

## Preview

### CMA's "Masters of the Fiddle" — a chat with Natalie MacMaster

by Mike Telin



On Friday, November 15 beginning at 7:30 pm in Gartner Auditorium the Cleveland Museum of Art's [Performing Arts Series](#) presents Masters of the Fiddle: [Natalie MacMaster](#) and [Donnell Leahy](#). The sold-out concert includes French Canadian, Celtic, Bluegrass and Cajun music in addition to original compositions by MacMaster and Leahy.

“Sold out, how exciting is that!” Natalie MacMaster exclaimed by telephone. MacMaster says that she always looks forward to being on stage with Donnell Leahy, who is also her husband. She is also quick to point out that they do travel as a family and yes, they do travel with their four children. So how does MacMaster juggle everything that comes with the life of a working mother who performs over 100 concerts dates a year? “I don’t really know the answer, but I do know that life is full and rich and exciting and difficult and wonderful. We’re really living and all the things you could hope for are happening for us, with the children, building a home and being able to play music. It’s fabulous.”

MacMaster says the show as always, is very energetic and upbeat. “In one sense it’s very lighthearted — full of happy and fun music. But we have spent a lot of time working on arrangements and finding all the great musicians who are part of the show. We play a lot of typical fiddle-type tunes as you would expect, and we have a bit of dancing. There are also some original pieces that I think are kind of different and sound pretty worldly so it’s a good combination of things and a lot of variety.”

And why does the Troy, Nova Scotia native think her music has been so embraced by audiences? “I don’t know for sure, but I could guess a few things,” she answers warmly. “The fiddle is something that connects people. And in Canada there are so many styles

and strong fiddle traditions that go across the country from coast to coast and I think it is similar in the States. There are a lot of pockets of deeply-rooted fiddle music that's been around for years and years. And people seem to have something in their backgrounds — they'll say, 'my grandfather used to play the fiddle'. So it is something that is nostalgic for them.”

In the end, MacMaster believes the biggest reason for the popularity is that the music has stood the test of time. “There have been a lot of fads, music that has come and gone, but fiddle music has been around forever. Even when the winds change and the tide goes in and out, when different pop cultures surge and fall to the wayside, fiddle music is always still there kicking along in the background. It's never gone away. It's authentic. It comes from a real place from genuine people. There's nothing artificial about it.”

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