

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 17, 2010

- WHAT:** Ensemble Galilei and Neal Conan in
First Person: Stories from the Edge of the World
- WHEN:** Saturday, April 10 at 8:00 PM
- WHERE:** UMass Amherst Fine Arts Center Concert Hall
University of Massachusetts Amherst
- TICKETS:** Call 1-800-999-UMAS or 545-2511 for tickets or go online to
<http://www.umastix.com/>
- IMAGES:** To download images relating to this press release please go online to
<http://www.fineartscenter.com/centerwide/pressRoom/>

(Ensemble Galilei and NPR's Neal Conan in a Remarkable Collaboration with the National Geographic Society)

Ibn Battuta writes of his travels to 14th Century Iraq. George Mallory sends a letter home before he attempts the summit of Mount Everest. Charles Darwin confesses his doubts on a voyage that will change all of what we assume to know. These are just a few of the stories and narratives featured in *First Person: Stories from the Edge of the World*, a remarkable collaboration between the National Geographic Society, NPR's Neal Conan, and Ensemble Galilei. This unique performance will be presented on Saturday, April 10 at 8PM in the Fine Arts Center Concert Hall. Spectacular photographs and images projected on a large on-stage screen, Neal Conan's compelling narration, and evocative music created specifically for this project seamlessly take the audience along on some of the world's most extraordinary expeditions.

Like most of us, Neal Conan grew up reading National Geographic magazine. So when he got to travel as a National Public Radio reporter to Midway Island, the Black Sea, and the Solomon Islands, all the while accompanying National Geographic photographers, it was a first-hand look at the "dedication and innovation" they bring to their jobs, as Conan puts it.

That lifelong appreciation for the magazine helped lead Conan, host of NPR's *Talk of the Nation*, to create *First Person: Stories from the Edge of the World*. The multimedia presentation, which comes to the UMass Fine Arts Center Concert Hall on

Saturday, April 10 at 8:00 PM, includes Celtic music by Ensemble Galilei, readings from the journals of celebrated explorers by Conan and actor Lily Knight, and National Geographic images projected on a large screen.

"We're very happy with the combination of adventure, intensity, comedy, poetry and music," Conan says. "The hard part from the point of view of a radio guy is to be as precise as the musicians, who are amazing. I find myself so carried away by them from time to time that I have a hard time remembering my entrances, which have to be as precise as theirs."

Ensemble Galilei is an ensemble of players from both classical and Celtic traditional backgrounds, playing Irish and Scottish airs and dance tunes, Early and Medieval music, and original compositions. Members of the Ensemble performing in *First Person: Stories from the Edge of the World* include Kathryn Montoya on recorders, oboe, and whistle; Sue Richards on the Celtic harp; Carolyn Anderson Surrick on the viola da gamba; Hanneke Cassel playing the Scottish fiddle; and Allison Edberg on early fiddle.

Neal Conan first read poetry and stories to the music of Ensemble Galilei in 2000 and worked with the group to put together both *A Universe of Dreams*, which debuted in 2004, and *First Person: Stories from the Edge of the World*, which had its premiere at the National Geographic Society in 2007. Weekdays, Mr. Conan hosts *Talk of the Nation*, which is broadcast on about 300 NPR stations and NPR Worldwide. Before that, Conan served NPR News as a reporter, editor and producer and as Bureau Chief in New York and London. He covered many elections, several wars, one impeachment and, in 2004, moderated the first radio-only presidential debate since 1948. In 2000, Mr. Conan took a leave of absence to broadcast baseball play by play for the Aberdeen Arsenal, a team in the independent Atlantic League and wrote a book about his experiences, *Play by Play: Baseball, Radio and Life in the Last Chance League*.

The artwork, maps, and photographs used in the production are astonishing. Images for *First Person: Stories from the Edge of the World* were chosen from one of the most comprehensive and unique collections of photographs and original artwork in the world. The National Geographic Image Collection contains more than 10 million

transparencies, black and white prints, early color photographs, and pieces of original art-and some of the collection's most thrilling pieces are included in this project.

Tickets for Ensemble Galilei and Neal Conan are \$35, \$25, and \$15; Five College/GCC/STCC and youth 17 and under are \$15. Tickets are available from the Fine Arts Center Box Office at 545-2511 or 1-800-999-UMAS, or on the Fine Arts Center ticket website at <http://www.umasstix.com/>.

This performance of *First Person: Stories from the Edge of the World* is sponsored by WFCR/WNNZ, WGBY, and *The Recorder*.

Images suitable for press coverage are available at the Fine Arts Center website: <http://www.fineartscenter.com/centerwide/pressRoom/>.

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