



Oregon Bluegrass Association
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Bluegrass Express

PORTLAND JOINS

The Handsome Ladies

When Christine Wittmeyer came to Bluegrass, she almost immediately found herself in a wonderful long jam among some of the Northwest's most traditional bluegrass players. It made an impression that probably has guided her musical tastes -- and led her directly to coordinating the Portland chapter of The Handsome Ladies.

Christine's dad "was crazy about music," and introduced Christine to a range of musicians, including Doc Watson, the Wiley-Lesley Dixie Band and David Grisman. As a camp counselor, she learned the obligatory camp songs on the guitar.

In 2008, her mom had her partner, John Peary, taught her how to play "any five-strings" on the upright banjo and introduced her to the Northwest's bluegrass scene. Then he went fishing for most of the summer and left Christine to explore the banjo scene and experiences of bluegrass and jams.

One evening at the festival in Seaside, Washington, she wandered into Christine Clark Hallway's camp, where Chuck and Christine Beck invited her to sing and play. She stayed for hours -- getting total immersion in the foundations of bluegrass music. Christine has been singing and playing the mandolin ever since. There of

keeping the tempo of a band, playing mostly all male weekly jams has not only helped her with her banjo chops but also has taught her how to project her voice above fiddles, banjo and mandolin players.



Christine Wittmeyer

Christine, a music addict with a challenging work schedule, has also served as an OBA board member and co-edited the Bluegrass Express with John for six years.

What's all this about Handsome Ladies?

But when she met members of The Handsome Ladies at festivals last summer and read about the group's goals

and their commitment to traditional music and teaching jam etiquette, she was willing to add a new project to her busy life. She joined The Handsome Ladies and eagerly offered to coordinate the next public, open-air, Portland chapter.

Portland has a variety of opportunities for beginning bluegrass musicians -- from "Blugrass for the Novice" on after jams throughout the summer city. "But," she said, "The Handsome Ladies is something different."

For her, it's a good answer to the question, "What happens to novices who improve beyond the beginner stage? Where can they go to step it up? The jams organized by The Handsome Ladies are the time and place for that."

She echoes the sentiments of The Handsome Ladies founder Jane the Cowy Edmonds article by saying, "If you join jams with the same people at the same level, you'll get stuck." She sees The Handsome Ladies jams as a place for women to push themselves and challenge their abilities.

There are rules!

As Jane's article explains, The Handsome Ladies set some explicit expectations for jam etiquette. There's a heavy emphasis on jam etiquette, so women

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