

Ten Great Years

On April 8, 1994, about thirty people met at the Black Forest Community Center with the idea of playing and hearing live music; a place where local folk musicians could play their best stuff in front of a listening audience. Sue Coulter brought her PA system, Marcia Hall brought brownies, and everyone paid a buck to get in. Murry Stewart, who, true to his Scots ancestry, rarely parts willingly with money, dipped into his pockets to cover the difference between the gate and the rent. It was informal, amateurish, and so much fun that we did it again two weeks later, and every second and fourth Friday of the month thereafter. We called it the Black Rose Acoustic Society because Murry liked the sound of the name "Black Rose" and the "Acoustic" part would scare away people with electronic keyboards.

That August, at the ripe old age of four months, we heard of Duck Baker and Molly Andrews playing at the Dublin House and convinced them to come play for us for a whole \$75, thus becoming our first featured act. In September, we became a membership organization. On October 7, we held our first special concert, with Tim and Mollie O'Brien; tickets were \$10, members paid \$6. For the show, we bought 20 folding chairs to augment the Community Center's supply, and when stenciling the chairs, we all came to the sudden realization that our acronym was the name of a woman's undergarment.

In January 1995, BRAS incorporated as a non-profit organization and grew slowly but steadily over the next several years. In 1997, KRCC and the Colorado Springs *Independent* bestowed their Community Weaver award on BRAS for its role in creating community. That's when we realized BRAS had become more than a club that put on concerts for the community. It had become a community — a place where friends meet, share their love of music, brownies and bad jokes. Our common thread is our appreciation for music that's not pre-packaged and shrink-wrapped for Wal-Mart, but shaped by hand by real people.

In ten years, we've had 223 Open Stage events with over 650 open stage acts, from rank amateur to seasoned professional, five to eighty-one years of age, and a host of fine featured acts. We've had special concerts with Blue Highway, Jonathan Edwards, Pat Donohue, Mason Williams, John McCutcheon, Bryan Bowers, Colcannon, David Wilcox, Roger McGuinn, Front Range, The Bluegrass Patriots, Laurie Lewis, The Rhythm Brothers, Tommy Emmanuel, Cheryl Wheeler, Phil Volan & Cindy Greene, Stephen Bennett, Karla Bonoff, Robin & Linda Williams, Mike Marshall & Chris Thile, Norman Blake, Small Potatoes, Tim & Mollie O'Brien and the O'Boys, Beppe Gambetta & Carlo Aonzo, Druha Trava, Andy M. Stewart, bohola, Tom Paxton, Tish Hinojosa, The Waybacks, Tom Rush, Steve Gillette & Cindy Mangsen, Northern Lights, and others.

Since 2000, 636 students have passed through our classes and workshops. We've awarded over \$5000 in music scholar-

**Come join us at the
BLACK FOREST MUSIC SOCIETY**

*Acoustic music - Bluegrass, Folk, Country,
Celtic, Swing - any type that doesn't require
electricity.*

FRIDAY, APRIL 8th
 7 - 9 PM: Concerts/Open Stage
 9 - Midnight: Open Jam Session

BRING AN INSTRUMENT, BRING A FRIEND,
OR
JUST COME OUT AND LISTEN!

BLACK FOREST COMMUNITY CENTER
 Black Forest Road
 (Near intersection of Shoup Road)

\$1.00 Admission

For more info or to sign up to perform, call Hope Kressmer at 495-0858, or Charlie Hall at 495-9664.

Original flyer announcing the Black Forest Music Society, courtesy of its creator, Hope Grieszer. "Black Forest" and "Music" were switched to "Black Rose" and "Acoustic" after the flyer was printed.

ships, donated over \$2000 and many hours of work to improving the Black Forest Community Center, and our members have volunteered countless hours to such community groups as the Boys and Girls Club, performing at nursing homes and Pikes Peak Hospice. Our 1997 benefit concert raised several thousand dollars for local homeless shelters. We've been the model in the formation of three other acoustic music organizations in the area: the Mountain Acoustic Music Association in Woodland Park, the Cañon Rose Acoustic Society in Cañon City, and the Buffalo Grass Acoustic Society in Peyton.

Some things are different today, some not. Ten years ago, our events had a friendly, welcoming atmosphere, and they still do. Our membership fees have never changed. Our post-show jams — which at one time were so popular that some of us wound up playing in the men's bathroom — faded as shows have run longer, but have new life now at our Benet Hill offices.

It's been a great ride. Here's to the next ten years.

Charlie Hall