

Sisters Folk Festival to host free concerts at park

Sisters Folk Festival will serve up a tasty — and varied — menu of free music this summer at Fir Street Park.

The three-show series, all on Thursday evenings at 6:30 p.m., will include:

- July 13, Joan Soriano from the Dominican Republic performing with his band an authentic brand of “bachata” music.

- July 27, the Tennessee bluegrass quartet The Barefoot Movement.

- August 10, the Colorado honkytonk band Halden Wofford & the Hi Beams.

Sisters Folk Festival received a Southern Arts Exposure Grant through the National Endowment for the Arts and Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation to bring Joan Soriano (pronounced Jho-Ahn) and his band to Central Oregon.

As part of the grant, the concert will also feature a dance workshop to teach traditional dance of the Dominican Republic and bachata music. The Afro-infused rhythm that permeates Soriano’s music has made him a favorite among dancers. The workshop is scheduled for 5 p.m. on the day of the show.

Born in the rural countryside near Santo Domingo, the Dominican Republic, Joan

Soriano fashioned his first guitar from a tin can and fishing line, and has never looked back.

Bachata is guitar-based music born in poor neighborhoods and is essential to Dominican culture, drawing upon a variety of influences from Africa, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean. Soriano’s clean, feathery guitar sound — which punches out rhythmic lines — is a bachata signature.

He began to get work as a session player in Santo Domingo at the age of 13, but his charisma and talent threatened to upstage the stars he accompanied, so it was only a matter of time before the talented youngster seized the limelight. Joan preserves bachata’s roots and expands on them in a rare combination of new and authentic, and he plays guitar with equal parts romance and grit. Joan is the star of Adam Taub’s new documentary, “The Duke of Bachata.” The album “El Duque de la Bachata” won the Best World Beat Album of 2011 at the Indie Acoustic Project Awards. He has performed throughout North America and Europe.

On July 27, the bluegrass quartet The Barefoot Movement will perform.

The Barefoot Movement is as down-to-earth as their intention for members of their audience: sit back, relax, take your shoes off, and stay a while. All the worries and frustrations of the world melt away as this acoustic band takes listeners back to a simpler place and time. Whether you’re seeking emotional ballads or rip-roaring barn-burners, you can expect a collection of music that offers something for everyone.

In September 2014, they received a Momentum Award, naming them Band of the Year by the International Bluegrass Music Association.

The “movement” can be traced back to the teen years of singer-songwriter and fiddler Noah Wall, of Oxford, NC. Just as she had begun penning her first compositions, she met mandolin-player Tommy Norris during their senior year of high school. With the addition of versatile guitarist and singer Alex Conerly in 2013, and most recently, Katie Blomarz on the upright bass, the lineup was complete with all the elements that make

up the Barefoot sound: lush harmonies, thoughtful instrumentation, and memorable melodies.

They have been selected as showcase artists at both the International Bluegrass Music Association and the Americana Music Association conferences and were first runner-up at the 2013 Telluride Bluegrass Festival’s New Band Competition

On August 10 the series concludes with the return of Colorado honkytonk rockers Halden Wofford and the Hi Beams. Veterans of the Sisters Folk Festival, Halden and band performed twice in Sisters to rousing applause, with their hard-driving, rocking approach to great original music. Halden Wofford & the Hi Beams ride out from the cutting-edge cow-town of Denver, Colorado. Rootsy and real, neither revivalist nor retro, the Hi Beams’ brand of country music is as boundless and electrifying as America itself. Equal parts Hank Williams and Johnny Depp, front-man Halden Wofford pours forth a potent mix of

rocked-up honkytonk, Western swing, Dylanesque originals and spaghetti-western epics.

There is no creative limit to the songwriter, illustrator, author, storyteller and singer. But Halden has met his match in the Hi Beams. Each outrageous tale he spins is met by the whine and wail of the steel guitar, the furious double-neck electric guitar and mandolin, and the relentless thump of the upright bass and drums.

From Red Rocks to rodeos, the Fillmore Auditorium to the back of a flatbed truck, Prairie Home Companion to performing arts centers, Halden Wofford & the Hi Beams deliver an unforgettable and original night of American music.

For summer concert series and artist information, visit sistersfolkfestival.org. SFF encourages patrons to bring blankets and low-back chairs, as seating is not provided. All shows start at 6:30 p.m., are free and open to the public, and picnics are encouraged. Fir Street Park is located in downtown Sisters at 150 N. Fir St.

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