

Local musician looks back at time as professional wrestler

by Jennifer Wardell
September 29, 2010



FARMINGTON — She’s got a graceful touch with a bow, and can pile drive you if you don’t respect the music.

Though music is a career for violinist Lynette Thredgold, a passion for bodybuilding served as the gateway to a several-month stint as the mysterious Phantom as part of the short lived Women of Wrestling (WOW) in 2001. Though the group folded less than a year later, Thredgold doesn’t regret the experience.

“I tease people that I can body slam anybody,” she said.

It was the stress of the music world that first led Thredgold to discover her love for lifting weights, and friends she spent time with at the gym persuaded her to try her first competition.

“I won second place, and just got addicted,” she said. “I developed a real love for bodybuilding.”

Several competitions later, a TV agent caught sight of her and sent her to the WOW audition in California. When a power outage caused everyone to be sent home, Thredgold knew her plane flight meant that she couldn’t wait and said she needed to audition right then.

“I pulled out my violin and just started playing,” she said, explaining that her character (the term for wrestling identities) could be torn between her desire to be a musician and a bodybuilder.

They hired her immediately, and she spent the summer flying back and forth as she learned how to wrestle.

“We were taught things like how to fall and not get hurt,” said Thredgold. “I’d still come home with huge bruises, but I felt safer in the ring than I did on the L.A. freeways.”

Though her character didn’t speak, Thredgold composed her own entrance music that she still plays in concerts. WOW never went into a second season, but a match where Phantom defeats another wrestler called Summer still exists on YouTube.

“Phantom is a powerhouse,” reads one of the comments posted beneath. “Once she got a leg, she just wouldn’t stop.”

Of course, the eternal question of professional wrestling is whether or not it’s faked. Even now, Thredgold is careful when asked how much of the match (or any other) was staged.

“In wrestling, you can’t disclose a lot of things,” she said, comparing it to doctor-patient confidentiality. “It was very physical and very real, but at the same time it was TV. It was entertainment.”

It was entertainment, however, destined to come to an end. A year or so after WOW folded, Thredgold stopped competing in bodybuilding competitions as well. She now focuses on her music and training



other bodybuilders, two of whom went on to become Mr. Utah.

“I put all my energy into training, so I don’t think I could train and compete at the same time,” she said. “My youngest daughter wants to do a show, so I tell her I’ll compete in one when she does.”

And, though her memories of her time in the ring are good ones, wrestling never appears on her TV at home.

“I don’t like to watch a lot of wrestling now, because the women aren’t really used as wrestlers. All the focus is on the men,” she said. “But at WOW, we weren’t the cheerleaders. We were the wrestlers.”

by Jennifer Wardell
jwardell@davisclipper.com

Read more: Davis County Clipper - Local musician looks back at time as professional wrestler



TV PREVIEW INSIDE

Standard-Examiner
June 6, 2008



Getting Out



Little voice,
funny woman



Zydeco's back



'Voyeur' vibes

Body slams and violin jams

The former fiddling Phantom
opens Layton summer series



Fiddler fits Layton bill

By LINDA EAST BRADY
Standard-Examiner staff
lbrady@standard.net

The Phantom, the mystery woman of the 2000-2001 Women of Wrestling league, didn't know if she should dedicate herself to her violin or to the art of the body-slam.

Lynnette Thredgold, who played the cape-wearing, fiddle-toting Phantom on TV, chose to do both — and more besides.

Still fit as a fiddle, Thredgold is a former competitive natural bodybuilder, as well as the trainer of two Mr. Utahs.

And now, Thredgold is learning to fly — an airplane, that is, not in her old Phantom cape and tights.

"I am never afraid to do something. I want to," said Thredgold, calling from her Farmington home. "My latest thing is that I am very near to getting my pilot's license, learning on a Cessna 172. But this is not something I always wanted to do or anything. In fact, I was always afraid I wouldn't be able to learn something like that, because it is so complicated.

"If I think I am afraid, I go into something. I always told my children to face their fears, so I'm like, OK — I am gonna learn this."

Underneath that ripped physique, Thredgold is like so many other Utah women. She comes from a family of 10 kids (she's the second oldest). She is a mom of two, stepmom of four, and a grandmother to 10. She earned a master's degree in music performance from the University of Utah.

Playfully, she lists not her birthday on her Web site, but rather a survey-style range of years — Age: 25-35.

Having played with professional orchestras throughout Texas, Utah, Idaho and Colorado, Thredgold nowadays tends to play closer to home. Her latest gig is in her own backyard, when she opens the Davis Arts Council's Summer Nights

With the Stars series on Saturday.

"About five years ago, I played as part of their Sunday night community series, doing a favor to help promote it. I love that stage," she said.

Playing in school

Thredgold played piano from an early age, saying it came easily to her. She started her violin studies in the summer of her third-grade year.

"I love to emphasize that I started in the school system," she said, "because more and more, they are cutting these programs."

The classic repertoire came first, but in college, she started to get interested in other styles. "That eventually led to gigs with the likes of Josh Groban and Zeppelin's Robert Plant and Jimmy Page.

"I guess I am a quote-unquote classical violinist, but I branched out," she said. "That's what I like to do. People have suggested, 'Why don't you just go into jazz, or do this or that?' but that

Thredgold

From 3

spend time."

About three years ago, Thredgold eased into retirement from the bodybuilding competition and show ring.

"I sometimes still judge shows, though. I now am like anyone else — trying to make it to the gym to keep fit. I can't say I am ripped-up for a show

anymore, but I keep myself healthy."

The Phantom

At the height of her bodybuilding career, a league called Women of Wrestling, aka WOW, came to be.

"Someone involved saw me at a bodybuilding show, and wanted me to go to L.A. for an audition. Well, I said, 'I don't know how to wrestle!' But they said they'd teach me."

They also wanted her violin

as part of the act.

By then, the show had auditioned about 500 women, and chosen about 30. When Thredgold arrived for her audition, they expressed interest, but asked her to come back later.

"I said, 'I flew in just for this, it's now or never,' and they let me audition." She laughed. "I pulled out my violin and started playing, making up what I could do as I went. ... And I got it. I spent the summer in L.A., learning how to wrestle. It's not

PREVIEW

- WHO: Lynnette Thredgold
- WHEN: 8 p.m. Saturday
- WHERE: Kenley Centennial Amphitheater, 403 N. Wasatch Drive, Layton
- TICKETS: \$10/general admission, \$12/reserved, \$8/children



AUDIO: Hear "Red Priest Steps Out," and also an interview excerpt in which Lynnette Thredgold talks of her children cheering her on as The Phantom



Lynnette Thredgold, formerly The Phantom in wrestling circles, performs Saturday at Kenley Centennial Amphitheater in Layton.

wouldn't be me. I think what people find interesting about what I do on stage is that I don't just play classical or jazz or pop, I do a big show with a lot of different things to keep the audience engaged."

Steamroller partner

Thredgold cites a longtime musical partnership with Chuck Penington, the arranger for Mannheim Steamroller.

Penington has written for Thredgold, and helped co-produce her three albums: "Amazing Grace," "Cool Energy" and "Dancing With the Red Priest."

The second and third albums feature a mix of styles, but the first one has a theme of nondenominational spiritual music.

"When I decided to record, I didn't want to record a Beethoven concerto — that would not separate me out from any other player. I decided to do a spiritual thing because of the religious community we live in. Even though I no longer affiliate myself with a specific religion, that is my background, and I do have a great respect for it."

Her own concerts started in 1995, soon after the release of "Amazing Grace."

To Layton, Thredgold will bring six musicians — piano, bass, drums, harp, flute and reeds, as well as a singer for one number.

"I will give a little taste of my wrestling past," she said. "And I like to bring in a surprise guest — but I won't tell you who, because it is a surprise. And I always like to premiere a new piece. This time I am redoing 'The Devil Went Down to Georgia,' because people have asked for that forever."

She laughed, adding, "But frankly, I always thought the violin part was a little bit lame, in such a great piece, so I reworked it. I want to show a real duel in there."

Natural bodybuilding

Soon after the birth of her second child in 1995, Thredgold decided to get serious about keeping fit.

"My family tends to be on the heavy side," she said. "I didn't want to go down that road. So I got into bodybuilding and weightlifting."

What started out as a way to keep healthy led to a competitive career. Thredgold was U.S. National Masters Champion in 1999.

But in a world where steroids and worse have become pandemic, Thredgold emphasizes that she built her muscles the natural way.

"I have never, ever tried a steroid and would not even know how," she said. "I like to really emphasize this. People get so desperate for that certain look. We think we have to be a certain size, and that is sad to me. I admit, it has been an interesting process for me, tricky. I really don't think it is all about how you look, it is about what is healthy and what is not, and that is why I kind of eventually veered away from competition. ...

"I did spend a whole lot of time at the gym, and finally, you have to realize what is more important, where you want to

See THREDGOLD | Page 4

all show, believe me. I can still body-slam anyone!"

The show's creators used some of Thredgold's audition ideas to help create her alter-ego, The Phantom.

"I was the mystery person," said Thredgold of The Phantom. "I was never one who spoke to the public. I was the logical one, the smart one, the strong one. I was struggling as to whether I would be a wrestler or violinist. I had my face painted, and a cape, and I would play the violin in the act."

The show lasted only one season. Thredgold says she doesn't miss it, because the demands on her family life, the two-city lifestyle, sometimes made it hard.

But she does miss one thing in particular.

"I wish I still had my cape! They made it especially for me, and I'm sure now it is packed away in a costuming basement or something like that. And I would just love to have it for the show."