

Yogi Baird brings unique movements to violin playing

By Ryan Anderson
Lake Houston Sun

Playing the violin and/or fiddle is difficult and takes years of practice to master.

Playing the violin while standing on your head, or playing with your legs behind your ears, takes a special kind of violinist.

That is where Highlands resident Yogi Baird comes in.

Baird has played the violin for 43 years and has performed professionally since 1971. Somewhere along the line, Baird decided that he needed a little something extra for his act. Enter the world's first and only contortionist violinist.

"I've never seen another fiddle player who can do what I do," Baird said. "I am the world's only contortionist fiddle player."

Among the unique tricks in Yogi's bag is playing while suspended in a split position on two chairs, playing on one leg with the other leg over his head, and playing while standing on his head.

Baird credits yoga with helping him get into positions other fiddle players can only dream of performing in.

"I've been doing Hatha Yoga for 25 years," Baird said. "It really has helped me as a contortionist. I may not be the best contortionist in the world, but I am the best contortionist fiddle player thanks to yoga."

Baird's training regimen includes no less than three to six hours of yoga and stretching daily.

As for the motivation to pick up the fiddle in the first place, that honor belongs to Baird's uncle.

"My uncle played the fiddle and then one day I decided I would play the fiddle as well," Baird said. "I've been playing ever since."

Every Sunday afternoon Baird performs at Pooky's Ice House on FM 2100 in Crosby.

Baird also showed off his brand of music and contortionism during a recent concert at the Good Times Marina's Friday fish fry.

“I’d play here every Friday if they’d let me. This is such a nice place to sit and listen to some music,” Baird said.

Among Baird’s play list are some old standards and some original works penned by the contortionist himself.

Rounding out the list of songs is what Baird calls “the world’s most popular fiddle tune, ‘Orange Blossom Special.’”

In addition to performing at various venues in and around Houston, Baird has been featured on the Tonight Show with Jay Leno, That’s Incredible, The Jon Stewart Show The Pat Sajak Show and Ripley’s Believe it or Not to name a few.

“I have traveled all over the world playing fiddle and the best place I ever performed was the Pat Sajak Show,” Baird said. “Pat treated me really well and was extremely friendly.”

Baird has also displayed his talents at the Houston Livestock and Rodeo Show.

Besides performing shows stateside, Baird has taken his act to numerous foreign locales including London, Paris and Tokyo.

When he is not out jet setting across the globe, Baird performs at area clubs, retirement homes and other local venues.

“I just love to play music and perform,” Baird said. “The size of the audience really doesn’t matter to me.”

While Baird’s career has been full of notable achievements, there is still one item left on his to do list.

“My goal is to be listed in the Guinness Book of World Records,” Baird said.

To find out where Baird is performing next or to pick up a CD of his music, call 713-459-3562.