



The *IDAHO FIDDLER*

Published by the

IDAHO OLD TIME FIDDLERS ASSOCIATION

May 2024

VOL. 61 NO. 5

District 8

Hello from District 8. April showers bring May flowers. Unfortunately, we have to look carefully to find the flowers that have been covered by the snow showers. Looking carefully at our surroundings is something that we have all been taught as we grow up. It is sometimes called situational awareness and can be applied to all parts of our lives especially to our music. Conditions change when we play inside or outside. We sometimes change sound systems or have to add wind screens to our microphones depending on where we are playing. We even use wind screens when we play inside but don't really need them. Well, maybe they help with some of Darryl's sound effects. Maybe someone noticed that Windy Bill was joining us and didn't want to take any chances with the microphones. Could just be that we lost so many wind screens when we took them off that we started to tape them onto the microphone so we would have enough when we needed them. Microphones have always been one of those things that we have to pay attention to for various reasons. Twenty or thirty years ago we had half a dozen microphones, and they were all different. Each had to be adjusted every time we played and had to be readjusted when a different player stepped up to the microphone. After we got a grant for sound equipment our first purchase was for a set of four Shure SM-57 microphones. The 57 is preferred for instruments and at that time most of our music was instrumental. We had two SM-58s for the vocals and that worked for a long time. Recently we started to use all 58s and have been performing more vocals than instrumentals. This has worked but has also made us more aware of another situation. Depending on the sound system, the number of microphones may change. We generally don't have a microphone for each instrument or singer. We typically use three stands and four microphones. One stand includes a side mount so the singer can amplify their preferred backup instrument. This rarely works as well as it should because the SM-58 needs to be very close to the instrument to pick up the sound and the rest of the backup players seem to play louder to compensate for not having a microphone. Sometimes the backup can't hear the rhythm and the timing gets lost. Sometimes we can't hear the chord changes or can't identify the correct chord. We tend to call these situations a train wreck. We also have situations that lead to a physical wreck when we need to move people up to a microphone to change instrument breaks. If you are standing close to a microphone and someone else needs that microphone for their break, you have to be able to back away and the next person needs to be able to move up. Choreographers shouldn't be needed to make this happen smoothly. If it is not your break, back up. If your break is next, stage yourself closer so you can make a smooth transition. Pay attention to who is around you and anticipate their movements. Let's restrict our train wrecks to the 97 and the 9. Happy fiddling from all of us here in the SE corner.

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