

Front Porch Music Festival at Town Hall Theatre

By Lou Fancher

Town Hall Theatre Company's ongoing collaboration with the Front Porch Music Festival brings an exciting roster of local acoustic musicians to the historic downtown venue on Aug. 2. Appearing in the third performance of the Lafayette-based Front Porch Music second season, the one-night-only show opens with singer/songwriter Joe PETERS warming up the crowd in the lobby bar at 6 p.m. Moving from the lobby into the warm, intimate theater space, the full production begins at 7 p.m.

First to take the stage and welcome audiences eager to enjoy close proximity to the artists, are five local musicians who craft a unique program offering folk, Americana, bluegrass, blues, country, jazz, and traditional acoustic music. The range is noteworthy, and a feature Front Porch co-founders Austin and André Hurst established early on, when the casual jam sessions began—on their Lafayette home's front porch, appropriately. Now a non-profit organization, Front Porch offers educational workshops and monthly Open Mic night's in addition to concerts.

On Aug. 2, the show begins with accordionist Sarah Gronquist joined by guitarist Mark Gill. The duo will set a lively tone with gypsy jazz and swing, after which guitarist and singer/songwriter Eric Smith will launch into country and bluegrass covers and original tunes with bassist Kerry Hays and percussionist and vocal-

ist Laura Dorman. Lafayette-based Mike Danese, who dove into his long-time love for guitar upon retirement, contributes a storyteller's approach, with songs based in humanity and connective themes that render feelings of harmonic unity.

The special guest artists for the evening are five members of the Berkeley-based band, Charlie Torch. Each a master bluegrass artist in his or her own right, the band's multigenerational old-time style fiddlers include Chad Manning, Jasper Manning, Jayna Manning, Tyler Stegall, and Paul Knight.

Chad Manning and his wife, Catherine Manning, founded and operate the Manning Music school that has several hundred students. Chad Manning began playing fiddle at age eight, and has performed with artists such as David Grisman and Laurie Lewis. During his teens, Manning's musical interest infected his parents—his father began playing bass, while his mother, picked up the piano. Shortly thereafter, his siblings joined in and the family band toured to local fairs and other events. He also started teaching and found special thrill in passing along the fiddling legacy to people of all ages.

Catherine Manning was a classical musician who performed as a violinist with orchestras and appeared primarily in concert halls. She took up fiddling as a student of Manning, her soon-to-be-spouse. Intrigued with learning music by



ear, instead of reading notes on sheet music, she became a proficient artist and instructor in the fiddling genre.

The couple's original jam sessions with friends and students they taught out of their El Cerrito home laid the groundwork for the teaching studio they eventually opened in Berkeley. The school's curriculum has expanded beyond fiddling with the addition of guitar, banjo, mandolin, ukulele, Dobro, music theory, and voice teachers. During COVID, when the school was closed, scheduled performances were canceled, and classes held only on Zoom, they countered the isolation with outdoor, backyard get-togethers and live-streamed the shows.

That kind of energy—local, intimate, upbeat, and community enriching—is exactly what the Front Porch showcase aims to affirm and amplify at Town Hall. With local established and emerging musicians sharing their art through performance and mingling with audience members before and after the show, the opportunity strengthens bonds and creates new friendships. Who knows what might happen? If the stars align, the festive evening might even result in a person, young or old, pursuing a long-buried or just-discovered musical passion.



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HIGHEST SOLD PRICE:	\$6,500,000	\$5,500,000
LOWEST SOLD PRICE:	\$750,000	\$1,080,000

	1ST QUARTER	2ND QUARTER
TOTAL HOMES SOLD:	17	34
DAYS ON MARKET:	9	15
AVG. SOLD PRICE:	\$1,943,000	\$1,985,000
HIGHEST SOLD PRICE:	\$2,800,000	\$2,800,000
LOWEST SOLD PRICE:	\$1,200,000	\$1,200,000

	1ST QUARTER	2ND QUARTER
TOTAL HOMES SOLD:	33	61
DAYS ON MARKET:	22	14
AVG. SOLD PRICE:	\$2,272,000	\$2,229,000
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Yoga studio Yoga Village



Photo Elaine Borden Chandler

Valerie Moore holds her new sign in her Lafayette yoga studio Yoga Village.

... continued from Page 2

Moore teaches several different levels of Vinyasa yoga, a popular variety that emphasizes flow, and the

more uncommon Buti yoga, which blends yoga, high intensity interval training, plyometrics, cardio, and tribal dance. "It's really fun," said Moore, before demonstrating several athletic, rhythmic moves to help reduce tension and release energy, before standing up beaming. "When we blast the music, it is not a relaxing class at all."

Moore has been enjoying these first couple of months getting to know her new regulars and first members, but she isn't done yet. She is already looking to the future to evolve Yoga Village even further. In the short term, there is going to be a Saturday morning all ages class for families. In the long term, she wants to create a community for mindful families where both parents and kids can learn. "For a long time I've thought, 'Wouldn't it be magical if I could go and take a class from a really good teacher and at the same time my kids nearby were also doing yoga or something mindful?'" After saying this, she looked around the studio with hope and determination before turning back. "That's what we're striving toward. And we're starting here."

Yoga Studio is located at 3416 Mount Diablo Blvd Suite B and classes can be found at <https://yogavillagecafe.com>.

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4

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