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Birch Creek Music Performance Center, Inc.

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For Immediate Release

Birch Creek Celebrates Growing Musicians for 40 Years!

2015 marks a major milestone for Birch Creek Music Performance Center as it begins its 40th year of concerts, which showcase some of the world's top artists in percussion, steel pan, symphony and Jazz. All come to be part of the music Academy's faculty, to teach and mentor outstanding young musicians through Birch Creek's unique performance-based experience.

For over a year Birch Creek's staff, Trustees, and volunteers have been planning a variety of delightful experiences for the public as it tells its story through "Fun Facts", concert night campus tours, Alumni gatherings, special programming and a "retired" instrument garden.

The entire season will honor co-founders Jim and Fran Dutton's vision of what Birch Creek has grown to be when it began in 1975 with just 11 students and faculty "housed" in used trailers and tents circled behind the Dutton's modest A-frame near Egg Harbor. Jim, who died in 1999, loved to say that with everyone having to share the one bathroom, "you almost had to make an appointment to use it!"

Jim was a renowned musician and head of the Percussion Department at the American Music Academy in Chicago, teaching and mentoring such students as Harold Jones who became the famous percussionist for Count Basie. Jim even persuaded Harold to venture up to Door County frequently to perform and offer Master Classes to students.

Jim's dream was to offer outstanding young musicians considering a career in music, the combined benefit of performance-based instruction from top professionals as well as doing so in a quiet, inspiring rural setting. And he did just that, first naming it the Birch Creek Farm Music Academy.

Forty years later Birch Creek can celebrate his vision as hundreds of students have gone on to perform and teach at the highest levels of the music profession. His insistence on the faculty interacting continuously with students all day, every day, to nurture and share real-life

experiences as professional musicians has proven to be the bedrock of Birch Creek's amazing success as well as creating an atmosphere where every day is a Master Class for students.

The performance-based commitment sets Birch Creek apart from other music camps, as students perform alongside faculty in the Symphony session and in short preludes prior to the Percussion/Steel Band, Jazz I and Jazz II faculty concerts our audiences love in the evening. As Jim Dutton insisted, "we have to let the public know that the Stars come out at night!"

Birch Creek students additionally perform throughout Door County as many as a dozen times during their two week stay, appearing at events, public concerts and venues through the Academy's Ambassador program.

Dutton's purchased the farm and land Birch Creek now occupies in fall of 1976 after Jim walked through the 1895 barn and pronounced its acoustics "perfect!" The barn, farmhouse, 1908 granary and other structures became Birch Creek's new home. Throughout the fall, winter and the spring of 1976 two young carpenters, Tom Allen and Tom Birmingham who later formed Great Northern Construction in Door County, worked furiously to rid the barn of "straw and rodents" rebuilding it in preparation for its first public concert on July 4th, 1976. The students that year had an interesting schedule: study and practice each morning for evening performances and in the afternoon, nail siding on the barn to insure concert goers were not drenched during rainstorms.

The granary and farmhouse were refurbished to offer housing and a kitchen. The barn's milking stalls became "practice rooms". A local school's girl's privy was donated and became the box office, named "in honor" of Fran Dutton who still loves to tell of its origin! A storage shed morphed into a two-bed "dorm" and was renamed "Woody's Woodshed" in honor of the two concerts Woody Herman and his Thundering Herd performed for Birch Creek's tenth anniversary.

A large milking parlor in the barn became the Green Room where visiting artists such as Herman, Dave Brubeck, the Brubeck Brothers, Buddy Morrow who led the Tommy Dorsey orchestra, etc. waited to go onstage.

During this 40th Anniversary celebration season, Birch Creek will especially honor its long-serving Faculty members who create the magic that is Birch Creek, especially those serving more than 20 years, including one returning for his 37th time.

The James Dutton Memorial Concert Barn has undergone many expansions and upgrades and now seats 500---although one concert in recent years boasted 601 attendees, although no one recalls where they all sat! A Gazebo acts as Birch Creek's hub on campus and is surrounded by dozens of sturdy memorial and honor benches built by its dedicated volunteer organization, The Associates, formed in 1989. Perhaps that tells us where many people sat.

The amazingly dedicated Associates have raised thousands of dollars through the years to support the Academy students, especially through scholarships, by organizing events, sales of treats and products and its most popular and famous Popcorn Stand. They continue to hold many jobs on campus as ushers, sales persons, etc. but are happy that one duty that preceded the barn floor being cemented, that of raking its gravel before every concert, is a thing of the past.

Capitol Campaigns through the years have expanded the number of buildings, including Juniper Hall, faculty housing, the maintenance building, more student dorms, housing for Counselors, an administration building, and even refurbishing and reassembling an older Baileys Harbor motel after it was moved in sections to the campus for use by summer staff. Campus tours, guided and self-guided, will be offered all season with legendary stories in abundance for the dozen structures Birch Creek now enjoys.

Birch Creek invites Door County residents and visitors to join the celebration. The party will last for Eight weeks and delight newcomers and old friends alike as it celebrates 40 years of Growing Musicians.

Concerts are held Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights at 8pm with students Performing in a pre-concert in the Gazebo at 7:30 and during intermission in Juniper Hall.

The Percussion/Steel Band session runs from June 18–27, Symphony July 2–July 11, Jazz I July 15-25 and Jazz II July 26-August 8. Tickets are still only \$29 for general seating and \$34 for premium seating. Parking is abundant on the west parking field with provisions on the east parking area for handicapped parking. Handicapped washrooms and entries are available.

You may call the Birch Creek office at 920-868-3763 to purchase will-call tickets or buy them at the box office on concert nights. For more information connect with us at www.BirchCreek.org or through Facebook or Twitter.

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