



Fiddler Rebecca Lomnicky and piper David Brewer bring Scottish tunes

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THE PEOPLE'S MUSIC

Corvallis-born violinist Rebecca Lomnicky and bagpiper David Brewer breathe life into long-forgotten Scottish folk songs

BY BENJAMIN RICKER
THE E

While studying abroad in Scotland last year, Rebecca Lomnicky spent hours every day poring over centuries-old manuscripts that belong to the University of Edinburgh.

For six months, Lomnicky studied Scottish culture at the university's School of Scottish Studies and exhumed forgotten Celtic folk songs from its archives.

Lomnicky — a classically trained musician who grew up in Corvallis — and bagpiper David Brewer will perform some of the music she uncovered Friday, Jan. 17, at the Troubadour Music Center.

Lomnicky met Brewer six years ago when she opened for his band, Molly's Revenge, at the Newport Performing Arts Center on the Oregon coast.

They bonded instantly over their shared love for the music of the Scottish highlands.

It's extremely rare, Brewer said, to meet another Celtic folk musician with precisely the same interests.

Brewer and Lomnicky are both drawn to a

SEE LOMNICKY & BREWER ON B3

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CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Corvallis native and international fiddle champion Rebecca Lomnicky performs with bagpiper David Brewer at 8 p.m. Friday, Jan. 17, at the Troubadour Music Center.

Lomnicky & Brewer

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Currently, Lomnicky is enrolled at Cornell University in Ithaca, N.Y., where she studies classical music and

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Lomnicky & Brewer

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very particular kind of Scottish music that has a specific repertoire and a distinct style.

"It's like a niche within a niche within a niche," Brewer said.

Together they recorded an album in 2009 titled "Inspired."

The two are near the end of a four-week, West Coast tour that began in Portland shortly after Christmas, went as far south as Los Angeles and ends in Seattle.

Lomnicky began her classical training in piano and violin when she was 5 years old. Three years later her parents took her to see renowned Cape Breton fiddler Natalie MacMaster in concert.

MacMaster's Cape Breton style is a folk music tradition unique to Nova Scotia, Canada, that has Celtic roots.

On stage, MacMaster smiled wide and danced while playing the fiddle. Her apparent love for the music and her exuberant persona inspired Lomnicky.

"The audience could tell she was having fun. That's the way it should be," Lomnicky said.

On top of that, MacMaster's music was much livelier and more welcoming than the classics Lomnicky practiced at home.

The statuesque fiddle star became Lomnicky's role model. "I wanted to be exactly like her."

As Lomnicky listened to more Celtic music she began to sense its inextricable ties to Celtic culture and history.

Out of her passion for the music grew interest in the lives of the people who passed it down.

"These songs," she said, "are the history of Scotland."

Preserving ancient Celtic music becomes increasingly

important to Lomnicky as more and more of the tradition bearers reach old age and pass on.

Currently, Lomnicky is enrolled at Cornell University in Ithaca, N.Y., where she studies classical music and anthropology.

She enjoys playing violin with the Cornell Orchestra as well as the baroque ensemble Les Petit Violons, but she prefers playing Scottish fiddle alongside Brewer.

"This is the people's music," Lomnicky said, "the music that everyday people played at home with friends, not the music of big, expensive concert halls."

Unlike classical music, which is thoroughly notated and very regimental in terms of how it's meant to be performed, folk music allows room for interpretation.

In fact, much of the music Lomnicky and Brewer perform has been handed down as an oral tradition for hundreds of years.

"What's written out," she said, "is only the skeleton of the song. It's up to the musician to fill it in and bring it to life."

Lomnicky and Brewer are scheduled to perform at 8 p.m. Friday, Jan. 17 at the Troubadour Music Center, 521 S.W. Second St., Corvallis.

Four years ago, Lomnicky performed her senior recital at the Troubadour.

Its size and atmosphere, she said, makes the music store the perfect venue for people interested in learning about the music's history and the culture to which it belongs.

• CHECK IT OUT •

WHO: International fiddle champion Rebecca Lomnicky, featuring bagpiper David Brewer

WHEN: 8 p.m. Friday, Jan. 17

WHERE: The Troubadour Music Center, 521 S.W. Second St., Corvallis

COST: \$15 in advance, \$18 at the door and free for 12 and younger

INFO: rebeccalomnicky.com; davidbrewermusic.com