

**CCE MUSICAL ARTS & DANCE WEEK**  
**TRADITIONAL IRISH FIDDLE, FLUTE, GUITAR, SEAN-NOS & SET DANCING**  
**FORMERLY CCE FIDDLEWEEK**  
**JULY 6-10, 2009**

## ROBERT SPATES, FIDDLE

You're already familiar with Robert Spates since you hear his violin 'round the clock on radio and TV. He's on countless commercials for Food Lion, Walmart and other national clients, and you often hear him in documentaries on National Geographic, Discovery, and the Learning and History Channels. He's even on the Weather Channel.

This Maryland native enjoys a unique stylistic versatility. He is at home in ancient or modern classical music, jazz, many types of ethnic folk music, rock, R&B, bluegrass or country. In addition to being recorded on literally hundreds of CDs, films, commercials, TV shows and in classical concerts, he is in great demand and has performed live with many pop artists including Aretha Franklin, Ray Charles, Smokey Robinson, Barry White, Texas legend Ray Price, Vince Gill, Arlo Guthrie, Trisha Yearwood, Manheim Steamroller, Christina Aguilera, Jewel and Clay Aiken (to name only a few!). His traditional American-style fiddle and mandolin playing is featured prominently on the PBS series *The Appalachians*, as well as his more formal violin with an orchestra in the score of the award-winning film *Paperclips*.



He grew up worrying his parents by kayaking rapids, rock climbing, and playing his guitar too much, eventually degenerating further when he took up the fiddle. He supported himself in his teens by playing bluegrass and worked with a number of legendary artists. In College, he switched studies from astrophysics to "get serious" with the violin, and eventually was formally trained by some of the best (he studied with the Guarneri String Quartet on a graduate scholarship, and received personal instruction from Arnold Steinhardt, David Nadien, Ruggiero Ricci, and Aaron Rosand, among others).

Spates appears before the camera in the Chris Rock/Bernie Mack film *Head of State*, and in a number of varied roles in the NBC TV series *Homicide*. He gave over 60 performances this spring at Ford's Theatre in Washington playing not only fiddle and mandolin, but tin whistle as well.

While touring Europe he was held over at the Montreux Jazz Festival in Switzerland, and began regular travels to Ireland and Scotland (where he briefly attended school as a young teen) to play traditional Celtic music in festivals there, and to further soak up the beautiful Scottish-flavored Donegal Irish fiddle style. The US National Scottish Fiddle Competition awarded him the first ever Scott Skinner award for his uniquely faithful renditions of the Scottish master's compositions.

For years he was a fixture in the Kennedy Center cranking out ballet, opera, and orchestral concerts with some of the world's finest classical musicians. In the past year he performed for, and was personally recognized by President Bush, then in January he became one of the very first musicians to perform for freshly-inaugurated President Obama. Robert Spates is currently Principal violinist and soloist with the Vox Amadeus Orchestra in Philadelphia, a Kimmel Center-based ensemble which specializes in Baroque and Classical repertoire performed on period instruments. He is fond of baroque violin concerti, and was featured soloist in a rare performance of the Bach g minor concerto. He designs and builds his own high-tech hybrid violins but also plays a 300 year old baroque violin for his ancient music concerts.

Spates also teaches at The Landon School, where he spearheads a newly created integrated music and educational program that uses software to hone the skills of young musicians. These days he can sometimes be heard with guitarist/balladeer Conor Malone from Ennis, County Clare.

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