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NATALIE MACMASTER & DONNELL LEAHY: *MASTERS OF THE FIDDLE*

Thursday, November 7, 2013
Shirley K. & Anthony J. Pasant Theatre



AFTER CHAT

immediately following performance.

NATALIE MACMASTER & DONNELL LEAHY: ***MASTERS OF THE FIDDLE***

Program to be announced from stage.

NATALIE MACMASTER

Meet Natalie MacMaster: wife, mother and virtuoso Cape Breton fiddler whose passionate proficiency on the beloved four-string amplifies the traditional East Coast sound for contemporary times.

It's a signature sound that has resonated with world audiences through 10 albums, multiple gold sales figures and 27 years; numerous Juno and East Coast Music Awards; two honorary degrees (from Niagara University, NY, and Trent University) and an honorary doctorate (St. Thomas University); the Order Of Canada – and a reputation as one of Canada's most captivating performers.

She also has the respect and admiration of top-notch musicians: master violinist Mark O'Connor, whose camp MacMaster frequents as a guest instructor; legendary cellist Yo-Yo Ma – who recently invited her to participate as a guest performer on his 2008 holiday-themed album *Songs Of Joy & Peace*; banjo prodigy Béla Fleck; fellow fiddling marvel Alison Krauss; guitarist Carlos Santana – the list goes on.

But to Natalie MacMaster, her beloved family now shapes and informs her musicianship as much as the jigs, reels, air, waltzes, strathspeys, marches and traditional folk that feed her spiritual soul. “Not so much the sound as the delivery,” states MacMaster, who married Donnell Leahy in 2002. “I am a mom now. I am a wife. Those things are my priorities in life, and I think people get a sense of that – of that part of who I am – through my show. But my music itself hasn't changed.”

Family has reinvigorated Natalie MacMaster's commitment to the stage and her audience. “I like being on stage even more,” she enthuses. “When I appear onstage, that's my departure from Momhood – and I transform into Natalie MacMaster: the entertainer, the fiddler, the performer. I relish that now more.”

As do her audiences, who are left clapping, hollering and screaming for more as MacMaster and her band wow them with stylistic diversity as reflected in such top-selling CDs as the Grammy-nominated *My Roots Are Showing*, *Blueprint* and *Yours Truly*.

Born June 13, 1972 to Alex and Minnie MacMaster in Troy, Inverness County, Nova Scotia; Natalie MacMaster's impressive musical lineage includes a cadre of amazing fiddlers, including her uncle, fiddle prodigy Buddy MacMaster (with whom Natalie recorded the 2005 gem *Traditional Music From Cape Breton Island*); her cousin Andrea Beaton, and the late, great

Canadian folk icon John Allan Cameron.

MacMaster forged her own sound, debuting her fiddling prowess at the age of nine-and-a-half years at a Glencoe Mills, N.S. square dance. She delivered her first album, *Four on the Floor*, at the age of 16.

She has performed with The Chieftains, Paul Simon, Faith Hill, Luciano Pavarotti and on “The Tonight Show with Jay Leno,” “Late Night with Conan O’Brien,” the ABC “2002 New Year’s Eve Special” and “Good Morning America.”

“I have gratefulness and an appreciation,” says MacMaster. “I am grateful for the ability to play music to people, for the ability that I have to extract so much from a tune or a melody and the rich feeling I get from it. Music has given me another layer and dimension of feeling because it really broadens the soul and really broadens the heart, you know?”

DONNELL LEAHY

“The violin sings, but the fiddle dances.”

It may be an old musician’s proverb, but it’s one that fittingly applies to the unique and contemporary style of master fiddler Donnell Leahy.

As leader of Leahy, the Lakefield, Ontario-based eight-piece family outfit that bears his surname, Donnell has helped Leahy achieve more than half-a-million copies in combined worldwide CD sales of *Leahy*, *Lakefield*, *In All Things* and *Live*; propel them onto the global stage in a highly-praised run as the opening act for Shania Twain’s *Come On Over* world tour; and earn them multiple Juno Awards – including Best New Group, Best Country Group and Best Instrumental Album.

Spending time touring with his family and with his wife, Natalie MacMaster, is crucial to Donnell.

“It’s phenomenal to be able to tour with your family,” he explains. “I go out with my brothers and sisters on tour, and my three brothers and me may hang out together on a Tuesday afternoon.

“I know that other brothers haven’t got that opportunity because they all have separate lives and separate jobs. We really like our family and our group – we’re just best friends. To be able to hang out like that is amazing.”

And with three young children of their own, it’s also important that he devotes meaningful time to Natalie, a situation that can be complex when one spouse is on the road without the other.

“Touring has always been a challenge, and with children there are always a lot of logistics to work out,” he explains. “But we want to be together as a family, and we want to play together. Although Natalie’s style is very different from mine, we love the combination. Everything makes sense for us to tour together.”