

SONG & DANCE



CREW & CAST BIOGRAPHIES

Kris Keltgen – Director and Producer

Kris Keltgen is the owner of Barefoot Music Studios and Publishing, Ltd., a small niche music and film production studio based in southern Minnesota. The studio focuses on preserving regional musical traditions and developing original film and music content, including the documentary Song & Dance. Through Barefoot Music, Kris brings a deep commitment to cultural storytelling and the celebration of old-time music.

In addition to his work as a producer, Kris is the founder and band leader of the Riverbend Dutchmen, a polka band known for its high-energy take on the traditional Dutchmen style. His musical journey began at the age of four, performing with his uncle's band, "Inside Straight," and continued through his teenage years as he learned drums, piano, and eventually the concertina—an instrument he took up at age 29. After two years of dedicated practice, he launched the Riverbend Dutchmen in 2009.

The band features a strong horn section and plays a diverse mix of polkas, waltzes, fox-trots, and modern tunes. Under Kris's leadership, they've performed across the upper Midwest and appeared on national programs such as the Mollie B Polka Party on RFD-TV and KEYC-TV's Bandwagon. Whether on stage or in the studio, Kris Keltgen remains dedicated to preserving and advancing the traditions of old-time music for new generations.

Zak Rivers – Director of Photography

Zak is an award-winning Photographer, Filmmaker, and Musician from Mankato, MN. While his client base is largely from MN, he has adventured and shot in Zion Natl. Park, Mt. Hood, the MN Boundary Waters, Cambodia, Big Bear CA, and recently Nepal/Mt. Everest.

Zak often brings together his love for photography and his love for outdoor adventure. Case in point: His documentary GREYBEARD: The Man, The Myth, The Mississippi, a documentary about the oldest person to paddle that river. As Zak put it: "With an interest in a source-to-sea paddle of the Mississippi, I was introduced to Dale Sanders, a world record holder and paddler from Memphis. The spark of Dales backstory, upcoming Source-To-Sea world record attempt as the oldest human to through-paddle the length of the Mississippi, and ever-present charisma was enough to convince me that an award-winning Documentary could potentially be made."

Zak's cinematography is exceptional. He brings together a technical perfectionism and artistic eye for cinematic storytelling to create compelling images and beautiful stories.

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Justin Bruellman – Cinematographer

Justin Bruellman is a cinematographer and editor best known for his cinematography work on the short film "Frost Bite". He attended the Institute of Production & Recording, honing his skills in cinematography and editing. With over 8 years of experience in video production, Justin has contributed to numerous films and series that have been played round the world.

Maxwell Kilsdonk – Camera Operator

Maxwell Kilsdonk is a versatile multimedia producer and content creator based in the Twin Cities. With a strong foundation in video editing, photography, and production management, he has established himself as a dynamic presence in the regional creative community.

A graduate of the Institute of Production and Recording in St. Paul, Maxwell has contributed to various projects, including independent films and nonprofit initiatives. Notably, he was part of the team that produced a public service announcement during the pandemic, showcasing his ability to adapt and deliver impactful content under challenging circumstances.

Maxwell's creative talents extend to the realm of short films. His work on "Rob the Incompetent" earned recognition at Z-Fest XI in 2020, where the film won Best University Level Team and Best Credits.

Aaron Schuelke – Narrator

Aaron Schuelke is the owner and operator of WRJQ Goodtime Radio, an internet-only station based in Appleton, Wisconsin, dedicated to preserving and promoting polka and old-time dance band music. Founded in January 2006, WRJQ streams 24/7, featuring genres like Dutchmen-style and Czech/Bohemian polka, catering to a global audience of enthusiasts.

Aaron's journey in radio began at the age of 13 when he started at WRJQ in 1994. His passion for the station's music led him to remain involved until 1996. In early 2002, while working at WAPL-FM 105.7, he had the honor of being the last person to sign off the original AM version of WRJQ before it transitioned to a sports talk format as WSCO.

In 2005, Aaron explored internet audio streaming and launched WRJQRadio.com in 2006, reviving the station's legacy online. Operating from his home studio on the northeast side of Appleton, WRJQ has become a cherished platform for polka fans worldwide.

Aaron's dedication to the polka community was recognized when the U.S. Concertina Association presented him with an appreciation award at Pulaski Polka Days.



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Greg George – Production Assistant

Greg George is a seasoned musician and a production assistant currently working with Barefoot Studios on the documentary Song & Dance. Based in Janesville, Minnesota, Greg brings over two decades of experience as the lead guitarist for the Murphy Brothers Band, a well-established group known for its authentic blend of classic and contemporary sounds.

Greg's deep-rooted passion for music and performance has made him a fixture in the Upper Midwest's live music scene. His role in Song & Dance reflects not only his technical talents behind the scenes but also his personal connection to the musical traditions the film celebrates.

Shawn Cable – Cast Member

Shawn Cable is an Emmy award-winning meteorologist, anchor, and reporter with a quirky charm and a knack for making weather fun and engaging. After spending more than 25 years on the air in Sioux Falls, SD, at both KELO and KSFY Television, Shawn is thrilled to be part of the station he grew up watching.

Shawn's passion for weather began in his hometown of Morgan, Minnesota. One memorable day while he was a junior in high school, he predicted a storm that blasted his hometown with hailstones the size of canned hams. Earlier that same day, he accepted the very first job of his broadcasting career at "The Polka Station of the Nation" 860, KNUJ radio in New Ulm. This whirlwind moment solidified his dedication to meteorology and set him on the path to a career focused on keeping people safe from storms.

After high school, Shawn ventured west to South Dakota State University (SDSU) in Brookings, where he earned a bachelor's degree in choral and vocal music. While still in college, he took a job doing the weather on weekends at KELOLAND television in Sioux Falls, SD. His first weather broadcast was a revelation, sparking a passion for meteorology that led him to pursue further education in broadcast meteorology at Mississippi State University.

In addition to his meteorological work, Shawn is the host of Bandwagon, a long-running television program on KEYC that showcases regional music, including old-time and polka bands. His dual roles in broadcasting and music make him a beloved figure in the Midwest's cultural landscape.

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Jerry Minar – Cast Member

Jerry Minar is a master concertina player, teacher, and craftsman from New Prague, Minnesota. He has played the concertina professionally for decades and is recognized as one of the best concertina players and teachers in the world, having taught over 275 students.

Jerry has promoted the concertina by setting up huge concertina displays at concertina events and festivals. He regularly performs at all the large concertina festivals from New Prague to Gibbon and has the distinction of playing in the White House for one of President Bill Clinton's inaugural balls.

In 1995, Minar began working under the careful guidance of Christy Hengel to learn how to make the fine Hengel instrument. Satisfied that Jerry had mastered the ability to continue making the Hengel Concertina to his standards, Christy agreed to sell the Hengel name, manufacturing business, parts inventory, and specialized machinery to Minar in 1997. Minar continues to manufacture the Hengel Concertina today, preserving and advancing the instrument's legacy. concertinaclub.org

Jerry's dedication to the concertina has made him a central figure in preserving this musical tradition in the Midwest.

Evelyn Keltgen – Cast Member

Evelyn is 2025 graduate of Cleveland High School, where she played on the varsity girls' volleyball team. Her contributions have been instrumental in the team's successful seasons.

A talented tenor saxophonist, Evelyn was selected to participate in the Gustavus Adolphus College High School Honor Band Festival, joining 235 top musicians from five states. This experience allowed her to collaborate with esteemed conductors and fellow musicians, enhancing her musical skills. Evelyn has played with multiple other bands including the Mankato Area Community Band, Cleveland Highschool Concert and Jazz Bands, as well as occasionally with her father's band: Kris and the Riverbend Dutchmen.

An active member of the Cleveland FFA chapter, Evelyn has participated in events such as the annual pancake breakfast fundraiser and has pursued her State FFA Degree, demonstrating leadership and commitment to agricultural education.

Diagnosed with pulmonary hypertension at six weeks old, Evelyn has managed this condition throughout her life. Despite health challenges, she remains active in sports and music and aspires to become a veterinarian.

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Melissa Keltgen – Cast Member

Melissa Keltgen is a musician performing in several local community bands and groups in the area. She holds a double major in Music and Psychology from Gustavus Adolphus College.

A passionate advocate for families with children facing chronic medical conditions, Melissa has been a guest speaker at local support groups for parents of children with congenital heart defects. Her personal experience as a mother to a child with pulmonary hypertension has deepened her commitment to supporting these families.

Melissa is involved in the local music community. She has contributed her flute skills to musical projects, including a recording at Barefoot Music Studios in Madison Lake.

Tom Goetzinger – Cast Member

Tom Goetzinger is a seasoned radio broadcaster and community leader based in New Prague, Minnesota. He serves as the General Manager and Morning Show host at KCHK Radio (95.5 FM / 1350 AM), a station renowned for its dedication to polka and old-time music traditions. Tom joined KCHK in December 1991, bringing with him a wealth of experience from his previous roles in news, sales, and management at various South Dakota stations. Since July 2012, he has been at the helm of KCHK, steering the station's programming and community engagement efforts.

Under Tom's leadership, KCHK has solidified its reputation as "The Polka Place," offering a rich mix of music and local content that resonates with listeners across generations. He co-hosts the popular "TRG Squared Show" alongside Tom R. Graham, a weekly program that features folk music, classic country, agricultural reports, and community shout-outs.

Beyond the airwaves, Tom is deeply involved in community events and initiatives. His commitment to preserving and promoting the region's cultural heritage is evident in his active participation in local festivals, historical projects, and public service endeavors.

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Tom Wheeler – Cast Member

Tom Wheeler is a veteran broadcaster and the longtime Sports Director at KNUJ Radio (860 AM) in New Ulm, Minnesota. Since joining the station in 1991, Tom has become a familiar and trusted voice for listeners throughout the region. Over the past 34 years, he has provided play-by-play commentary for New Ulm High School sports, covering events from local gymnasiums to the Xcel Energy Center during state tournaments.

Tom's broadcasting journey began after a serendipitous encounter with a radio commercial while working a different job in the Twin Cities. Inspired, he enrolled at the Brown Institute and embarked on a career that would see him become an integral part of the New Ulm sports and broadcasting community.

Beyond sports, Tom co-hosts the "Dinner Bell Hour," a program that blends music, community news, and listener engagement, further cementing his role as a central figure in the local media landscape.

His dedication and contributions were recognized when KNUJ celebrated his 34th anniversary with the station, honoring his commitment to delivering quality broadcasting to the community.

Bud Schroeder – Cast Member

Bud Schroeder is a respected musician and historian deeply involved with the Minnesota Music Hall of Fame in New Ulm, Minnesota. Known for his extensive knowledge of the state's musical traditions, Schroeder has played a pivotal role in preserving and promoting Minnesota's rich musical history. His work encompasses both performance and scholarship, making him a valuable resource for understanding the evolution of music in the region.

Schroeder's dedication to documenting and celebrating Minnesota's musical legacy has been instrumental in educating the public and honoring the contributions of local musicians. Through his efforts, the Minnesota Music Hall of Fame continues to serve as a vital institution for cultural preservation and appreciation.

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Dan Groebner – Cast Member

Dan Groebner is a dedicated local historian and researcher affiliated with the Brown County Historical Society (BCHS) in New Ulm, Minnesota. He has contributed significantly to the preservation and interpretation of the region's history through various presentations and publications.

Groebner has been instrumental in researching and presenting topics such as the history of New Ulm's Popcorn Wagon, which celebrated its 110th anniversary in 2024. His presentation, "Kernels of History on NU Popcorn Wagon," delved into the wagon's origins, its role in the community, and its evolution over the years. The event featured historical photographs and artifacts, providing attendees with a comprehensive understanding of this local landmark's significance.

In addition to his work on the Popcorn Wagon, Groebner has explored the rich history of community theater in New Ulm. His presentation, "History from the Balcony: Community Theater in New Ulm," highlighted the development of local theater from its early days at Turner Hall to the establishment of the State Street Theater Co. The program emphasized the importance of community involvement and volunteerism in sustaining the arts in the region.

Groebner also served as the editor for the biography "The Life and Times of Francis Baasen: From Luxembourg Immigrant to a 'Most Prominent Man,'" authored by Terry Sveine. This work sheds light on the life of Francis Baasen, a significant figure in New Ulm's history, and Groebner's editorial expertise contributed to bringing this important story to a wider audience.

Through his meticulous research and engaging presentations, Dan Groebner continues to enrich the community's understanding of New Ulm's history, ensuring that the stories of its past are preserved and appreciated by future generations.

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Tania Cordes – Cast Member

Tania Cordes is the owner and president of the Kato Ballroom, a historic venue in Mankato, Minnesota, renowned for its rich musical heritage and vibrant community events. Under her leadership, the ballroom has experienced a renaissance, hosting a diverse array of events from live music performances to weddings and community gatherings.

Originally from the Chicago area, Cordes holds a degree in economics from Colgate University and earned her MBA from Harvard Business School. Her professional background includes roles as a Wall Street analyst, strategy consultant at Bain & Company, and vice president of institutional sales at Security Capital Group. In the late 1990s, she was part of a Chicago-based internet start-up offering insurance to small businesses. Her extensive experience in business and strategy has been instrumental in revitalizing the Kato Ballroom.

Cordes purchased the Kato Ballroom in January 2014, after learning of its availability during a family gathering. At the time, the ballroom had been owned by her ex-husband's family for over 30 years. Despite her initial unfamiliarity with the venue, she was drawn to the opportunity to manage and revitalize this iconic space. Her passion for entertaining, event planning, and community engagement fueled her decision to take over the ballroom.

*Since acquiring the Kato Ballroom, Cordes has implemented various initiatives to enhance its offerings. She began hosting the long-running television program *Bandwagon*, which had previously been held at the ballroom, and also took on the role of booking bands for the show. Under her direction, show attendance increased significantly, with over 300 attendees at some events. Cordes has also expanded the ballroom's services to include a wider range of public events and private functions, ensuring the venue remains a vibrant part of the Mankato community.*

Rick Keane – Cast Member

*Rick Keane is a talented musician and the lead trumpet player in the popular band *Kris and the Riverbend Dutchmen*. His musical expertise adds a vibrant and dynamic element to the band's polka and old-time music performances, contributing to the group's success in preserving and promoting this genre. Rick also serves on the board of the Minnesota Music Hall of Fame.*

In addition to his musical career, Rick is an active community historian in Pine Island, Minnesota. He has been instrumental in preserving local history, including donating a historic stool from the Pine Island Telephone Company to the Pine Island Area Historical Society, and contributing to the restoration of the Metro Theater in Pine Island. Rick's efforts have helped to enrich the community's understanding of its cultural heritage.

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Ray Sands – Cast Member

Ray Sands is the founder and leader of Ray Sands and the Polka Dots, a renowned old-time polka band based in Kenyon, Minnesota. Formed in 1949, the band has become one of Minnesota's most recognized traditional dance bands, known for its German and Scandinavian polkas. Ray, a 1948 graduate of Wanamingo High School, joined Art Fitch and the Polka Dots with his accordion, before becoming the band leader.

Under Ray's leadership, the Polka Dots have achieved significant milestones, including performances at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., and the International Polka Festival in Kitzbühel, Austria. They've also been featured on Garrison Keillor's A Prairie Home Companion and have toured Scandinavia.

Donnie Klossner

Donald "Donnie" Klossner (1935–2025) was a celebrated concertina player, bandleader, and cherished figure in the New Ulm, Minnesota music community. His passion for old-time and polka music spanned over seven decades, leaving an indelible mark on the cultural landscape of the region.

Born on July 7, 1935, in New Ulm, Donnie's musical journey began in his youth when he attempted to play his father's button accordion. He later received a double-reed concertina and took lessons from Ray Henke, which set the foundation for his lifelong dedication to the instrument.

In 1951, Donnie formed his own band, performing extensively at venues like George's Ballroom in New Ulm and the Orchid Inn in Sleepy Eye. His band, known for its energetic performances and authentic sound, became a staple in the local music scene.

Throughout his career, Donnie played with several bands, including the Babe Wagner Band, and was known for his compositions and recordings that celebrated the rich traditions of polka music. His contributions were recognized with his induction into the Minnesota Music Hall of Fame in 2006 and the World Concertina Congress Hall of Fame in 2005.

Donnie's legacy continues to inspire musicians and fans of polka music. His dedication to preserving and promoting this genre has left a lasting impact on the cultural heritage of Minnesota and beyond.

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Cy Pfannenstein – Cast Member

Cyril "Cy" Pfannenstein is a dedicated advocate for polka and old-time music, based in Albany, Minnesota. He hosts the "Music for Sunday Morning" show on KASM 1150 AM featuring a mix of gospel, polka, and classic country tunes. A notable segment of his program, "Musicians Come & Play," is where Cy interviews musicians about their bands, followed by a 30-minute feature of their music in the "Musical Treat for Dancing Feet" segment.

Beyond radio, Cy operates the Cy Pfannenstein Music Service, offering a vast collection of polka and old-time music CDs through his website. He actively participates in regional events like the Central Minnesota Farm Show and Albany Pioneer Days, promoting and selling music. Cy's passion for music is evident in his efforts to preserve and share the rich traditions of polka and old-time music with the community.

Katie Smentek M.D. – Cast Member

Dr. Katie Smentek is a board-certified pediatrician based in Mankato, Minnesota. She practices at the Mankato Clinic Children's Health Center, where she provides comprehensive care for infants, children, and adolescents. Known for her warm and attentive approach, Dr. Smentek emphasizes family-centered care and is especially committed to long-term health and wellness for her patients.

She is affiliated with Mankato Clinic, one of southern Minnesota's largest physician-owned practices, and is active in community health education and advocacy. In addition to her clinical work, she is recognized for her engagement with local families and dedication to creating positive healthcare experiences for children.