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PENNSYLVANIA DUTCH TRADITIONAL MUSIC FILLS THE AIR AT THE KUTZTOWN FESTIVAL

The music hardly ever stops at the Kutztown Festival, one of the nation's leading folklife festivals.

“Music was always an important part of life for the Pennsylvania Germans and it has a very special place in their heritage. Some of this music originated in Germany and came over with the German immigrants in the 18th and early 19th centuries, but much of it was created as they settled in America. All of the music represents a unique expression of a wonderful culture that is German in background but is strongly influenced by a pioneering American experience,” according to Festival Executive Director Dave Fooks.

The music is exceptionally varied and ranges from folk ballads and brass ensembles to sacred music for worship sung a cappella. There are even numerous popular sing-along ditties that the Pennsylvania Germans (better known as the “Pennsylvania Dutch”) created just for fun and have sung for generations.

In the 19th century, fiddling became strong among the Pennsylvania Dutch and it is still important today. Fiddling was often associated with hoedown dancing which involves young and old, and over the years this music and dance program has become one of the most popular attractions at the Festival.

More music, more fiddling, more singing and more dancing will be part of the 2005 Kutztown Festival which runs from July 2 through July 10 at the fairgrounds in Kutztown, PA.

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PA Dutch Music At The Festival – 2

Again in 2005, an instrumental and vocal ensemble from the Rhineland-Pfalz region of Germany will provide toe-tapping, traditional style music throughout the week for Festival audiences. Vocals will be in the Rhineland dialect, which is closely related to the Pennsylvania Dutch dialect spoken in eastern Pennsylvania.

Two strolling Pennsylvania Dutch bands entertain throughout the fairgrounds, and Lester Miller and The Country Folks fill the air with fiddling, foot-stomping music and jigging and hoe-down dancing. Miller also leads a “square dancing free-for-all” Wednesday and Friday evenings, inviting visitors to join in.

Both acclaimed folk singer and storyteller Ray Owen and the celebrated Blue Mountain Gospel Express are returning to the Festival this year. Keith and Karlene Britzenhof who present familiar folk songs in the Pennsylvania Dutch dialect will also be on stage.

The beautiful sounds of an a cappella choir, modeled from the Ephrata Cloister, will perform centuries-old music of the Mennonite community. Acclaimed fiddlers will present music that has dazzled audiences at the nearby Lyons fiddle festival.

All of this music is in addition to the Festival’s program of folk art and crafts, quilts, folklore, living history, children’s activities, and Pennsylvania Dutch food.

Festival admission for adults is \$10; seniors, \$9; children 12 and under, free. Free parking is available in the Festival parking lots and a free shuttle service will be available. For additional information on the 2005 Festival, visit the Festival website at: www.kutztownfestival.com

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