

Texas Fiddling Makes it to the Big Apple



The Doc Wallace Trio performing a breakdown at a New York University concert this October. Pictured from left to right are Daniel Levy, David "Doc" Wallace, and Dana Scofidio.

by Barbara Clark

Old-time Texas-style fiddling has been David Wallace's passion ever since his father took him to the World Championship Fiddlers Festival in Crockett when he was eight years old. David was simply "blown away" by the masterful fiddling of artists like Shorty Chancellor, Dale Morris, and Jimmie Don Bates. After seeing a

few more contests, David decided to become a fiddler himself—a decision that has taken him everywhere from Hallettsville's

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Knights of Columbus Hall to New York City's Carnegie Hall.

David was born in Slidell, Louisiana, on August 6, 1970, to Charlie and Marilyn Wallace, both native Texans. (Charlie's great-great-grandfather, Stephen W. Blount, signed the Texas Declaration of Independence). By 1972, the Wallace family had moved to their present home in Spring, Texas, where a young David listened to his father play Bob Wills tunes on a fiddle he had bought in college.

At the age of twelve, David and his sister, Sheryl, started taking fiddle lessons from Michael Weise of Houston. According to David, "Michael's a great teacher because he makes you learn a tune exactly the way a great fiddler like Benny Thomasson or Terry Morris played it. He won't let you get by with any funny business until you're good and ready—and watch out if you're out of line!"

After high school, David studied classical violin and viola at the University of Houston, the Mannes College of Music, and New York City's prestigious Juilliard School, where he earned his doctorate in 1999. Juilliard requires their doctoral candidates to give a lecture recital, and David took a big chance when he sub-

mitted a proposal for a Texas-style fiddling concert to the notoriously highbrow Juilliard faculty. As David recalls, "Fortunately, Mark O'Connor's first album with cellist Yo-Yo Ma had just hit the top of the classical charts, so the doctoral committee agreed." The recital was a huge success, and David's carefully researched 370-page thesis on Texas-style fiddling won Juilliard's Richard French Prize, the school's highest honor.

Armed with his newly minted degree, "Doc" Wallace continued his career as a musician in earnest. Although he gets his fill of Bach and Beethoven as a classical performer—he plays in chamber groups, solo recitals, serves on the Juilliard School's faculty, and earns much of his living as a Teaching Artist for the New York Philharmonic and the Lincoln Center Institute—he still gets his kicks performing old-time fiddling for appreciative audiences. In 1999, David formed The Doc Wallace Trio, featuring David on fiddle, Dana Scofidio on electric guitar, and Daniel Levy on acoustic guitar. The group performs widely throughout the New York region, and will be giving educational concerts for Young Audiences of Houston at Houston's Museum of Fine Arts in

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May 2002. The trio's recently released CD, *Live at the Living Room*, contains their soulful, energetic renditions of standards like "Dusty Miller," "Cotton Patch Rag," "Wednesday Night Waltz," and "Sweet Georgia Brown."

The Doc Wallace Trio's unique blend of Texas-style fiddling and swing suits the talents of the all three musicians to a "T." David calls Daniel "the first guitarist I've met outside of Texas who can swing like Jerry Thomasson." He also has plenty of praise for his other guitarist: "Dana's the most creative improviser I've ever performed with. He truly lives by Johnny Gimble's motto, 'Never play it the same way once!'"

Following the tragic terrorist attacks of September 11, the music of the Doc Wallace Trio has played a substantial role in keeping the spirits of New Yorkers high. Thanks to an anonymous donor from Texas, the trio has been able to distribute copies of *Live at the Living Room* to firefighters, rescue workers, and families who lost loved ones in the attack.

When the Doc Wallace Trio produced *Live at the Living Room* last August, they decided to print "WARNING! This music will make you happy" on the disk. From every report, the CDs are doing just that. As one New Yorker recently wrote, "I absolutely love the CD! I've been sporadically happy since I received it . . . This reviewer not only gives the CD two thumbs up, but has to give two big toes up as well!" *Live at the Living Room* is available for \$15.00 plus \$3.00 postage and handling from David Wallace, P.O. Box 20670, Columbus Circle Station, New York, NY 10023, or by writing to: docwallacetrio@aol.com.

Barbara Clark is an editor at Reader's Digest Select Editions in Pleasantville, New York.

obituary

We received notice of the death of Mr. R. V. Colclazer. Mr. Colclazer passed away on Aug. 30, 2001. Please give and remember in thought and prayer.

