

## INTERNATIONAL MUSIC ORGANIZATION RETURNS TO CHICAGO

Having been founded in the Windy City in 1957, for several days this July the Fretted Instrument Guild of America will once again call Chicago its home as hundreds of members of the organization from the United States, Canada and overseas converge on the Hilton Indian Lakes Resort in Bloomingdale to take part in the 53<sup>rd</sup> annual FIGA convention.

While FIGA - a nonprofit organization - embraces all fretted musical instrument including the guitar, mandolin, ukulele, banjo and other ethnic instruments, a quick glance will reveal that a large percentage of its members share a common appreciation of the instruments of the jazz age - particularly the four-string banjo - as well as the ragtime, jazz and swing styles which were shaping America's musical identity in the 1920s and 30s. The public is invited to share in this wonderfully eclectic mix performers and musical styles during three special concerts which will be held on July 22<sup>nd</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>.

Concert performers are varied and range from seasoned veterans to the youngest musicians who carry on the musical traditions which are part of FIGA's mission. Particularly notable among these two bookends are National Four-String Banjo Hall of Fame members Buddy Wachter, Georgette Twain, Dave Frey and Dave Marty who will be performing in concert juxtaposed to youthful banjo groups such as the *All Stars Youth Banjo Band* from Houston and the *STL BandJos* from St. Louis.

With jazzy banjo soloists, such as Peter Mezoian, and bands well represented, the truly unique aspect of these concerts becomes evident when groups such as the Von Bernewitz family, Martha's Mandolins, Ludwig Kalbrunner and Kurt von Eckroth, and the All Frets Orchestra take the stage presenting music from classics to Broadway on instruments such as the mandolin and the seldom heard zither. Fans of hot jazz of the 1930s will marvel at the technical wizardry of guitarist Ross Hubbell and his trio while aficionados of the days of vaudeville will delight in the music and humor of Canada's banjo-ukulele sensation, Mel Collie.

Annually, the FIGA Foundation awards educational grants to aspiring young musicians and youth oriented musical programs. Although still in their teens, grant recipients Cody Clausen and Nathan Hanna each have developed into fine solo performers and will be returning to their FIGA roots, performing in concert during the convention. Another FIGA youth initiative comes in the form of the KABAMM program which, led by Houston's Buddy Griffin, will unite youngsters from all over the United States performing in concert on the FIGA Chicago stage.

During three evenings of formal concerts over 40 acts made up of nearly 200 musicians will be entertaining. Additionally, during the day and late evening hours, casual performances and jam sessions - all open to the public - will take place throughout the hotel property.

FIGA Convention 2010 concerts will be held in the Trillium Ballroom of the Hilton Indian Lakes Resort at 250 W. Schick Road in Bloomingdale. Tickets are \$8 for Thursday, July 22<sup>nd</sup> and \$10 for Friday or Saturday, July 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> (\$25 for all three nights) and may be purchased at the door or in advance by calling 312-735-5335 or by emailing: [katemple@uchicago.edu](mailto:katemple@uchicago.edu).



