



Boston Celtic Music Fest Special Event: "BCM Fest Goes West(ford)"

None are older than age 25, one of them is still in college, and the others aren't even out of high school yet. And this group of talented young musicians and dancers from the Greater Boston area are banding together, along with some slightly more seasoned players, to present a special concert on Friday, Oct. 12, in Westford, Mass.

The concert, "BCM Fest Goes West(ford)," will take place at The Westford Museum at 8 p.m. (doors open at 7:15). Admission is \$15, \$10 for members of the Westford Historical Society, \$5 for teens and free for under age 13. All proceeds benefit the Boston Celtic Music Fest or BCM Fest, Boston's grassroots, community-oriented festival of Celtic music and dance that will mark its fifth anniversary on Jan. 11-12, 2008.

This event will be a postscript of sorts to the BCM Fest 2007 Finale Concert, "Finding Our Place," which celebrated the shared love of traditional music across generations. Four of the young performers featured in that concert will be appearing Oct. 12: fiddlers Eden Forman, Katie McNally and Amanda Cavanaugh and flutist Rebecca McGowan. Also performing will be Doug Lamey on fiddle and Debbie Billmers, a stepdancer who will be joined by McGowan and Forman on some of the dances.

McNally, in addition to performing, is the major planner and coordinator for the event. "Essentially, I've organized this concert as a way to give back to BCM Fest and to

the Boston Celtic community at large," she says. "I have been privileged to receive tremendous support from some of the most respected Celtic musicians in the world, and in a way, this concert is a tribute to them. It's my turn to promote and — with the help of all the performers — bring new excitement to the tradition."

Sharing the stage with the younger performers are guitarist Cliff McGann, who plays with Lamey as part of The Boston Kiltics, singer Kira McGann and Susie Petrov — accordionist, pianist, dance caller, author, arranger, and a leading expert on Scottish country dance music who is the creative force behind BCMFest's finale concerts.

A member of the BCMFest board, Petrov says she is delighted that this emerging generation, many having learned from older performers who regularly appear at BCMFest, has come of age and — citing McNally's organization of the concert as an example — is starting to assume a leadership role in keeping Celtic music and dance traditions alive and robust.

"BCMFest strives to notice and put forward all the areas of endeavor in traditional music - from tradition-bearers to novice players old to young, amateurs and professionals. We are pleased that this group is doing so much to support our effort."

Petrov says the "Finding Our Place" concert, which also spotlighted some of Boston's most respected "tradition-bearers" — those persons who, over the years, have helped shape the thriving Celtic music and dance scene in Boston — offered a first-hand look at the energy and innovation this new generation is bringing to Irish, Scottish, Cape Breton and other Celtic music.

"The most exciting thing I heard at BCMFest last year," says Petrov, "was when one of our tradition bearers in our finale concert said 'The tradition is in good hands.'"

Petrov says the experience of many young performers — such as those appearing in "BCMFest Goes West(ford)" — represents a significant development in the way traditional music is now passed on. Whereas Irish, Cape Breton and other tight-knit communities have long provided the means for transmitting the music to succeeding generations, she explains, until relatively recently it was rare for young people outside of such natural networks to become immersed in these traditions.

"But then we had the Celtic folk music revival in the 1960s, 70s and 80s, and groups like The Bothy Band or Silly Wizard toured the US and the rest of the world to present this traditional music in a new, exciting way to audiences who weren't as familiar with it. Also, folk music and dance camps — such as The Valley of the Moon in California and Pinewoods here in Massachusetts — became enormously popular, and these to made it easier for kids to find and play the music.

"So in recent years we are seeing come of age this generation that has been shaped and influenced by these important trends — and they have a lot to offer."

Other BCMFest board members are equally enthused. "This event means a lot to BCMFest," said Laura Cortese, BCMFest co-founder. "It's gratifying whenever any group of friends takes the initiative to help spread the word about BCMFest and give people a little taste of what the festival is like. But the fact that the concert organizers and performers are mostly young people of high school and college age makes it all the more important.

"They have been tremendous supporters of BCMFest and bring such energy and creativity to Celtic music and dance; they are the generation which is going to keep the tradition going and bring it to new heights."

Reservations for the Oct. 12 concert are recommended: Call (978) 692-5550 or e-mail
Museum@Westford.com. For directions, see www.westford.com/museum/.