

The Cleveland Orchestra celebrates the Holidays

by Mike Telin



It's all about the holidays this week at Severance Hall. On Wednesday, December 17 at 7:30 pm, Brett Mitchell will lead The Cleveland Orchestra and renowned Cape Breton fiddler Natalie MacMaster in "Christmas in Cape Breton," a special show that mixes folk and Celtic styles with Holiday favorites and Nova-Scotian jigs.

"We're really excited about it," MacMaster said during a telephone conversation. "I love playing music with symphony orchestras. It's such a nice change for us. We do about a dozen shows with orchestra each year, out of our one hundred shows a year. And this is even more special because it is Christmas time."

If you've had the privilege of hearing Natalie MacMaster perform live, you know she is one of the most versatile and exciting musicians on the folk and Celtic scenes. You also know that Christmas is a special time for her. "I'm a fiddler and at Christmas time in Cape Breton there are a ton of house parties. It's a time to get together and play our traditional music, so there will be a lot of that on the program as well."

With so many great Christmas songs to choose from, does MacMaster have a favorite? "I don't necessarily have a favorite, but there is a fun little tune called *Christmas in Killarney*. It's a jig that translates to the fiddle so well."

In addition to the Orchestra, MacMaster will be joined by her drummer Eric Breton, and long-time piano player, Mac Morin. "Mac has been with me off and on for twenty years. We're both from the town of Troy, Cape Breton."

Although her children are traveling with her on her current eleven-concert tour, unlike her past two Christmas shows in Cleveland, they're not part of the Symphony show. "This is the adult version," MacMaster says. "But that's not to be taken the wrong way," she quickly adds with a chuckle.

The Orchestra's Holiday Concerts continue on Thursday, December 18 at 7:30 pm when Robert Porco leads The Cleveland Orchestra, the Cleveland Orchestra Chorus and members of the Cleveland Orchestra Youth Chorus in the first of six concerts featuring music for the Christmas Season. Guest choruses include the Cleveland Orchestra Children's Chorus (matinees on December 20, 21), the University of Akron Chorus (December 18) and members of the Cleveland Orchestra Youth Chorus (evenings December 18, 19, 20).

As always, these concerts will include sing-alongs and of course, a surprise visitor. Check our concert listings page for dates and times.

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