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Tuning into Auburn’s acoustic music scene: Sundilla Acoustic Concert Series



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By [Ella Walton](#) | [Newsletter Editor](#)

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When it comes to the music scene in Auburn, concerts of every genre can be found. Folk and bluegrass, in particular, have struck a chord with many locals — all thanks to the Sundilla Acoustic Concert Series.

Sundilla Acoustic Concert Series is a nonprofit organization geared towards providing Auburn with acoustic performances by touring musicians. The organization began in 1993, when it was created by Katie Lamar Smith, Jay Lamar and Mary Littleton. It is now recognized as a member of the North American Alliance for Folk Music and Dance.

In 1996, the series found its permanent residence at Auburn's historic Unitarian Fellowship building at 450 Thach Ave. In addition, many concerts are held at Pebble Hill in Auburn.

Allyson Comstock, a former fine arts professor at Auburn University, has been working with Sundilla Acoustic Concert Series since 2000. She enjoys working with Bailey Jones, who has been with Sundilla for over 20 years and now handles the booking and promotional aspects of the organization.

"It's a great thing, because it's all non-profit and nobody gets paid, we just give the money to the band. They come from all over the U.S. and sometimes out of the U.S.," Comstock said.

The series hosts several types of acoustic bands. Their list of past performances reaches over 230 in total.

"It's under the big umbrella of Americana, which is like folk, bluegrass, sometimes Celtic, sometimes leaning towards blues — a lot of singer-songwriter musicians," Comstock said.

Sundilla's first concert of 2024 took place on Friday, Jan. 19, from 7:30 to 10:30 p.m., when Bluegrass lovers and Auburn locals alike filled the seats of the Unitarian Fellowship building for a [Thunder and Rain](#) concert.

Thunder and Rain, a Nashville-based bluegrass band, consists of three members — Erinn Peet Lukes on guitar and lead vocals, Laura Ray on the banjo and vocals and Amelia Ransom on the fiddle and vocals. Andy Brown accompanied the group on bass.

Between songs, Ransom expressed her gratitude to Sundilla for welcoming her back, as she had performed there with her previous band, The Ransom Notes, in 2019. Lukes also thanked the Sundilla Concert Series for hosting the concert and arranging their housing for the night.

In addition to kicking off yet another year of Sundilla concerts, the night's performance served as the anniversary of Thunder and Rain's very first performance.

The band performed a mix of both covers and original songs for the audience. While a crowd favorite was a Guns N' Roses cover, and one of Thunder and Rain's songs, "Walk Right Through the Door of My Heart," was inspired by Hank Williams, Lukes says her rootsy Americana influence is Gillian Welch.

"She was kind of my first folk artist that really inspired me — she's just got a deep well of creativity in her writing," Lukes said.

Lukes' passion for performing was evident on Sundilla's stage, who says the pressure of everyone looking at her excites her and makes her perform better.

"It's like, how can I express this syllable, or this vowel in this word while I'm singing? And also, what is the band going to do? Because we do something a little different every night," Lukes said. "I think the surprise of performing is really fun, and the pressure of it is really fun, and in the moment, I have to be present on stage."

The audience enjoyed interacting with the band during intermission, where they could purchase merchandise and refill on free refreshments.

Dallin and McKell Fillmore, Auburn locals, discovered the concert through the Auburn-Opelika Tourism page. Dallin, who is currently pursuing his MBA degree at Auburn University, was once in a folk band himself and enjoys listening to bluegrass.

"I like seeing him [Andy Brown] do the slap bass on the standing bass — that was pretty impressive," Dallin said.

Dallin’s wife, McKell Fillmore, loved listening to Thunder and Rain’s rendition of Guns N’ Roses’ “Sweet Child O’ Mine.” Their folksy cover of the popular rock song went viral on YouTube and put the band on the map.

“Any part where all three of them harmonized and went higher-pitched was really cool,” McKell said.

Thunder and Rain’s performance was the first of many that will take place this year; the full 2024 line-up is available on Sundilla’s [website calendar](#).

Sundilla’s next concert will be on Friday, February 2, 2024, at the Unitarian Fellowship building. [House of Hamill](#), a Celtic-folk trio from Philadelphia, is scheduled to take the stage at 7:30 p.m.

Tickets bought in advance are \$20 and can be found at Spicer’s Music, Ross House Coffee, Foodie’s, and [online](#). Admission at the door will be \$25; however, students with an ID can pay \$15, and children 12 and under will have free admittance.

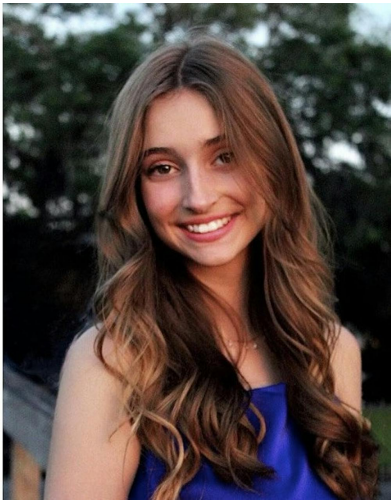
Instrumental to the amplification of the folk and bluegrass music scene, Sundilla Acoustic Concert Series serves as an ode to the harmony within Auburn.

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Ella Walton, majoring in English literature with a minor in creative writing, currently serves as the Newsletter Editor at The Auburn Plainsman. Formerly the Culture Editor, Walton has been with The Auburn Plainsman since the fall of 2023.



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