

McCain to bring Celtic sense of home to St. Patrick's Day-eve performance



Celtic music can foster a sense of 'coming home' for people with Scottish and Irish roots, but it also transcends to people of every heritage.

That's the feeling that Eleanor McCain will bring to the St. Andrew's College stage this Saturday, March 16, with the Aurora Cultural Centre's presentation of Eleanor McCain in Concert: A Night of Celtic Traditions & Classics.

An acclaimed singer, McCain will be joined on stage for the St. Patrick's Day-eve concert by performers Brigham Phillips and Jason Fowler, with the North Atlantic Drift trio serving as the opening act.

Throughout her career, McCain has recorded six critically-acclaimed albums, including 2017's *True North: The Canadian Songbook*, and has collaborated with Canadian performers ranging from Chantal Kreviazuk and Natalie MacMaster to John McDermott and Roch Voisine.

'This music resonates with many people because it has beautiful, lilting, lyrical melodies that really pull at your emotional heartstrings,' says McCain. 'Plus, a lot of the poetry, the situations, the stories, a lot of the songs tell stories that really draw people in, but there is very often an emotional component to them. There are a lot of songs of longing for home and because the lyrics are so real and so down to earth and accessible, they are very captivating in that way.'

Hailing from the small town of Florenceville, NB, McCain's earliest musical foundation came from her mother, who, as a pianist, could often be found at the church organ. When she was nine-years-old, however, on a visit to her aunt in New York City, she saw the musical *Annie* on Broadway, an experience which sparked a life-long interest.

'It was really a turning point for me to do something in a more professional vein,' she says. 'From there, my mom took me to Fredericton once a week where I started taking singing lessons, 90 minutes each way from Florenceville. The voice teacher I had there is still one of my best teachers. She was fabulous and [fostered] the dedication to music and singing from a very young age.'

From there, McCain studied Classical Music at Mount Allison University, receiving a Bachelor of Music degree with a focus on Vocal Performance. She continued her training after moving to Toronto, but found herself deviating just a little from the classics.

?I started to change lanes and get more into working with songwriters, getting more into a sensibility of fusing the classical with some jazz, with some folk roots, pop ballads, and I mixed them together and realized what was most important for me in music was the emotion behind the song, not necessarily the vocal style. Some people have made comments over the years that maybe I should choose a style, but that is my style ? focusing on the emotional content of music. It's a mix of styles in a melting pot!?

Asked what fuels her creativity, she responds that she has ?never really found the words that adequately describe the movie that goes on in my head? on what draws her to a song, but it always comes back to the emotion of things ? and that is something she hopes is felt by local audiences this weekend.

?I hope the music touches them in the same way it does me,? she says. ?It is not just a Celtic journey they go on, but maybe it is an emotional journey they go on as well. Hopefully in many ways the music touches their hearts the way it does me. I'm excited and honoured to be asked to sing in concert and it's always nice to celebrate St. Patrick's Day eve with this music.?

Eleanor McCain in Concert will take place Saturday, March 16, at 7.30 p.m. at the Wirth Theatre at St. Andrew's College. Tickets are \$40 and can be obtained at auroraculturalcentre.ca or by calling the box office at 905-713-1818.

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter