

Wednesday, February 28 at 7:30pm, 2007
UMass Amherst Fine Arts Center Concert Hall

Natalie MacMaster

Brad Davidge, guitar

Miche Pouliot, drums, percussion

Matt MacIsaac, highland bagpipes, small pipes,
whistles, banjo

Mac Morin, piano, step dance

Shane Hendrickson, bass

Program will be announced from the stage

Sponsored by Coca Cola, The Recorder, 93.9 The River and Valley Kids

Natalie MacMaster

With a talent that remains both raw and wondrously refined, and backed by a band any top musician would be proud of, Natalie MacMaster continues to stun crowds around the globe with her feverish fiddling and mesmerizing step dancing.

Well-known to international audiences as one of Canada's major talents, Natalie has been an ambassador for traditional East Coast music, and is credited with lifting the style to its contemporary prominence. While acclaimed for taking Celtic music to new heights, each album Natalie releases displays a creativity and range that constantly expands the boundaries of the genre.

Natalie first picked up the fiddle at age nine and hasn't looked back. The niece of famed Cape Breton fiddler Buddy MacMaster (with whom she recorded a tribute album in 2005), Natalie quickly became a major talent in her own right. After winning numerous awards for her early traditional recordings, Natalie's subsequent releases have been boldly ground-breaking and received with abundant accolades.

With albums like *In My Hands* (Rounder), which fused Jazz, Latin, and the guest vocals of label mate Alison Krauss, and the Grammy-nominated *My Roots Are Showing* (Rounder), Natalie has proven time and time again that she is making her mark on music history. 2003's remarkable *Blueprint* (Rounder) combined Natalie's own musical radiance with the cream of American roots instrumentalists, including Bela Flack, Jerry Douglas, Sam Bush, and Edgar Meyer, and won her "Best Female Artist of the Year" and "Best Roots/Traditional Solo Recording" at Canada's East Coast Music Awards in 2005. Two of Natalie's CDs have charted on *Billboard's* Top 20 Selling World Music charts, while four of her previous five CD releases have been certified "gold" (50,000+) in Canada. Natalie has a Bachelor of Education degree from the Nova Scotia Teachers College, and has received honorary doctorates from St. Thomas University and Niagara University. In July of 2006, Natalie was one of the youngest people ever named a member of the prestigious Order of Canada – Canada's highest civilian honor.

Available October 10, *Yours Truly* is MacMaster's tenth album, and a return to the more wide-ranging stylings of *In My Hands*. Co-produced by Natalie and her husband, fellow fiddle virtuoso Donnell Leahy of the famed Canadian band Leahy, *Yours Truly* finds her continuing to ingeniously incorporate new sounds and concepts into her rich Cape Breton musical heritage, proudly claiming a place for the timeless strains of her native traditions in today's musical universe. Exploratory, yet firmly grounded, this album benefits greatly from MacMaster's carefully balancing of the contributions of her dynamic regular band with those of a host of special guests, including such acoustic music luminaries as Rushad Eggleston (cello), Natalie Haas (cello), and Jens Krüger (banjo). The album boasts a moving version of the classic "Danny Boy" featuring a lead vocal by pop superstar Michael McDonald. Overall, the sound is steeped in the driving rhythms and soaring tonalities unique to Cape Breton, with MacMaster's trademark intensity and brilliance shining throughout.

In 2005, Natalie and Donnell launched an Internet radio show entitled Cape Breton Live, which features live performances of musicians in traditional venues along the East Coast. Earlier in the year, Natalie played a moving tribute at New York's Carnegie Hall to journalist and news anchor Peter Jennings, who had been one of Natalie's greatest fans. The bittersweet track "Farewell to Peter" is one of the emotional highpoints of *Yours Truly*.

MacMaster and Leahy were proud to announce the birth of their first child, Mary Frances Rose in 2005. Motherhood has barely slowed Natalie, however, and she has already begun the touring-with-baby experience, with the help of her mother. "Having someone you trust on tour with you to help take care of your child is a must," she says. Natalie's live performances are renowned for their incandescent energy and toe-tapping, rhythmic intensity. She has shared the stage with Santana, The Chieftains, Paul Simon, Pavarotti, Faith Hill, Don Henley, Michael McDonald and

dozens of distinguished symphony orchestras, and has appeared on national television programs such as *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno*, *Late Night with Conan O'Brien*, ABC's New Year's Eve special "ABC 2002" and *Good Morning America*. Through it all, Natalie's performances have resounded with what the *Los Angeles Times* described as "irresistible, keening passion."

Brad Davidge, guitar

He has shared the stage with the likes of Faith Hill, Don Henley, Allison Krauss, Barenaked Ladies, Bela Fleck and the Flecktones, Yo-Yo Ma, Michael McDonald, Arlo Guthrie, Judy Collins, Gordon Lightfoot, Hayley Westenra, Patty Loveless, Rosanne Cash, Jann Arden, Paul Brandt, Blue Rodeo, Sam Bush, Mark O'Connor, Randy Bachman, Jackson Browne, and currently touring with Grammy nominated fiddler Natalie MacMaster. He's recorded with such world class talents as Michael McDonald, Bela Fleck, Victor Wooten, and Jerry Douglas. He's performed at such renowned venues as Carnegie Hall, and The Hollywood Bowl and has appeared on *Good Morning America*, *Late Night with Conan O'Brien*, *CBS Morning Show*, and ABC's New Years Eve Special with Peter Jennings. Now, with Juno Award winning producer and former band mate Gordie Sampson, Brad Davidge has embarked on a musical journey like no other - *Unfolded* - Brad's debut solo effort. By removing the boundaries of the traditional east coast style, Brad is revolutionizing a new musical movement that is resonating with audiences world wide.

Brad has played on every recording that Natalie has done since he joined her band in 1999. On Natalie's latest recording, *Yours Truly*, Brad not only played on the entire project, but also either co-wrote and/or co-arranged every track with Natalie. Brad has also been involved in other musical projects. For instance, in January of 2000, Brad was asked to take part in a project which entailed joining a group consisting of elite musicians from around the world for a concert in Glasgow, Scotland. They were to support 6 fiddlers, all from various countries, including Natalie MacMaster, American Liz Carroll, and Norwegian Annbjorg Lien. As well, Brad has done duo shows with violin virtuoso, Mark O'Connor, and has shared the stage with Faith Hill, Don Henley, Michael McDonald, Rosanne Cash, Allison Kraus, Bela Fleck, Sam Bush and Hayley Westenra to name a few. With Juno Award winning producer Gordie Sampson, Brad has embarked on a musical journey like no other. The result is *Unfolded*, Brad's debut solo effort.

Brad has received coast to coast acclaim, including two Nova Scotia Music Industry nominations, Album of the Year, and New Artist of the Year, as well as an ECMA for Pop Artist of the Year. To date, Brad has sold over 5,000 copies of *Unfolded*, reaching fans from London, England, to San Diego, California. The album is also available at www.braddavidge.com.

Miche Pouliot, drums, percussion

Miche Pouliot was born in Toronto, Ontario, Canada at Toronto's Western Hospital on February 21st, 1958 at 6:43 p.m. Things have never been the same. He arrived on the same day as his sister's third birthday party, rudely interrupting the event, and setting the family dynamic for years to come. "I believe we have MOSTLY settled that issue" says Mr. Pouliot. In any case, there is a double celebration each year, on February 21st.

His musical training consisted of recorder, clarinet, french horn and percussion through grade school, but it was guitar that captured his imagination. Studies in classical and folk styles with the renowned Margaret Huggett were definitely a highlight of the grade school years. High school was a different story. French horn and percussion held minor interest, however the drumset held most of Miche's attention. Alas, there were other, more competent players than he, and Stan Clarke, Miche's music teacher actually recommended Miche give up music and take up tennis. To that, Miche replies, "Stan, you are welcome to visit my home anytime and view my 10 platinum and gold albums from projects I've been involved in." They amount to well over 2 million units sold worldwide. Drumset studies with jazzmaster Peter Magadini rounded out his formal musical education.

Miche alternated between guitar and drumset, enjoying the versatility of dual instrumentation and the opportunity to be involved in many a jam session. "Sure, it was cool because when they got tired of my teen-age guitar antics, I could switch to drums and have another few minutes of music before they threw me out" opines Pouliot. Golden memories. After high school, Miche buckled down to making a career of music, starting with Ottawa's free-wheelin' reggae-blues outfit, HEAVENS RADIO. After that it was THE SILVER DARTS, and then onto BRUCE COCKBURN, KD LANG, JANN ARDEN, TOMMY HUNTER and currently NATALIE MACMASTER as well as all the other fine musicians he has been blessed to have the good fortune to work with. "I've been TOTALLY lucky" he states. "But I would say the most important piece of the puzzle was to play my best ALL the time, because you never know who is watching and listening out there".

Matt MacIsaac, highland bagpipes, small pipes, whistles, banjo

Born in Sydney, Nova Scotia, Matt MacIsaac was exposed to and surrounded by piping at an early age. A great-grandson to Pipe Major John A. (Black Jack) MacDonald of the Cape Breton Highlanders, Matt has followed his traditional lineage as a piper just as his relatives have before him. He is truly a natural talent.

As a solo piper Matt has won every major amateur championship in Atlantic Canada and beyond from novice juvenile to grade 1 including the March, Strathspey, and Reel at the prestigious George Sheriff Memorial Invitational in Ontario where he caught the ear of world renowned Pipe Major Angus MacDonald who recognized Matt's level of play as prize worthy in Scotland and encouraged Matt to travel to Scotland and compete at the international level. In 1997 Matt traveled to Scotland and proved what Pipe Major Angus MacDonald pointed out the year prior in Ontario. Competing in the open juvenile 17 and under category Matt won consistently at Abernethy, Perth, Crieff, Glenfinnan, Cowal, and won the MacGregor Memorial Piobaireachd contest at Oban. At Cowal, Matt became the first Canadian to win both the open juvenile 17 and under March, Strathspey, and Reel and Piobaireachd in the same year.

Matt's success in 1997 in Scotland earned him an invitation to play at the 1998 Silver Medal contests at Oban and Inverness. In Oban at the world famous Argyllshire Gathering Matt overcame a faulty fire alarm to win the Silver Medal. Later the same year Matt would place 2nd at the Silver Medal event in Inverness behind his friend and mentor Bruce Gandy.

After years competing solo and with pipe bands Matt now enjoys the best of both piping worlds as a professional touring musician. In 1999 Matt ventured into the world of folk bands touring with "Cuillin", giving him exposure to many other musicians, disciplines, instruments, and styles all of which have served to further his musical experiences and eventually land him his current job touring with Natalie. In December 2004, Matt released his debut solo recording "Matt MacIsaac - The Piping Album", and is currently working on his second album which will feature several different instruments, including the Irish high and low whistle, the guitar and banjo.

Mac Morin, piano, step dance

Dancer, Piano & Keyboard player, Mac Morin is a talented Troy, Cape Breton native whose ancestors were noted Cape Breton step dancers for several generations. Including Mary C. MacDonald Morin (Mother) and John R. 'Roddie Eddie' MacDonald (Grandfather). Mac has been dancing for over 10 years, first being taught by his mother and then the talented Warner sisters of Mabou, Cape Breton. Since then he has taken on the role as teacher in various private and workshop venues.

Along with other highly regarded dancers, Mac was a step dance instructor during the International Celtic Colours Festival held in Cape Breton yearly since 1997. Mac has also made a big name for himself as an accomplished Cape Breton-style piano player.

After two years on the road with Natalie MacMaster's band touring all over the world and sharing the stage with such artists as the Chieftains and Mark O'Connor, Mac has since toured with Howie MacDonald's 'Celtic Brew' and 'Rise & Follies of Cape Breton' shows, the Rankin Sisters,

and is kept busy supplying accompaniment for fiddlers such as Ian MacDougall, Andrea Beaton, Rodney MacDonald, Glenn Graham, Howie MacDonald, Jackie Dunn, Wendy MacIsaac, Troy MacGillivray, Shelly Campbell, and Buddy MacMaster to name just a few.

Mac is also a full-time member of the energetic Cape Breton band 'Beolach' which features fiddlers Wendy MacIsaac and Mairi Rankin, Guitarist Patrick Gillis, Piper Ryan J. MacNeil, Drummer Matthew Foulds and Mac on Piano. The band has toured Canada, United States and Europe and released a self titled CD in 2002.

Speaking of CD's, Mac has just released his first self-titled CD this summer. The recording consists of 17 tracks of traditional and contemporary Cape Breton music and features the talents of Gordie Sampson, Rannie MacLellan, Pius MacIsaac, Patrick Gillis, Betty Lou Beaton, Sandy MacDonald, Kevin Dugas, Al Cross as well as former Natalie MacMaster band members John Dymond and Steve O'Connor. Mac has also appeared on a number of other artist CD's including Buddy MacMaster, Glenn Graham, Troy MacGillivray, Wendy MacIsaac, Beolach, Kinnon Beaton, Ian MacDougall, Pius MacIsaac and Mairi Rankin.

Shane Hendrickson, bass

"It couldn't have been a worse start for a musician," says Shane. Shane was born in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan to a farming family from the small hamlet of Crane Valley (50 people on a good day!). "Growing up, there were no other musicians I could jam with in town and the only music we had was AM radio - not the best influence for a budding musician."

After years of touring, recording, and more touring, Shane's career as a professional sideman started, as he began taking studio gigs and playing for bands and recording acts around the Vancouver area. He was soon picked up by one of the hardest working female trios in Canada, Farmer's Daughter. After a time with Farmers Daughter, Shane again settled into his freelance sideman routine until one day he got a call from Siobheann Leahy, bassist for the Canadian Celtic powerhouse Leahy. "Siobheann asked if I would like to fill in for a couple of weeks for her. Of course I jumped at the chance," explained Shane. "Then she told me the first show was in Detroit in 10 days and it's a 90 minute show!" Gulp! Well by foregoing sleep and food, Shane managed to get the tunes embedded into his head. He walked on stage 10 days later in Detroit with no rehearsal, and the show went off without a hitch. "It went so well that I don't think there was one person in the audience who knew I wasn't a part of the band!" Well, there was one person in the audience who noticed - Natalie MacMaster.

Fast forward two years later. Shane is on the last show in New York of a US tour with Italian singer Patrizio Buanne when he gets a call on his cell from Natalie. She was making some changes in her band and wondered if he'd be interested in working with her. "I thought about it for about a millisecond before accepting!" jokes Shane. Once again, he found himself trying to cram material for a whole 90 minute show into his head! "At least this time I had a whole two weeks to learn Natalie's music!"

"I'm very blessed to be playing with Natalie and her band of incredibly talented musicians," says Shane. "I've got the best seat in the house! Natalie is not only an incredible musician but also she is a great entertainer and probably the nicest person you'll ever meet. It feels like I've won the musicians' lottery!"