

For Immediate Release  
**MEDIA RELEASE**

January 25, 2011

## **Natalie MacMaster *Live with the VSO***

**Vancouver, BC** - Sensational Cape Breton fiddler **Natalie MacMaster** will perform with the **Vancouver Symphony Orchestra** on **Wednesday, May 11<sup>th</sup>, 8pm** at the **Orpheum Theatre**. Assistant Conductor **Pierre Simard** will lead the VSO. Tickets go on-sale **Monday, January 31<sup>st</sup> at 10am online at [www.vancouversymphony.ca](http://www.vancouversymphony.ca) and the VSO Customer Service phone line at 604.876.3434.**

Bringing her passion for the music and culture of Cape Breton to Vancouver, **Natalie MacMaster's** passionate, electrifying performances never fail to thrill audiences wherever she goes. She debuted her fiddling prowess at the age of nine-and-a-half years at a concert in Glendale, Cape Breton – then delivered her first album, *Four On The Floor*, at the age of 16, and has been enchanting audiences ever since.

Ms. MacMaster's signature sound has resonated with world audiences through 10 albums, multiple gold sales figures; numerous Juno and East Coast Music Awards; two honorary degrees and an honorary doctorate; the Order Of Canada – and a reputation as one of Canada's most captivating performers.

This exciting performance with the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra will feature many traditional reels, jigs and strathspreys, conveying the flavor of Cape Breton-style Celtic fiddling in Ms. MacMaster's own unique way – with some highland step-dancing thrown in for good measure! In addition, the performance will feature modern takes on traditional tunes with orchestral arrangements by Scott MacMillan.

### **CONCERT INFO**

**Specials: Natalie MacMaster**

**WEDNESDAY, MAY 11, 8 PM, ORPHEUM THEATRE**

**Pierre Simard** *conductor*

**Natalie MacMaster**

Sensational Cape Breton fiddler **Natalie MacMaster** performs *live* with the **Vancouver Symphony Orchestra!** A multiple Juno-award winning artist, Natalie MacMaster's passionate, electrifying performances never fail to thrill audiences wherever she goes!

Visit **Natalie MacMaster** at [www.nataliemacmaster.com](http://www.nataliemacmaster.com)

**TICKET INFORMATION:**

**Tickets:** \$45- \$65 (senior, student and subscriber discounts available)

**Tickets available online at [www.vancouversymphony.ca](http://www.vancouversymphony.ca) or by calling VSO customer service at 604.876.3434**

**BIOGRAPHIES**

**Pierre Simard** *conductor*

In his first season as Assistant Conductor of the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, Pierre Simard is also Artistic Director with both the Vancouver Island Symphony (BC) and the Orchestre Symphonique de Drummondville (QC). Having served as Associate Conductor with the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra, he also performs as guest conductor with major orchestras in Milwaukee, Toronto, Ottawa (National Arts Centre), Victoria, Hamilton, Okanagan, Hot Springs (AR), Trois-Rivières, Québec's Les Violons du Roy and Montreal's Orchestre Métropolitain. Recipient of many honours, Pierre Simard was awarded the Canada Council's Jean-Marie Beudet Award in Conducting, recognizing his work on a national scale. He is also grantee of the Québec Music Council, the Québec Arts Council and the Montreal Mayor's Foundation.

A passionate defender of orchestral repertoire, Pierre Simard devotes himself to reinventing the concert form, combining his fresh ideas, fantasy and humour with music. His outstanding creativity and engagement with youth audiences inspire him to write and perform original symphonic shows, featured all across Canada. Holder of a Master's Degree in Conducting from the Peabody Institute and five Conservatory Prizes from the Conservatoire de musique de Montréal, Pierre Simard studied with Raffi Armenian, Frederik Prausnitz, JoAnn Falletta and Marin Alsop.

The VSO's Assistant Conductor position is made possible with the support of the Canada Council for the Arts.

**Natalie MacMaster**

Meet Natalie MacMaster: wife, mother and virtuoso Cape Breton fiddler. You know her more as the latter than the former; an electrifying performer whose passionate proficiency on the beloved four-string amplifies the traditional East Coast sound for contemporary times.

It's a signature sound that has resonated with world audiences through 10 albums, multiple gold sales figures; numerous Juno and East Coast Music Awards; two honorary degrees (from Niagara University, NY, and Trent University) and an honorary doctorate (St. Thomas University); the Order Of Canada – and a reputation as one of Canada's most captivating performers.

She also has the respect and admiration of the crème de la crème of top-notch musicians: master violinist Mark O'Connor, whose camp MacMaster frequents as a guest instructor; legendary cellist Yo-Yo Ma – who recently invited her to prominently participate as a guest performer on his 2008 holiday-themed album *Songs Of Joy & Peace*; banjo prodigy Béla Fleck; fellow fiddling marvel Alison Krauss; spiritually electrifying superstar guitarist Carlos Santana – the list goes on.

But to Natalie MacMaster, her beloved family now shapes and informs her musicianship as much as the jigs, reels, air, waltzes, strathspeys, marches and traditional folk that feed her spiritual soul.

“Not so much the sound as the delivery,” states MacMaster, who married handsome fiddle phenomenon Donnell Leahy of Leahy in 2002.

“I am a Mom now. I am a wife. Those things are my priorities in life, and I think people get a sense of that – of that part of who I am – through my show.

“But my music itself hasn’t changed.”

If anything, family has reinvigorated Natalie MacMaster’s commitment to the stage and her audience.

“I like being on stage even more,” she enthuses. “When I appear onstage, that’s my departure from Momhood – and I transform into Natalie MacMaster: the entertainer, the fiddler, the performer. I relish that now more.”

As do her audiences, who are left clapping, hollering and screaming for more as MacMaster and her band wow them with stylistic diversity as reflected in such top-selling CDs as the Grammy-nominated *My Roots Are Showing*, *Blueprint* and *Yours Truly*.

The applause only increases in excitement when MacMaster incorporates step dancing into her performance.

“I was 16 when I started focusing on the step dancing, and it was kind of a joke at the time,” she recalls. “I was with a bunch of other young musicians and we all played and we all danced. It was a joke at the beginning, but then I began pulling it out of the hat so to speak when I needed to perk up the crowd, and it always did the trick.

“As the years went on, people came to expect it, so I still do a little of that – even when I’m pregnant.”

But it’s her majesty with the bow and her intricate technique in making the fiddle sing and championing the Cape Breton tradition that floors her admirers for over 100 shows per year.

“I guess culture and tradition never go out of style,” MacMaster explains. “For my crowds, they’ve been there for so many years – they just keep building and hanging on.

“I think they’ve seen me go from a very youthful new sound into a maturity and a confidence through the years.

“I also think they receive whatever it is that I give, not through me trying, but only through the nature of music itself. I always get the sense from them that they deeply understand the unspoken essence of what I do.

“That’s probably a combination of the Cape Breton tradition and a combination of personality and time.”

And she’s not simply sticking to her roots.

"I am a very musical person," MacMaster declares. "I love music, and I don't just love Cape Breton fiddling, although it's my favourite: I love jazz and pop rock and country.

"I grew up listening to Michael Jackson, Whitney Houston, Def Leppard, AC/DC, Anne Murray -- if I hear something really great, like Bonnie Raitt's *Luck Of The Draw* and 'Good Man, Good Woman,' I want to be a part of it.

"That love spawned a few tunes like 'Catharsis' I recorded on *No Boundaries* – my first rock piece – and 'Flamenco Fling' on *In My Hands*.

"I heard flamenco guitar playing and I thought it was awesome, and thought I could put a fiddle tune over flamenco rhythms.

"I guess I've never felt that because I'm from Cape Breton, that's all I can do. I've always felt like I can play music however I want to play it, although everything is rooted in the tradition of Cape Breton fiddling."

Born June 13, 1972 to her parents Alex and Minnie MacMaster in Troy, Inverness County, Nova Scotia, Natalie MacMaster's impressive musical lineage includes a cadre of amazing fiddlers, including her uncle, fiddle prodigy Buddy MacMaster (with whom Natalie recorded the 2005 gem *Traditional Music From Cape Breton Island*); her cousin Andrea Beaton and the late, great Canadian folk icon John Allan Cameron.

However, MacMaster forged her own sound, debuting her fiddling prowess at the age of nine-and-a-half years at a concert in Glendale, Cape Breton. She delivered her first album, *Four On The Floor*, at the age of 16.

"It's been quite a journey, traveling through many different paths," says MacMaster, who also holds a Bachelor of Education degree from Nova Scotia Teacher's College.

"I remember the excitement of me just being able to take what was in your mind and put it out on an instrument, which, when you're learning, isn't so easy.

"So when it happens, there's a great feeling of satisfaction and it keeps you wanting more."

Her career hasn't been without its challenges.

"I was incredibly shy on stage until I was in my early-to-mid 20s," she explains.

"I went through a phase of nerves – where you got better and better and then there was more at stake almost for you, in that you really felt the personal pressure to be as good as you could be.

"It was at a point in time where people were expecting you to be good because you established some sort of familiarity with the crowd. It lasted for a year or so – where I was so nervous going on stage.

"Finally, I said to myself, I can't continue like this. I'm driving myself crazy. I can't perform to the best of my ability because these nerves are affecting my bow.

“So I put mind over matter, triumphed and transformed that negative nervous energy into positive nervous energy.

“It made me stronger rather than weaker.”

This strength and confidence has only manifested itself through the years, whether it's through albums such as the gold *Fit As A Fiddle* that marks her fueling tradition or exploring Texas and bluegrass swing, Gaelic singing on the gold *No Boundaries*; a touch of folk rock and new age during the gold *In My Hands*; or a contrasting embrace of the modern and old roots on *Live*.

It has served Natalie MacMaster on stage, whether performing with The Chieftains, Paul Simon, Faith Hill, Luciano Pavarotti or in front of millions on *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno*, *Late Night with Conan O'Brien*, the ABC 2002 New Year's Eve Special and *Good Morning America*.

It has thrilled audiences throughout Europe and North America, especially in her native Canada, enabling MacMaster to passionately perform and promote the universal language of her Cape Breton sound.

And at a youthful 38, her strength and confidence in performing the fiddle continues to drive her passion and hunger to explore her love of music even further – and satisfy her audiences, and herself, in the process.

Which is why Natalie MacMaster is so thankful for her gifted talent.

“I have a gratefulness and an appreciation,” says MacMaster. “I am grateful for the ability to play music to people, for the ability that I have to extract so much from a tune or a melody and the rich feeling I get from it.

“Music has given me another layer and dimension of feeling because it really broadens the soul and really broadens the heart, you know?”

-VSO-