera singer past her prime or a sick cat, Sayre said.

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