

Doug Van Gundy

Elkins WV
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Artist's Biography

Born:

12 March 1966, Lewistown, Pennsylvania

Current Residence:

Elkins, West Virginia

Description of the art form/tradition:

I play the fiddle in the east-central West Virginia style, and I am particularly influenced by the music of the Allegheny Highlands. The music of the Hammons Family of Pocahontas Co., Mose Coffman of Greenbrier Co., and Henry Reed of Monroe Co., all retain an archaic quality that reaches back into the British Isles and northern Europe, and have figured importantly in my development as a musician. The fiddle music of this region was frequently a solo music, and consequently often features a droning, lonesome quality that reflects the isolated, highland quality of the landscape. This is my favorite music in the world.

Accomplishments or Milestones:

- have recorded and released three CDs of traditional fiddle music, one with Jake Krack and two with my duo, *Born Old*
- have taught traditional WV fiddling at the Augusta Heritage Workshops six times
- have taught traditional WV fiddling workshops in West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Ohio, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, New York, Pennsylvania, and Ontario, Canada.
- have performed with *Born Old* at many venues in West Virginia, Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York and Massachusetts
- My music (and performances) have been featured in several television and film productions including advertisements for ABC Television and the documentaries Lo and Behold: Reveries of the Connected World and Recovery Boys.
- Have performed twice at the Kennedy Center
- Have performed solo fiddle concerts in throughout the east and northeast portions of the US and in England and Wales.
- Am currently a Master Artist in the West Virginia Humanities Council's Folklife Apprenticeship Program.

Artist's Statement

I learned to play the fiddle 25 years ago from Mose Coffman (b. 1905) of Greenbrier County, WV through an apprenticeship program of the Augusta Heritage Center of Davis and Elkins College. Through Mr. Coffman's patience and generosity, I became the living repository of a fiddle tradition that has been a part of Appalachian culture since before West Virginia was a

state. Through the current West Virginia Folklife Apprenticeship Program, I am passing that tradition on to a very worthy steward in Annie Stroud. This music belongs to her, and to me, and to all West Virginians, and the whole of the American people as a part of the rich mosaic of American Culture as a whole.

I grew up in east-central West Virginia surrounded by the playing of such wonderful musicians as Woody Simmons, Dewey Hamrick and the Currence Brothers, but I didn't take much notice of it, nor value it in any real way. Now, in my 50s, I am proud to carry on the traditional music of West Virginia, and to have the opportunity to pass it on to others through individual teaching, workshops and performances throughout the state and beyond.