

## THE STORY OF "HARVEST QUEEN"

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It was my favorite music event of the year, the annual 2011 Harvest Gathering up at the Bernard Farm in Lake City, a weekend of music, with three stages going all the time, almost one-hundred bands, and a feast of organic whole foods. My daughter May and her husband Seth Bernard put this on each year, with the help of scores of volunteers.

The Harvest Gathering used to be for musicians only, advertised by word of mouth, three days after the music festival season is over, when hundreds of musicians gather to play with and for one another. Sure, maybe 1,000 outsiders find their way into the scene. It is the most like gatherings in the 1960s that I have ever seen. It has been going on for well over a decade.

I had brought my new friend Kailin Yong to the event, a fiddler and master violinist from Singapore, and he had just met Bob Bernard, who has spent a lifetime playing waltzes on the violin. It was already dark, and the night air was cold and these two fiddlers had just met out by the large bonfire. I had hoped they would play together. Bob Bernard, who had worked the event all day, was tired, but he invited Kailin into his house to play just a few tunes.

I followed them inside on this cold September night and watched them getting ready to play some waltz duets in the mostly empty living room. How nice, I thought, but it was already late for me. I was tired and on my way to bed. I looked forward to drifting off to sleep hearing them play in the room below.

However, before I could get up the stairs I heard the strains of their first waltz. Now waltzes are fine by me, but just not something I listen to that often. But what I heard that night made me stop in my tracks and sit right down on the couch in front of them. As a music critic and author of many books on the subject, I have heard a lot of good players in my time, and I do know fine music when I hear it. I was hearing it that evening, and it just unfolded, getting better and better. Something very special was happening.

These two violinists played waltzes as I had never heard them before; It was the purest music from heaven and I was transfixed from the very start. We all were tired from a long day, but after the first tune, you would never have known it. These two players were so alive with music, weaving in and out of each other's melody lines. It was like a symphony with only two instruments. Bob, who is almost my age, seemed like a kid again. He was having that much fun. As for me, well I was transported right out of my tiredness (and my body) and lost all sense of time.

And the two fiddlers moved from tune to tune. Before long, Bob Bernard was digging through books of waltzes and drawers of sheet music, finding old tunes he had not played in years, and they were just warming up. Each waltz kept sounding better and better. You can't program spontaneity into music, but it does happen once in a great while. This was one of those magical times. Something wonderful was taking place, at least for me, and I was not the only one – a special moment.

Bob and Kailin played waltzes until four o'clock in the morning, way past any of our bedtimes. We didn't care about tomorrow because we were alive and living the night. This music was

some of the most beautiful music I have ever heard in my life.

Some months later, I invited Kailin Yong and Bob Bernard to our Heart Center Studios here in Big Rapids, Michigan to record an album of the kind of music we heard that night. Seth Bernard came and played guitar and my daughter May was also there.

We spent a couple of days recording, sharing food, and being together with one another in the studio. An album "Harvest Queen" was recorded for which we are now trying to raise money to bring it out on CD for all of you to hear. And it is beautiful.

"Kickstarters" helps to make great things happen. Here is one project worth participating in and the gifts involved are all really fine too. Check it out. If you love music, and remarkable music at that, join us in making that happen. Here is the link: Be sure to watch the video and hear some of the music.:

[http://www.kickstarter.com/projects/sethandmay/bob-bernard-and-kailin-yongs-harvest-queen?ref=recently\\_launched](http://www.kickstarter.com/projects/sethandmay/bob-bernard-and-kailin-yongs-harvest-queen?ref=recently_launched)

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