

LOCAL



ANDY HEIDT/MTSU CREATIVE AND VISUAL SERVICES
Dr. Dale Cockrell, director of MTSU's Center for Popular Music and co-coordinator of "Pa's Fiddle: American Music," poses for a photo prior to the start of filming for the PBS special at Loveless Barn on Friday in Nashville.



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Recording artists Randy Scruggs, Randy Travis, Rodney Atkins, Ronnie Milsap, Ashton Shepherd, Natalie Grant and other guests perform music from the 'Little House on the Prairie' books at Loveless Barn on Friday, under the coordination of Dr. Dale Cockrell, director of MTSU's Center for Popular Music, and actor Dean Butler from the 'Little House Series.'

MTSU part of 'Pa's Fiddle' project

Program to air during PBS pledge drive in June

The Daily News Journal

MURFREESBORO — Music City all-stars are bringing Charles "Pa" Ingalls' old-time fiddle music and songs alive for a PBS special, and MTSU will be right by the fireside.

"Pa's Fiddle: America's Music" will feature award-winning musician and musical director Randy Scruggs and an all-star string band — Matt Combs, Dennis Crouch, Chad Cromwell, Hoot Hester and Shad Cobb — along with artists Randy Travis, Rodney Atkins, Ronnie Milsap, Ashton Shepherd, The Roys, Natalie Grant and Committed, second-season winners of NBC's "The Sing-Off."

Dale Cockrell, director of MTSU's renowned Center for Popular Music and a scholar of the early American tunes immortalized in Laura Ingalls Wilder's "Little House on the Prairie" book series, is coordinating aspects of the music special. It was taped Friday night in Nashville.

"Pa's Fiddle: America's Music" will be broadcast during the 2012 June pledge-drive season on PBS stations throughout the nation. A new CD, "Pa's Fiddle: American Fiddler," featuring a portion of the 127 songs mentioned in the "Little House" books, will be released at the same time. The CD will be in stores June 5 but is available now as a pre-release special at www.laura-ingalls-wilder.com.

Cockrell is the founder, owner and president of Pa's Fiddle Recordings LLC, a record label dedicated to recording the music referenced in Wilder's books. He teamed with actor Dean Butler, who played Wilder's husband, Almanzo, in the "Little House" TV series, to create the "Pa's Fiddle" project.

"I've been working on the 'Pa's Fiddle' project for about 12 years now," Cockrell explained, "and sometimes it's felt like we've been pushing that boulder up that hill every day. Now we're finally at the top and get to share this music with everyone."

A professor emeritus of musicology at Vanderbilt University, Cockrell said it is "terribly exciting" for so much to be going on all at once.

"But as exciting as it's been for me, it's even more exciting to see these excel-

lent musicians get so excited about playing this music. They don't get the opportunity to do that very much, and to see them al-

most melting in the studio in the presence of this great music is a wonderful opportunity," he said.

University students will be behind the scenes to film "Inside Pa's Fiddle," a documentary on the inspiration, creation and execution of the special. The student crew from the Department of Electronic Media Communication in MTSU's College of Mass Communication will be led by professor Tom Neff, founder and former CEO of The Documentary Channel and an award-winning producer and director. Six to 18 students will be onsite for the special, and another six to 18

students will work post-production on editing, graphics and sound with professors Clare Bratten and Matt Foley.

"This is a wonderful learning experience for us all," Neff said. "I'm thrilled to be involved and help students any way I can. It's a unique and wonderful way MTSU is tying the professional world to the student world. We're always looking for real-world projects, so this is a

great mix."

The documentary will accompany the PBS special in a planned DVD package. EMC major Sam Willey, a junior at MTSU, will direct the behind-the-scenes documentary in Nashville. Haley Ellis, who graduated in December from MTSU, and Megan Brantley, another junior EMC major, are line producers.

The documentary has a quick turnaround time to

meet the PBS airing and sales deadline, so MTSU students will be working through the early spring to create an archival-quality product.

"Sometimes it's a blessing for a media project to have a fast deadline," Billy Pittard, EMC department chairman, an MTSU alumnus and multi-E Emmy-winning media entrepreneur. "It's great to see our students shine on a project like this."

FYI
To learn more information about the "Pa's Fiddle" project, visit www.laura-ingalls-wilder.com. For information about MTSU's Center for Popular Music, visit popmusic.mtsu.edu.

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