



The San Francisco Scottish Fiddlers

starring
Alasdair Fraser

May 17 at 7 p.m. Veterans Memorial Theatre, Davis
May 18 at 7 p.m. Glaser Center, Santa Rosa
May 19 at 1 p.m. Freight & Salvage, Berkeley

Tickets and info: sfiddles.org

The concerts

Prepare to be thrilled when Alasdair Fraser and the San Francisco Scottish Fiddlers take the stage for their annual high-energy, family friendly concerts. Led by Fraser's virtuoso violin, dozens of fiddlers – backed by cellos, percussion, piano and guitars – will take you on a rollicking musical exploration of traditional tunes played with a big orchestral sound you won't soon forget. Tickets at sfiddles.org.

The players

Alasdair Fraser is one of the greatest exemplars of Scotland's fiddle-playing tradition, not only a virtuoso but a musical ambassador whose warmly expressive playing, mastery of his instrument and deep understanding of the genre has inspired musicians on both sides of the Atlantic.

Born in Clackmannan, Scotland, in 1955, Alasdair began taking classical violin lessons at the age of eight, enduring much teasing from schoolmates at a time when carrying a fiddle case around was considered far from cool. Driven by the love of the instrument and the tunes he heard at home, he persevered, and the musical journey was under way.

In his teens Alasdair played with dance bands and began gathering the compositions of great fiddling forebears including Niel and Nathaniel Gow, William Marshall and James Scott Skinner. He went on to win – twice – the Scottish National Fiddle Championship, and continued playing even as his studies led to work as a petrophysicist with British Petroleum, which took him to California in 1981.

A few years later, Alasdair realized that he was in the wrong job and went on to follow his passion for music. The journey led him to teaching as well as performing. He is the founder and director of the Valley of the Moon fiddle camp, fiddle courses on the Isle of Skye and in Spain; and Sierra Fiddle Camp, near his home in California.

Alasdair's musical partnerships include duos with pianist Paul Machlis and guitarist Tony McManus, and his acclaimed band Skyedance. He has also guested with The Chieftains, The Waterboys, Itzhak Perlman and the Los Angeles Master Chorale, and appeared on innumerable television broadcasts. He and his fiddle have also been featured in numerous movie and television productions, from Ken Burns documentaries to *Titanic*, *The Last of the Mohicans* and *Treasure Planet*.

Since 2003 Alasdair has partnered with cellist Natalie Haas, restoring to contemporary prominence "the wee fiddle and big fiddle" partnership that flourished in 18th-century Scotland. Their debut album, *Fire and Grace*, was voted Album of the Year at the Scots Trad Music Awards 2004.

The San Francisco Scottish Fiddlers formed in 1986 around a nucleus of musicians devoted to learning and playing the joyous, moving traditional music of Scotland. No numbering around 200 members, it is an inclusive group with members who play not only fiddle but cello, bass, percussion, piano and guitar – as well as the occasional flute, harmonica and, in one case, the musical saw.

A core group of members has remained from the beginning, while new players, often in their teens or younger, join every year. The "fiddle club," as longtime members call it, offers instrumentalists of all ages, backgrounds and levels of proficiency, to play with and learn from each other. A significant number of young players have gone on to study at Juilliard, Berklee and other renowned music conservatories, and have established themselves in professional careers. But they always consider the Fiddlers to be their musical family.

The San Francisco Scottish Fiddlers meet monthly to play favorite tunes and learn new ones. Their repertoire over the years has expanded to include the music of Brittany, Galicia, Scandinavia and North America, while remaining rooted in the Scottish fiddle forms of dance, pipe tunes, and song.

The highlight of the Fiddlers' year comes each spring when, under Alasdair Fraser's direction, the group rehearses for and presents a three-concert series in the greater Bay Area.