

## 14 Vermillion Plain Talk

the personal touch she brings to the song.

"It sort of has followed me everywhere," she said. "I ended up presenting my thesis a lot during the end of my senior year and the summer following that, at different conferences. And I'm still doing that."

Earlier this summer she shared her findings involving cowboy music during a presentation at the Deadwood Public Library.

"This is also my first year as part of the Artists in the Schools program hosted by the South Dakota Arts Council," Lynn said, "and what I'll be doing in my residencies with the students is, in a large part, the research for my thesis.

"So it (my studies and research) has really followed me. It became an album and a tour, and I got a great chance to go out and share my research and my music with a lot of people," she said.

Students will likely learn the origins of The Falling of the Pine, another track on Lynn's "Sodbuster" album.

The song is a ballad from the time when "square timber logging" was popular during the Golden Age of Lumbering in northern Minnesota. Sung by M. C. Dean of Virginia, MN, The Falling of the Pine was collected by Franz Rickaby between the years of 1918 and 1925, and is included in Ballads and Songs of a Shanty-boy, published in 1926.

### GOING FULL CIRCLE

Lynn can trace back, with great precision, the moment that folk songs struck a chord with her personally and began to influence her taste in music.

"It's a funny story ... the first song I ever sung on stage, when I was like 12 or 13 years old - I still play as part of my folk music repertoire," she said.

Lynn said her father and grandparents are lovers of old time country music.

"And in all of these small towns in South Dakota, there are jamborees and gatherings once a month or twice a month, and anybody in the audience

"When I was doing my research, my family began telling me stories of my ancestors coming to this part of the country, and their journey, and that's what 'Sodbusters' is all about. It's the story of my great-great-grandmother, Lydia, and her husband traveling to South Dakota and the isolation and the hardships that were all part of making that trip.

### JAMIE LYNN

can go on stage and play with musicians and sing any song they wanted," she said. "Plus, you're singing to a very forgiving crowd."

Lynn, who accompanied her grandparents to one such jamboree, eventually gathered up enough courage step on the stage and sing You Are My Sunshine.

"I enjoyed it a lot then, but when I think about where I started, and where I am now, the type of music is very similar," she said.

Lynn admits, however, that during "the in-between period" of her childhood and her time of research and

study at USD, her musical tastes were "all over the place. I just sort have come full circle, and pretty much ended up where I started, where my roots are, which I think is kind of neat. The realization was very slow in coming; it was very gradual."

The title track of "Sodbusters" is a song Lynn wrote about an ancestor that also found herself swept up in a personal journey on the Great Plains.

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Lynn's personal excursion as a singer and songwriter continues.

One of the reasons she briefly wound up in Nashville was the wanderlust that typically strikes many young people growing up on the plains of South Dakota - the desire to make one's mark in a new, different place.

"Through my research, I really found a deeper connection to South Dakota and to the Midwest, and a greater appreciation from where I came from," Lynn said. "You also learn to greater appreciate the people and the history right here.

"It's definitely been an interesting journey in the last two years in that respect, because it has completely changed my view on where I am and where I'd like to be, and that's right here," she said.

## ECONOMY

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The demand for American food is not limited to one part of the world, Keller said.

"Brazil is a big economy and a big population center. Russia is another economy that is gaining," he said. "Millions of people are starting to eat more food that we export. In the long term, we are doing that (food production) better than anybody else."

North Dakota enjoys an oil boom in addition to its strong agriculture, and South Dakota and Nebraska are national leaders in ethanol and other biofuels, Keller said.

"Right now, energy policy and environmental policy go hand in hand, and politicians are looking to invest in alternative energy," he said. "But more needs to be made (of opportunities) in the private sector. There is a lot of research being done, and there are people with ideas and investments."

Besides its agriculture boom, South Dakota's economy has enjoyed a strong health care industry, Keller said.

"When it comes to health issues, people will spend on that regardless of the economy," he said. "People are not going to cut corners when it comes to health care. The demand always seems to go up."

The region also escaped the housing bubble that has placed a drag on other parts of the country, Keller said.

"Very few of our banks were overextended or over-leveraged," he said. "They weren't chasing around, looking for borrowers who weren't qualified."

South Dakota has also kept

its jobless rate under 5 percent, or about half the national average, Keller said.

However, that doesn't mean the state has been without problems, he said. The manufacturing sector took a hit at the height of the recession, with Yankton holding one of the state's highest jobless rates at more than 7 percent.

"Yankton is a little more industrial than most of South Dakota and was one of the worst affected (by the economic downturn)," he said.

Yankton has made gains in its manufacturing with the recent expansion of businesses, but manufacturing continues to struggle nationally, Keller said.

"Most of the manufacturing segments in the country and the world have significantly underutilized capacity. I would guess that we have in the neighborhood of 30 percent unused capacity in many industries," he said. "We have to see demand increase. For the industry to really grow, you need to add jobs and new facilities, and to buy new equipment."

### RIDING OUT THE STORM

South Dakota and Nebraska may be enjoying a relatively strong economy, but those states don't exist in a vacuum, Keller said. They are ultimately affected by the national and global turmoil.

"If the economy is going to bounce back, the Europeans need to get a handle on things," he said. "And the U.S. government is going to have to come up with some sort of clear plan to address the deficit and address the job growth idea. But there is political gridlock, which adds uncertainty both in Europe and America."

Keller fears that politicians lack the courage to take bold

action or the will to reach a compromise.

"I don't see any signs of people coming to an agreement on a clear plan," he said. "I hope we don't dig in and wait for an election. It's a real waste of 15 months. A lot of times, you never get that (lost opportunity) back."

The United States needs to seize the moment, Keller said.

"Would (a delay) kill us? Probably not," he said. "But wouldn't it be better if we started getting things (back on track)? I think that waiting means lost opportunity, although it's probably not a death knell."

Keller wasn't surprised by the stalemate over the nation's debt limit.

"I predicted early and often that they would dilly-dally around and that it would come up to the last minute. What they came up with wasn't substantial and basically kicked the can," he said.

"They will postpone (action) until the next time that the ceiling comes up. It's a problem with politics and not a problem of economics, which in itself is solvable."

Europe has seen even greater economic chaos with its huge collective economy, Keller said. He looks for the devaluation of currency and other moves that will add to the anxiety.

Meanwhile, the American stock market undergoes huge swings, the USD dean said.

"People sit on their hands, waiting to see what happens," he said. "They're worried about the bubble bursting with change."

Parties with wealth are steering clear of risky investments and holding on to incredible amounts of cash, Keller said.

"They are now talking about trillions - that's starting with a

't' - of dollars they are sitting on," he said. "Formerly, we had 95 percent (of wealth) in portfolios of stocks and bonds, and 5 percent in cash. Now, we are finding a lot of wealthy people sitting on 20 to 25 percent of their investments in cash."

Keller anticipates continued wild swings in the stock market as uncertainty reigns, pushing money toward safe investments with little return.

"As far as markets, (investors) are looking for direction. But there are wild gyrations. I don't see much change for two or three years," he said. "(Investors) are moving into AAA government bonds and safe things like cash, (certificates of deposit) and the bank savings accounts."

Consumer spending has tanked as the national unemployment rate remains above 9 percent and people fear for their jobs or are living on much smaller paychecks, Keller said.

"We won't have strong recovery until unemployment drops. If it's 10 percent unemployment, people aren't confident until the figure become lower," he said. "There is no way we are going to grow the economy and boost production until we get unemployment below 5 percent."

### WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Politicians remain polarized on the idea of another stimulus, Keller said.

"They are talking about the short-term stimulus versus no stimulus and a cut in government spending that will produce some sort of growth.

walk down with him because he is in his mid-80s. In the back of our minds, we thought how wonderful it would be for him to go down with his grandson, who is currently serving in the Marines."

So the family started planning. Kurt contacted Christopher, who was serving in Afghanistan at the time, to see if it would be possible for him to return to South Dakota this summer. The event came together, and even the weather cooperated.

"There were storms all around that night and it looked like the ceremony might be in danger of being canceled," Kurt said. "But it was just like the clouds split and went around us. When we left, the roads and the parking lot were all wet from rain, but at the amphitheater it did not rain at all."

Christopher said that anyone who has served the nation in the military is asked to participate in the ceremony.

"As we leave the stage, every single person gets to touch the flag that flew, symbolizing that there is still that bond and connection and that you did serve the county no matter what

it took," Christopher said. "Regardless of how they served, they did something that only 1 percent of the population of the United States has done. That is a huge honor. Being able to just sit there and touch that flag - knowing what it represents, knowing who all has died and who all has fought for everything that our country stands for today - is unreal."

"I remember reading a bumper sticker right before I joined that said, 'It couldn't always be somebody else's son or daughter,'" Christopher said. "Somebody has to step up, regardless of what you think and how you feel. ... We don't do what we do for the recognition or the respect. We do it because it is something that needs to be done."

Christopher said the thing he will never forget from the flag ceremony is his grandfather's eyes and the pride he saw in them.

"I know that night when it came to be, when we had the chance to go down, his eyes just lit up," he said. "I know that is something we will both remember until the day we die."

## FLAG

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"The thing that I didn't get in pictures was when the two of them were walking back to their seats," he explained. "Dad puts his hands on Christopher's shoulder and says how much of an honor it was to do this together. That was a moment I didn't capture on film but was the best moment of the night for me. We are very proud of both of them."

Planning for the night began in a ritual that started more than 12 years ago for the family.

"Our family started a tradition of meeting together in the Black Hills together," Kurt said. "It just became a mini-family reunion type thing. Every year, we go out there we go to the lighting ceremony at Mount Rushmore. It is the highlight of our trip."

"Every year my father has gone down because he is a World War II veteran - he served in the Navy. So he would go forward. The last few years, either my brother or I would

There is nowhere in the middle," he said.

Stimulus projects could benefit areas such as infrastructure, but any government stimulus produces only short-term results, Keller said.

"It's not the government that produces growth. Ultimately, the private sector has to produce," he said. "We have to find segments of the economy that Americans can rally around, where we can generate a bunch of new jobs. They have to produce something that people want to buy. We have got to get corporations to invest their cash."

The nation also faces tough questions about tackling the deficit, Keller said. Congress could opt for some tax increases along with broad-based budget cuts, he said. However, those cuts would affect popular programs such as education, health care, farm programs, federal disaster aid and military spending.

"As far as cuts, it's a matter of whose ox gets gored the most," he said.

The United States faces critical decisions on defense spending, particularly with two wars still ongoing as the nation

approaches the 10th anniversary of 9/11, Keller said.

"It may be money well spent (on wars). But instead of spending into the trillions (of dollars) in Iraq and Afghanistan, what if it would go into jobs in America?" he asked. "Instead of all that money spent on troops and equipment, we invested it in infrastructure, it would be a considerably different world."

While South Dakota is not immune from the recession, it also avoids the wild economic swings often found elsewhere in the nation, Keller said.

"In many parts of the country, they are going from boom to bust," he said. "We don't have many booms when the rest of the nation is booming, but we also aren't caught in a lot of busts. We had one gold rush (in the Black Hills), and that was it."

Despite the gloom and doom of some naysayers, Keller believes the nation will find a solution to its economic woes.

"I am generally pretty optimistic that this will work out," he said. "For our purposes, we put our faith in (believing) that it will."

Black Hills State University invites friends and alumni back to campus for

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Tuesday, Sept. 6 - Saturday, Sept. 10

Swarm Day is Saturday, Sept. 10

- 10 a.m. | Parade
- 11:15 a.m. | Tailgate Social
- 1 p.m. | Swarm Day Football Game

For a complete list of events and locations visit [www.BHSU.edu/SwarmDays](http://www.BHSU.edu/SwarmDays)



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