

Shindig on the Green

For more than 40 years, Shindig on the Green has been one of the finest cultural traditions in the city of Asheville and across WNC, Philyaw said. An outdoor concert held “along about sundown” on summer Saturdays in the city’s downtown, the shindig presents traditional Appalachian music and dance to thousands of local residents and visitors from around the world, stimulating awareness and appreciation for the cultural heritage of the region, he said.

Shindig on the Green began in 1967, but it traces its origins back further, to the advent of its parent festival, the Mountain Dance and Folk Festival. The festival was started in 1928 by noted musician and folklorist Bascom Lamar Lunsford to spread the beauty and quality of Southern Appalachian music and dance traditions. It was out of that tradition that Shindig on the Green was founded by Jackie and Earl Ward, Bob Lindsay and Jerry Israel, with the help of other Folk Heritage Committee members, as a place for musicians in the area to gather and play.



Asheville’s Shindig on the Green has been showcasing Appalachian music and dance for more than 40 years. (Photo courtesy of Erin Brethauer, Asheville Citizen-Times.)

The Folk Heritage Committee is a group of 18 dedicated individuals who work throughout the year to produce the Mountain Dance and Folk Festival and Shindig on the Green, Philyaw said. The committee operates under the umbrella of the Community Betterment Foundation (a part of the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce). The committee is independently responsible for raising all the funding needed to produce both events.

Shindig on the Green always has featured the best of the region's traditional bluegrass music, and that focus is personified in the event's longtime house band, the Stoney Creek Boys, Philyaw said. Along with that group, the shindig features all the other staples of Appalachian culture – old-time string bands, big-circle mountain dancers, clog dancers, smooth dancers, ballad singers and storytellers. The weekly events also are well known for attracting other talented local musicians who gather nearby to participate in their own jam sessions, and the best of those musicians are handpicked to perform onstage during the shindig.

The Shindig on the Green recently completed its 44th season, a series of eight Saturday night events held on the newly minted Bascom Lamar Lunsford Stage at the new Pack Square Park. The concerts had been relocated to nearby Martin Luther King Park for three years while the new facilities were constructed.

(Some of the information above was provided courtesy of the Folk Heritage Committee and Carol Rifkin.)

Folk Heritage Committee member Glenn Bannerman accepted the Mountain Heritage Award on behalf of the committee.

WCU's Mountain Heritage Awards are presented each year in recognition of outstanding contributions to the preservation or interpretation of the history and culture of Southern Appalachia; or in recognition of outstanding contributions to research on, or interpretation of, Southern Appalachian issues.



Glenn Bannerman (foreground), a member of Asheville's Folk Heritage Committee that produces Shindig on the Green, accepted the Mountain Heritage Award on behalf of the committee.