



CMA Performing Arts Series 2013-14



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DEPARTMENT OF PERFORMING ARTS, MUSIC, AND FILM

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COURTESY CAMI

Masters of the Fiddle: Natalie MacMaster and Donnell Leahy

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Welcome to the Cleveland Museum of Art

The new season of concerts at the Cleveland Museum of Art showcases 18 outstanding performances from around the globe and the U.S. This year we focus on four themes: Masters of the Violin, Flamenco Festival, Asian Performances—Part One: Subcontinent of India, and Mother & Child.

Tonight we are pleased to welcome back to Cleveland the ever-popular fiddlers Natalie MacMaster and Donnell Leahy for a high-energy evening of Cape Breton music and family fun.

Later this month the Masters of the Violin series focuses on another of the violin's relatives, the *kamancheh* (Persian spiked fiddle), in a performance by Kayhan Kalhor who is joined by Ali Bahrami Fard on *santoor* (Persian dulcimer).

Then in December, we turn to music from various eras inspired by spiritual imagery of the mother and child. First, a return engagement by the State Capella of Russia in the Ames Family Atrium. Then a free musical event showcasing the impressive Cleveland Orchestra Youth and Children's Choruses, Quire Cleveland, and Trinity Cathedral Choir with organist Todd Wilson.

I invite you to come early to look at works of art, dine at the restaurant or cafe and refresh yourself with great performances from around the world. There's much more to come. . . glance through the Performing Arts Series brochure available in the lobby and see if anything catches your imagination for an evening in the fabulous surroundings of the Cleveland Museum of Art.



Massoud Saidpour
Curator of Performing Arts and Music



Masters of the Fiddle Natalie MacMaster and Donnell Leahy

Friday, November 15, 2013 • 7:30 p.m.
Gartner Auditorium, The Cleveland Museum of Art

ENSEMBLE

Natalie MacMaster – *violin*

Donnell Leahy – *violin*

Mac Morin – *piano*

Tim Edey – *guitar and accordion*

PROGRAM

Tonight's program will be announced from the stage and will be presented with one intermission.



NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

The Maritime Provinces on the East Coast of Canada were primarily settled by Irish and Scottish communities fleeing famine or economic hardship at home. On Cape Breton island there was a huge influx of Scottish settlers in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries due to the Highland Clearances. To this day, the descendants of those immigrants show a pride in their Scottish fiddle style—generally accompanied by piano—much more rootsy and dance-like than the classical veneer that’s developed in the British Isles. Many musicians from Scotland, in fact, repeat their ancestors’ immigrant journey in order to rediscover their own traditions as preserved on craggy Cape Breton.

All that activity aside, the revival in East Coast music was hard to foresee. Just two decades ago, it was still necessary to seek out East Coast music in the kitchens of Newfoundland fishing villages or the church halls of Cape Breton. Poverty, isolation, and the lack of interest in Celtic music left these musicians feeling that their traditions and passions were at best quaint.

Aside from a few regionally popular groups in the 80s, the last ten years has brought on the most revolutionary impact, a new generation of fiddlers including legacy prodigies Ashley MacIsaac and Natalie MacMaster. These artists have taken the music of Cape Breton around the world, on their recordings, music television, and international tours, featuring some of the best East Coast musicians in their ensembles.

—Notes (abridged) by Charles Foran,
Rough Guide to World Music, Vol. 2



ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Natalie MacMaster

Award winning Cape Breton musician, Natalie MacMaster, began her fiddling career at 16 releasing her debut album *Four on the Floor*. Her musical venture now spans over three decades, completing 11 albums, performing thousands of shows and collaborating with a multitude of world renowned artists.

The most recent album by MacMaster, *Cape Breton Girl*, has been self-described as a “straight-ahead, traditional record.” The album is filled with an invigorating collection of toe-tapping jigs, reels, and strathspeys that embodies her most cherished values, her family and home, tradition, and faith.

Natalie’s family and work-life have been intertwined since marrying fellow fiddler Donnell Leahy in 2002. Her values are equally as important in her life as music. She believes incorporating family into her performances and music is the perfect way to maintain a healthy work-life balance. MacMaster and Leahy now have five beautiful children, the newest addition being born August of 2012. She maintains her devotion to family by having their children join her and her husband on tour. Natalie admits that becoming a mother has reinvigorated her love for the stage by giving her a chance to transform from Natalie The Mom into Natalie MacMaster The Entertainer.

Over MacMaster’s three decades of performing her audience is still left clapping, hollering, and screaming for more as she and her band wow them with stylistic diversity without losing the traditional Cape Breton groove. The applause only increases with excitement when she incorporates step dancing into her performance. Although her stage presence is reason enough to see one of her shows, it’s the elegance with the bow, the intricate technique with the fiddle, and



the embrace of the Cape Breton tradition that floors her admirers at over 100 shows a year. The dedicated work ethic Natalie has shown throughout her career has garnered her well deserved recognition throughout the industry. In turn, this has amounted to multiple gold albums, awards from all across North America, as well as an honorary doctorate from St. Thomas University and honorary degrees from Niagara University, NY, and Trent University. She has also received the Arts & Letters Award from the Canadian Association of New York, the honor of being a member of the Order of Canada, and—most recently—receiving an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree from the Atlantic school of Theology.

MacMaster's sought-after talents are in demand by her musical peers, all from a range of genres. She has collaborated with countless artists, including a recording with Yo-Yo Ma, which won a Grammy. In turn, Natalie has enlisted the expertise of many world renowned artists to contribute to her own projects throughout the years.

More recently, Natalie's talents have expanded to include co-writing and publishing the picturesque 161-page coffee table book *Natalie MacMaster's Cape Breton Aire* with Pulitzer Prize-winning wordsmith Eileen McNamara and featuring Boston-based Eric Roth's breathtaking photography.

With her Cape Breton roots, dedication to her craft, and love for her family, Natalie is a musical force with a long and successful career in music, who will, without a doubt, continue to warm the hearts of fans for years to come.

www.nataliemacmaster.com



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.

"Speaking from the objective of a fellow fiddler, Donnell takes the violin and truly soars," says Natalie MacMaster, Donnell's wife and an expert on the bow-and-strings in her own right.

"It is remarkable how he can play with this intense power, but maintain the sweetness and tone of the instrument. He's absolutely precise and articulate—a must-see to believe."

Adds record executive Geoff Kulawick: "Donnell Leahy is quite likely the greatest fiddle player in the world right now."

But you don't have to be a musician to appreciate the finesse that Donnell displays in his performance.

"You're not a fiddler, you're a genius!" a fan recently proclaimed after being dazzled by a 90-minute performance.

Donnell continues to dazzle: 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.

Leahy isn't Donnell's sole musical concern either: He also occasionally performs with his wife, Cape Breton fiddling sensation Natalie MacMaster.



Spending time touring with both families 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 five 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.”

There is that third component: the fiddle.

Just as it’s impossible for anyone to extract Donnell from his family roots, it’s unfathomable to distinguish the self-taught master fiddler from his instrument.

“The fiddle is such an extension of my body,” he admits. “The bow is literally an extension of my arm, and the energy I have in my arm goes into the bow.

“It expresses my personality, my spirit.”

Not to mention a palate of emotions that are verbally unspoken, but fervently articulate.

“I’m not the greatest with words, but on the fiddle, I can tell the whole story passionately,” says Donnell. “If you want to play a sad piece, it’s easy to be sad playing it. I’m aggressive, a quick mover, spirited, athletic and that



comes out in my fiddling. I’ve always been willing to take risks and try anything on the fiddle.

“And I think I’ve learned that you really have to believe what you’re playing.”

Those that watch the mesmerizingly strident, exultant and high-energy performance from Donnell—as well as his Leahy siblings Angus (fiddle) Doug (fiddle), Frank (drums), Siobheann (bass, piano and fiddle, dance and vocals); Agnes (dance, vocals, keyboards); Erin (piano, vocals, dance) and Maria (guitar)—are quickly converted into believers, lapping up every amazing moment of the troupe’s riveting concert, with the eldest Leahy brother serving as its animated sparkplug.

It’s been a lifetime of practice: Exactly how early did the Donnell Leahy story begin?

“Probably when I was in my mother’s womb,” he admits, half-jokingly—especially since Leahy parents Frank and Julie led their own band.

“They would play at local square dances, round dances and weddings,” Donnell recalls. “Our parents had plenty of house parties and ceillidhs. We witnessed that as kids and it was just natural for us to play.”

Encouraged to start early, Donnell received his first fiddle at three-years-old and Frank—a fiddle player—and Julie—a pianist, singer and step dancer—started the lessons.

He credited his parents with teaching him how to hold the instrument.

“It allowed me to shift into all the positions and do things with my bow that one probably wouldn’t be able to do if you didn’t hold it properly.”

Only one year later, Donnell began playing competitively.

“You need a reason to play,” he explains. “You can’t tell your kids just to practice—you have to get them an audience and have a reason to play.



“I’d be the four-year-old playing against the 12-year-olds,” he recalls. “I moved up to the older class, although it wasn’t about the winning. It was about getting better.”

Donnell would practice incessantly on the family beef farm homestead in Lakefield.

“Dad would take me to the field when I was a young lad,” Donnell recalls. “He’d be working ground or baling hay and he’d put me under a tree with shade. Every time he came round with the tractor, he’d be able to watch me. Of course, I’d have my fiddle with me. I’d sit there and play the fiddle under the tree. The next time he came around I’d be asleep.”

Donnell’s competitive streak spurred him on.

He became intimately familiar with the music of New Brunswick fiddling sensation Don Messer; All Ireland fiddle champion Sean McGuire, Cape Breton master Jerry Holland, Ontario’s Graham Townsend, and Quebec’s Ti-Jean Carignan, listening to their records and learning each song note for note by ear.

“I was exposed at the right time to all these different styles of music,” Donnell notes. “Along the way, I heard a bit of classical and then the magnificent Stéphane Grappelli.

“But my style is Canadian, my own thing.”

As family members grew into their instruments, the octet (out of 11 children!) Leahy was formed: and then during a six month residency in Germany, Donnell discovered the music of a young Cape Breton fiddler named Natalie MacMaster and decided they had to meet.

“I met her music first,” Donnell recalls. “We were playing in Germany and one of my sisters had a cassette she would play. I asked her about it, found out she was an 18-year-old girl from Cape Breton. When I heard that style being played by a young girl, she tweaked my interest, and I decided I had to meet her.



“The day after I got home from Germany, I jumped in the car and drove to Cape Breton. I found out she was in Truro at Teacher’s College, so I drove there and asked her out for dinner.

“I said, ‘I don’t know what you look like. Maybe if you brought your fiddle, I’d know who you were.’ We went out for dinner, played some tunes, and the rest is history. As Natalie put it—we dated for two years, broke up for 10, and then got married.”

Donnell says touring with Natalie MacMaster will complement his studio and performances with Leahy.

“My performances with Natalie and Leahy fulfill me in different ways,” admits Donnell. “Both remain career priorities.”

And if life isn’t busy enough for Donnell—did we mention he’s a farmer as well?—he will also help continue to run the annual Leahy Music Camp, co-hosted by Natalie MacMaster.

“We decided to hold a music camp in our hometown and invite people to come from around the world and learn the Leahy way,” Donnell explains.

“Natalie and I had talked about doing a fiddle camp, but we merged the idea of doing one with Leahy. We provide teaching for fiddle, piano, guitar, and step dancing—basically everything we do.

“It’s three days of solid instruction with concerts, talks, special guests—and it’s a great camp, if I do say so myself. People attend from all over the U.S., Canada and Europe.”

No wonder Sir Yehudi Menuhin once described a violinist—or, less formally, a fiddler—as “half tiger, half poet.”

Donnell Leahy certainly fits the bill.

www.leahymusic.com



Mac Morin

As with most Cape Breton musicians, music for Mac started early and was humbly nurtured in the home. Step dancing came first, with his earliest steps and guidance provided for by his mother, Mary Catherine, herself a noted dancer who toured the UK and performed at the the World Expo in Montreal in 1967.

By 15, Mac was known as one of Cape Breton's finest dancing performers and began teaching traditional dance in Cape Breton. He continues to travel throughout Canada, the US and Europe teaching/performing the traditional dancing of the Island with recent workshops at the Gaelic College (Cape Breton), Sabhal Mor Ostaig (Scotland), and the University of Limerick (Ireland). He has also recently performed several tours with Dannsa, a Scottish dance/music ensemble during the winters of 2009–2013.

Although piano was not his first display of the Cape Breton culture, it has become another element that Mac is now known for. Since he began to play nearly 20 years ago, he has managed to record and tour with many great performers including Yo Yo Ma, the Rankin Family, Ashley MacIsaac, Allison Krauss, Dianna Krall, the Cheiftains, Art Garfunkle, and many more. He was a cofounder/coproducer of the Cape Breton traditional group, Beolach, whose 2 albums were nominated for East Coast Music Award (ECMA). He has most recently recorded with Natalie MacMaster on her ECMA award winning album, Cape Breton Girl, and continues to tour with her throughout North America and Europe. On rare occasions when he is home in Cape Breton, he is highly sought after to lend his skills at dances, concerts, ceilidhs, and the odd house party.

Not only a performing artist, Mac produced and recorded a self titled album (released in 2004) that was nominated for an ECMA and is now in preproduction on another future release.

www.macmorin.com



Tim Edey

Tim Edey is a successful solo artist, multi-instrumentalist, singer and double award winning musician. The 2012 BBC Radio Two "Best Musician of the Year" and "Best Duo" (BBC Folk Awards 2012) with harmonica guru Brendan Power.

2013 continues to see Tim branch out playing his solo shows. He featured at this year's Celtic Connections in Glasgow with accompanist Peter Gazey.

Tim is in the process of recording a brand new album featuring the "String Section" of Scottish musician Patsy Reid.

At just 33, he has toured the world and recorded with most of the major names in Celtic roots music including: The Chieftains, Michael McGoldrick, Seamus Begley, Christy Moore, Sharon Shannon, The Barra MacNeills, JP Cormier, Shaun Davey, Lunasa, Vinnie Kilduff, Altan, Mary Black, Session A9, Julie Fowlis, Frankie Gavin and more.

Originally from Broadstairs, Kent where he honed his style learning from his father Richard a fine guitarist and listening to Ed Boyd, Steve Cooney, and Django Reinhardt. He has lived in Ireland and now resides in Scotland where he is based and tours all over the world regularly.

www.timedey.co.uk

CREDITS

Natalie MacMaster and Donnell Leahy appear by arrangement with

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UPCOMING PERFORMANCES AND EVENTS

Kayhan Kalhor

Wednesday, November 20, 7:30 p.m.

The three-time Grammy nominee and acclaimed virtuoso on the *kamancheh* (Persian spiked fiddle) has been instrumental in popularizing Persian music in the West through his many musical collaborations. Kalhor appears with Ali Bahrami Fard on *santoor* (Persian dulcimer). \$29–\$45

Music in the Galleries

Wednesday, December 4, 6:00 p.m.

Our 2013–14 season of “first Wednesday” gallery concerts continues with an hour-long performance by musicians from the Cleveland Institute of Music. Free.

State Capella of Russia

Wednesday, December 4, 9:00 p.m. – Ames Family Atrium

“What a choir! Beautiful, noble, ideally balanced sounding, diversity of timbres, flawless clear intoning. We can only dream about such a choir”—*Le Monde de la Musique*

The fifty-member mixed choir, under the direction of Valery Polyansky, returns to the CMA Performing Arts Series in the magical setting of the atrium with a program of Orthodox music, carols, Russian folksongs, and more. \$33–\$51

Pre-concert talk by David J. Rothenberg, associate professor of music at CWRU, who will discuss Marian music and ties to the museum’s collection at 7:30 p.m. in Gartner Auditorium

Mother and Child

Saturday, December 14, 2:00 p.m.

This themed choral event focuses on music inspired by holy imagery of the Virgin and Child in the museum’s collection of medieval art. The program progresses through the museum and features performances by Quire Cleveland, the Cleveland Orchestra Youth and Children’s Choruses, and Trinity Cathedral Choir with organist Todd Wilson. Seating is limited in the galleries. Free.

Pre-concert talk on Virgin and Child imagery by Stephen Fliegel, curator of medieval art, at 1:00 p.m. in the Recital Hall.

CMA Performing Arts Series

Visit ClevelandArt.org/PerformingArts for more information about performances, including audio/video samples and program notes.

MASTERS OF THE VIOLIN

L. Subramaniam

Friday, October 4, 7:30

O’Connor String Quartet

Wednesday, October 30, 7:30

Jordi Savall and Hespèrion XXI

Friday, November 1, 7:30

Masters of the Fiddle: Natalie MacMaster and Donnell Leahy

Friday, November 15, 7:30

Kayhan Kalhor

Wednesday, November 20, 7:30

Gil Shaham, Solo Violin

Thursday, February 6, 7:30

Ray Chen and Julio Elizalde

Wednesday, February 12, 7:30

Riccardo Minasi and Musica Antiqua Roma

Wednesday, February 19, 7:30

Midori

Saturday, April 12, 7:30

Roby Lakatos

Friday, May 2, 7:30

FLAMENCO FESTIVAL

Ballet Flamenco

Eva Yerbabuena

Wednesday, March 5, 7:30

Estrella Morente

Wednesday, March 12, 7:30

Tomatito

Friday, March 14, 7:30

ASIAN PERFORMANCES PART 1: SUBCONTINENT OF INDIA

L. Subramaniam

Friday, October 4, 7:30

Sufi Devotional Music: Asif Ali Khan

Wednesday, March 19, 7:30

Nrityagram Dance Ensemble

Friday, April 11, 7:30

Mother and Child: Sujatha Srinivasan

Sunday, May 11, 2:00

MOTHER AND CHILD

State Symphony Capella of Russia

IN THE ATRIUM

Wednesday, December 4, 9:00

Mother and Child

Saturday, December 14, 2:00

Mother and Child: Sujatha Srinivasan

Sunday, May 11, 2:00