

Chilhowie grad making his mark on film

BY GLENNA CRABTREE-BULLINS
Staff

When Smyth County native Tracy Fisher graduated from Chilhowie High School several years ago, he hadn't really decided on a career path. He attended Wytheville Community College and later Radford University.

"When I had to declare a major at Radford, I wasn't exactly sure of what I wanted to do. For some reason, the movie Braveheart popped into my mind. My dad and I must've watched that film together 20 times. He was always up for a good war movie. So that was it, I was going to be an actor. As impulsive as that sounds, that's how it all started," Fisher said.

Fisher earned a Bachelor of Science degree in theater and a minor in cinematic arts from the university.

The son of Walter Fisher, a small business owner, and Sally Campbell Repass, an author, Fisher was born in Marion on Oct. 5, 1975. He has three brothers and one sister.

"I first started acting when I moved to Los Angeles in the summer of 2001 after graduating. Despite being out there for 10 years, I had never really made acting a focus of mine. Like most actors, I was easily distracted by other things. It wasn't until I moved to Atlanta in 2011 that I

thought acting could be a possibility for me. Oddly enough, it took leaving Los Angeles in order to get that mindset. Maybe it took getting out of that high-stressed environment to really center myself," Fisher said.

Fisher found the cost of living to be much cheaper in Atlanta. He said studios were "moving in at that time because of the tax incentives. It also helped that not everyone around me was an actor, so the competition, while still good, was less mercenary."

He was able to find an agent who he still has today. She helped him to book a small co-star role on NBC, playing Nurse Brad in NBC's Constantine, Angels and Ministers of Grace. This role made Fisher SAG-AFTRA (Screen Actors Guild - American Federation of Television and Radio Artists) eligible.

"But really, it wasn't until I moved back to Virginia, to a small town where I currently live called Hot Springs (population 738) that I made acting my full-time job," Fisher said.

Fisher starred in Investigation Discovery's Murder By Numbers (The Eastside Killer) as Mike and most recently, he played the young father in Jeremy Camp's newly released music video, Keep Me in the Moment.

"Works I have releasing this year, pending COVID-19, include Lying Still, where I was the



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Smyth County native Tracy Fisher is enjoying a successful acting career. He most recently appeared in a Jeremy Camp music video that can be viewed on YouTube.

lead role, Ronny Palmer, a man looking for redemptive deliverance. I played a bar customer in the upcoming feature film produced by Wong Kar-Wai and directed by Nattawut Poonpiriya called One For the Road, a story about two friends dealing with the results of terminal cancer. I also played a Realtor in Christmas Inn Farmstead, which will air either on Hallmark or Lifetime during the holiday season this year, as well as a detective on the feature film called When We Try," Fisher said.

Projects he is looking to film

later this year, pending the pandemic, include Homicide City, Fractals, Drip, and Impulse, he said.

Fisher lives with his wife, Jeanette Fang, a professional pianist (artistic director and pianist of Garth Newel Music Center) in Hot Springs with their cat, Sophie.

She has been featured at such prestigious venues as Alice Tully Hall, John F. Kennedy Center, Zankel Hall, Hill Auditorium, Peter J. Sharp Theater, Weill Recital Hall, and Steinway Hall, as well as appearing on stages in Europe and Asia.

Her most recent awards include the Gold Medal at the 2013 Seattle International Piano Competition, where she also received the President's Award and Audience Favorite Prize. She has earned top prizes in the Dallas Chamber Symphony International Piano Competition and the MTNA Young Artist National Competition. She is the recipient of the Earl V. Moore Award and the Gottlieb Award, given by the University of Michigan, and the Elizabeth J. Parisot award from Yale School of Music, the winner of the Karlfried Nordman Scholarship Piano Competition at Juilliard, and was a National Presidential Scholar in the Arts in 2003.

As an avid chamber musician, Fang has collaborated with such

acclaimed artists as the Parker Quartet, Roger Tapping, Aaron Berofsky, Peter Frankl, Bonnie Hampton, Juliette Kang, Tom Kraines, Aisslinn Nosky, and Tina Dahl, and been engaged by the Taos Music Festival, Yellow-Barn Festival, Bargemusic, and Le Poisson Rouge.

She was a founding member of the new music group Khemia Ensemble and has worked with composers such as David Biedenbender, Aaron Jay Kernis, Martin Bresnick, David Lang, Sydney Hodkinson, Andy Akiho, and Pascal LeBoeuf.

Fang has published many articles on music, and currently hosts a podcast entitled So Many Wrong Notes. She received her DMA from University of Michigan, and holds degrees from Juilliard and Yale. Her principal teachers have been Robert McDonald, Yoheved Kaplinsky, Julian Martin, Peter Frankl, and Logan Skelton.

Fang is premiering a new solo piano work composed for her on YouTube May 3 at 4 p.m. It'll be the first worldwide virtual premiere, as usually new works are premiered live. The composer is Polina Nazaykinskaya and Fisher directed the music video, their first collaborative work as husband and wife. The music video can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCa9t-WoaNzJdz0SpsvDqfdYA>.

Naturalist Rally heads online this year

BY STEPHANIE PORTER-NICHOLS
Staff

At the end of 10 days, you may never look at your backyard in the same way.

Experts will guide you in exploration, an internationally-recognized writer is expected to inspire you, and you can even get a T-shirt to boast of the experience. It's all part of the annual Mount Rogers Naturalist Rally.

While the rally is normally a weekend experience, the rally's extended timeframe is just one of the changes for this year.

Aaron Floyd, executive director of the Blue Ridge Discovery Center, which is organizing the rally, explained, "The coronavirus shutdown gave us two choices: to cancel a long-standing tradition or to get creative. When we started to look at the possibilities of a remote version, we saw that it could really bring out some of the core values of our mission."

The Mount Rogers Naturalist Rally: Backyard Edition was born.

According to the center's website, the rally, which runs from May 1-10, will offer "hands-on exploration of the biodiversity just outside your doorstep, suitable for youth and adults. All participants will independently explore a greenspace, discover the flora and fauna present, and share these observations.... The greenspace you explore could be your yard or a nearby meadow, park, or trail.... You'd be amazed at what you can find in your own backyard!"

"We are really hoping that people can take on the explore-, discover-, and share mentality and learn more about the place they call home," Floyd said.

In this time of stay-at-home orders and virtual classrooms, the idea has taken hold with many individuals and families. "People have been very receptive," said Floyd. He



Barbara Kingsolver with her dog.

PHOTO BY DAVID WOOD

Kingsolver was named one of the most important writers of the 20th Century by Writers Digest. In 2000 she received the National Humanities Medal, this country's highest honor for service through the arts.

Her 15 books have been translated into more than two dozen languages, and have been adopted into the core literature curriculum in high schools and colleges throughout the nation. She has contributed to more than 50 literary anthologies, and her reviews and articles have appeared in most major U.S. newspapers and magazines.

Her book The Poisonwood Bible was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize and won the national book award of South Africa, before being named an Oprah Book Club selection. In 2011, Kingsolver was awarded the Dayton Literary Peace Prize for the body of her work.

Her presence with the rally has attracted its own audience. "Not only has the new use of technology brought about a slightly different audience," Floyd said, "but having Barbara Kingsolver read some of her unpublished poetry has brought attention for a national fan base."

While Kingsolver may attract adults, Floyd emphasized that there will be plenty to attract younger participants. "If you have kids, there will be some excellent activities to participate in throughout the week. This is a great supplement for any online lessons that they might be doing for school at the moment," he said.

The rally will feature expert-led webinars, exploration time, participation in the iNaturalist project, and prize giveaways.

This year is the rally's 46th anniversary. Tickets for event are \$5 for an individual, \$20 for five tickets, and \$40 for 20 tickets.

To learn more about the rally, visit <https://blueridgediscoverycenter.org/mrnrr>.

did note that "it seems to be a slightly different audience than the traditional

rallies."

The rally normally hosts a keynote speaker on Fri-

day evenings. This year will be no different. Author Barbara Kingsolver,

a Southwest Virginia resident, will offer a poetry reading via livestream.