

# **Fiddlin' with Amanda Shaw – Cajun Style!**

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by Susan Marquez

Amanda Shaw is a Louisiana girl through and through. Raised in the New Orleans area, she grew up listening to and playing Cajun music. “There’s something about it that speaks to my soul,” she says.

While she may be petite, Amanda fills the stage with her large personality, killer fiddlin’ skills, strong voice, and joie de vivre that is contagious. Amanda Show and The Cute Boys have become a crowd favorite in south Louisiana, where they play a hard-driving, high-energy style of Cajun music.

Amanda says she didn’t come from a musical family, yet she always loved music. “From the time I could hum, I was dancing!” At age four, Amanda saw someone playing the violin on television. “I announced that I wanted to do that.” Her supportive parents took her seriously. Southern Louisiana University in Hammond had a wonderful music school. “The head of the department taught me a violin, and she gave me a strong foundation.”

In her formative years, Amanda’s mom took the budding musician to area restaurants to hear Cajun bands.

“I wanted to learn Cajun music, so I took fiddle lessons with the great fiddle player Mitch Read. He taught me traditional Cajun songs. He would show me a piece and I’d play it back for him while his band was setting up for gigs. I realized from

being around Mitch how important it is to be actively involved in that tradition. It is folk music and culture, which is not written down. It is passed on from musician to musician, generation to generation.”

Amanda has become an accomplished songwriter and she enjoys all types of music with a lot of crossover tunes. But her newest LP, *Joie*, released last year, is her first-ever all traditional Cajun album.

“I don’t speak French,” she admits. “I spent a lot of time learning the lyrics and how to properly sing the songs.”





## Dick Clark's New Year's Rockin' Eve

Fans look forward to seeing Amanda play in venues around New Orleans, and at festivals including JazzFest and French Quarter Fest in New Orleans and Festival International de Louisiane in Lafayette. "I love that older people recognize and love the songs, while younger people really enjoy the

energy of the music.”

In addition to being an accomplished fiddler and songwriter, Amanda is also a television writer and producer. “Back in the day, there were variety shows on television with a little something for everyone. I thought New Orleans needed a 1960s-style variety show because we have a variety of people here. It would be a way to bring New Orleans people together.” For five years, Amanda has produced and hosted the *Amanda Shaw Cajun Christmas Special* on WGNO, the ABC affiliate in New Orleans. “I was so excited to do it the first time, and now here we are, five years later and it is still going strong. We start working on it every year in July.” Amanda says it takes a day to film the music segments, and another day to film the skits. “I love working with the people at the TV station. I have fun with it. I have a custom dress made, and the guys in the band all wear matching shirts. We draw inspiration from entertainers like Dolly Parton and Porter Wagoner, with sassy songs and quick comedy sketches.”

Believing that because she has been given so much, Amanda gives back through the Amanda Shaw Foundation which funds support efforts to build, sustain and empower strong Louisiana families through music, food, and culture.

“I know my career wouldn’t be possible without the belief other people have had in me. There are plenty of other talented people out there who just need an opportunity. I want to help people with their dreams and ideas, to help them pursue the things that make them happy. I believe that will help make our community a better place.”

The Foundation has established a scholarship fund.

Amanda can also add “teacher” to her resume, as she has been teaching a Zoom Master Class. Her Fiddlin Friday Spring Series was an online course where Amanda talks about Cajun music and demonstrates the basics of playing the fiddle. “That has been

a lot of fun," she says. While COVID-19 forced her to give up playing in person, she is slowly getting back out again and is enjoying the support she has gotten at her live shows this spring. "It means the world to me every time people come to pass a good time with me and the guys at a show."

<https://youtu.be/MpPYWRbE6jE>