

Winter 2018/19  
Vol. 25, No. 4  
U.S. \$7.00  
Can. \$8.00

# fiddler Magazine

Seán Heely

Rebecca Lomnický

Aynsley Porchak

Update from Mexico

Tommy Peoples: An Appreciation; Fiddlin' on the Big Screen;  
Libby Rodenbough; Niklas Rimmerfors; Edward Hoover;  
Bluegrass; Old Time; Improvisation; Irish; Scottish; 12 Tunes ...



# Rebecca Lomnický: Sharing Music and Culture

By Danielle Montague-Judd

Scottish music is Rebecca Lomnický's passion: her drive combined with her love of Scottish fiddling has launched her onto an exciting musical path. Through performing, teaching, and exploring, Rebecca has proved herself to be an accomplished and gifted interpreter, composer, and champion of Scottish fiddling. Rebecca and I talked by phone earlier this year as she embarked on a summer filled with research, touring, and the release of a new album with The Fire.

## Finding Her Voice in Scottish Music

Rebecca's musical path started in her hometown of Corvallis, Oregon, with classical violin lessons at the age of 5. She explains, "apparently when I was 4 years old my parents took me to a music store. They put a little violin into my hands and my mom said that from that moment on I kept begging her to play the violin." Fiddle lessons followed at age 8 after she saw Natalie MacMaster in concert. Within just a few years, Rebecca had won the Junior Division of the U.S. National Scottish Fiddle Competition and, at age 13, recorded her first album, *The Call*, to high praise. Honors kept rolling in, one of the most prestigious being an invitation to compete in the international Glenfiddich Scottish Fiddle Championship in 2009, when she was a high school senior. Not only did Rebecca compete – she became the youngest competitor and second American to win the championship.

*What drew you specifically to Scottish fiddle music as opposed to other fiddle genres?*

My fiddle teacher exposed me to Irish and Scottish and Cape Breton tunes, yet I was always more drawn to the sound of the Scottish tunes ... the melodies, the cadences, the techniques... I loved the Scottish sound and ended up always wanting to learn more of that style, rather than anything else. I also think that I was attracted to the aesthetic of the bagpipe, and bagpipe tunes played on fiddle,



because I have continued to incorporate those sounds and techniques into my playing. From very early on, hearing the pipes and knowing that I could emulate that on the fiddle really drew me in.

*What interesting discoveries have you made in terms of making the fiddle sound like the bagpipe?*

I first started doing this when I heard Bonnie Rideout perform. She's one of the first people I ever heard to take fiddle playing to the level of sounding like a bagpipe. I remember when I competed at the U.S. National Competition in 2005, she was one of the judges, and she played "Amazing Grace" with bagpipe ornamentation for solo fiddle. That moment was super-inspiring for me because I realized then some of the ways that I could go about incorporating these ornaments into tunes to make the fiddle sound like a bagpipe. Since then I have worked a lot with [bagpiper] David Brewer, where he'll play a bagpipe ornament and then I'll figure out the best way to do it on the fiddle. He's also taught me a lot of bagpipe tunes and from that I've been able to listen very closely to what he's doing on the pipes and see how I can go about emulating it . . . This has been instrumental in shaping my style and also in helping me to teach the mechanics of ornamentation to my students.

Careful observation of bagpiping technique has paid off not only in Rebecca's fiddling taking on a pipey sound, but also in allowing her to develop an effective teaching style. Her approach to



Rebecca Lomnický and David Brewer turn up the heat at the Portland Games

teaching Scottish fiddle employs detailed explanation and careful listening. Students learn about tune structure and types, bowing patterns and styles, and left-hand ornaments. Her private lessons and workshops give students the tools to interpret traditional melodies, and the means to bring out the character of each tune, be it a driving reel or a playful jig. These days, most of Rebecca's teaching takes place at workshops and camps because of her busy performing and school schedule.

### **Musician and Scholar**

In college, Rebecca sought out opportunities to study Scottish music as an academic, including completing a study-abroad semester at the University of Edinburgh. After graduating summa cum laude with a double major in music and anthropology from Cornell University, Rebecca moved back to the West Coast, where she is currently pursuing a doctorate in ethnomusicology at the University of California, Berkeley. One of the top schools in the country for this discipline, Berkeley's program is known for its faculty and rigor. Rebecca explains that ethnomusicology "is essentially the study of music and culture ... and that can be anything from Trinidadian folk songs to Russian underground rock." In choosing ethnomusicology, she seeks to bridge her interests in both performing and understanding Scottish music on a deeper level. Her graduate work includes studying social and cultural theory, conducting research on Scottish traditional music, and teaching a variety of courses for the music department ranging from Beginning Music Theory to Music in American Culture. Upcoming plans include pursuing dissertation research in Scotland over 2019-2020 to examine the effects of Brexit on how musicians earn their living as performers. When asked what stands out to her about Scotland's music and people, she explains, "Scotland's music and its people are resilient. They have made music during the most challenging circumstances and even in the face of those challenges have taken them as opportunities to make new forms of music or to continue to play the music that they love in new ways."

You're both pursuing a PhD and actively performing and recording. How do you balance your schedule to accomplish your goals?

I tend to thrive on a busy schedule and so for me, it's imperative to have both of these things. As an academic you need to have an outlet and for me that's performing. As an ethnomusicologist, I think it's also very important to remain grounded in whatever you are studying. Performance gives me the chance to constantly be spending time with people, thinking about the music, and thinking about how I'm writing about that in my work. And so for me the strategy is to do both and to make sure that I have a nice balance of the two.

### **The Fire: Sharing Music & Culture**

Rebecca keeps a busy performing schedule as a founding member of The Fire, a high-energy Scottish instrumental trio. Together, Rebecca and her bandmates David Brewer and Adam Hendey make traditional and contemporary Scottish tunes come alive to the delight of audiences everywhere. Their latest album, *Radiance*, was released in August 2018, and celebrated with a concert at Kuumbwa Jazz Center in Santa Cruz, California.

How did The Fire evolve?



## **NORTHEAST HERITAGE MUSIC CAMP**

**JUNE 23-29, 2019**

**COMMON GROUND CENTER  
STARKSBORO, VERMONT**

**A WEEK OF  
TRADITIONAL MUSICAL IMMERSION**

<b>SUNNIVA BRYNNEL</b>	<b>YANN FALQUET</b>
<b>SARAH HOTCHKISS</b>	<b>DAVID KAYNOR</b>
<b>ALEX KEHLER</b>	<b>KATIE MCNALLY</b>
<b>NEIL PEARLMAN</b>	<b>LISA ORNSTEIN</b>
<b>DAVID SURETTE</b>	<b>PETE SUTHERLAND</b>
<b>BECKY TRACY</b>	<b>NICHOLAS WILLIAMS</b>



**ACADIAN BRETON CAPE BRETON CONTRA  
FRENCH IRISH OLD TIME QUÉBÉCOIS  
SCANDINAVIAN SCOTTISH & MORE...**

**INSTRUCTION DANCES PERFORMANCES JAMS  
DANCES BANDS SINGING CRANKIE  
CAMARADERIE GOURMET MEALS  
A DARN GOOD TIME**

**NORTHEASTHERITAGEMUSICCAMP.COM**

About 10 years ago, David Brewer and I first met and started playing music together. Our styles meshed so well that we decided we needed to perform together. We played as a duo under our names “Rebecca Lomnický & David Brewer” for several years and recorded an album called *Inspired* in 2010. A few years later in 2015 we decided to take on a band name, “The Fire,” and to mark the occasion we released our self-titled album. Shortly thereafter we decided to add a third person to our band. We had both known Adam Hendey for several years through the Bay Area music scene, and after a few trial runs, we knew he was the perfect person for the job. Since adding Adam, we have recorded two albums together as a trio: *Ignite* and *Radiance*.

#### *What is your vision for the band?*

The Fire performs a range of music, from extremely old traditional tunes to our own newer compositions. We spend a lot of time digging through archives of tune books and recordings to find traditional tunes that are rarely played. Through our lively stage performance, we aim to show that traditional music played on acoustic instruments can and does rock. By performing a range of music, from old to new, we hope to showcase the beauty of Scottish music and add our own voices to the tradition.

#### *How did you select the tunes for The Fire’s new album, “Radiance”?*

I have a collection of Scottish music books that my dad has helped me to compile since I first starting learning Scottish fiddle. Many of these books are hard to find or out of print now. Some of them are copies from manuscripts housed at the National Library of Scotland. David also has a large collection of bagpipe tune books

#### *About Her Equipment*

Rebecca’s main violin is a 2006 Jonathan Cooper instrument. She says, “I needed a violin that sounded beautiful for both classical music and for fiddling. I was looking for a deep full-bodied tone, and found that this instrument had both a rich lower register balanced with a sparkling top end.” She uses a Nürnberg bow: “I really like this bow because it gives me a full range of motion while requiring minimal effort. Rebecca also plays a separate German violin, tuned up one half step to play with the bagpipes, and its origins are a little more mysterious: “It’s got a bit of a secret backstory because there’s actually a fake label that was put inside of it. … But it is likely over 200 years old.”

that he has collected over the years and inherited from fellow bagpipers. Last summer, David and I paged through these books looking for gems to record on *Radiance*. Every time we found one that we liked, we made a quick recording of it. At the same time, all three of us also started proposing our own new original tunes to everyone in the band. After listening to each other’s tunes and to these informal recordings for weeks, we chose our favorites.

#### *What is your approach to composing?*

Scottish tunes have long been written to commemorate people, places, and important events. The Fire follows this tradition by writing tunes about people who are dear to us, places we visit, and incidents from our travels. In doing so, we move the Scottish tradition forward into the 21st century. Often, a fragment of a melody

## Mr. McLaine’s Scotch-Measure

Traditional. Recorded on *Radiance* by The Fire. “In 1700, Henry Playford published *A Collection of Original Scotch-Tunes (Full of the Highland Humours) for the Violin*, the first collection of Scottish fiddle tunes to ever be printed. When searching for tunes to record on *Radiance*, I came across ‘Mr. McLaine’s,’ which is the first tune in that collection and an absolute gem. This tune has a playful, effortless quality to it that calls for a light touch in performance. ‘Mr. McLaine’s’ should be performed at a medium walking tempo, and the eighth notes should be slightly swung with some Scottish snaps incorporated into the rhythm to propel the dancers across the floor.”

The musical score consists of four staves of fiddle music. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and common time. It features a mix of eighth and sixteenth note patterns. The second staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and common time. It features a mix of eighth and sixteenth note patterns. The third staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and common time. It features a mix of eighth and sixteenth note patterns. The fourth staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and common time. It features a mix of eighth and sixteenth note patterns.

will pop into our heads and we will take it from there by either sitting down at that moment to write the tune, or singing that little fragment of melody into our voice recorder phone app so that we can return to it and flesh it out later.

#### *What do you enjoy about performing?*

I view performing as a chance to share with audiences my love of Scottish music, and so I think that a performance is a success when people come up and tell me how much they enjoyed the music and also how much they learned during the performance. On stage, in addition to playing the music, we also, as a band, find it very important to tell the stories of the tunes and provide some context for what people are listening to. I also love when I can tell that the audience has a connection to what we're doing and the room just sort of becomes electric. ... Any performance where there's that electric feeling is to me a great performance, whether it's a tiny house concert where there are maybe 30 people or a big performing arts center where there are hundreds. It doesn't matter the size

— it's just about whether you can tell that people are engaged and loving the music just as much as I do.

Rebecca's passionate and informed approach to performance and scholarship bodes well for the future of Scottish music. She explains, "I feel extremely lucky to be a part of the Scottish music scene, and to have been welcomed into this community by so many incredible musicians, scholars, and music appreciators. It is my hope that by continuing to perform and study this music, I can help to carry on the tradition, share it with others, and give back to those who have already given so much to me."

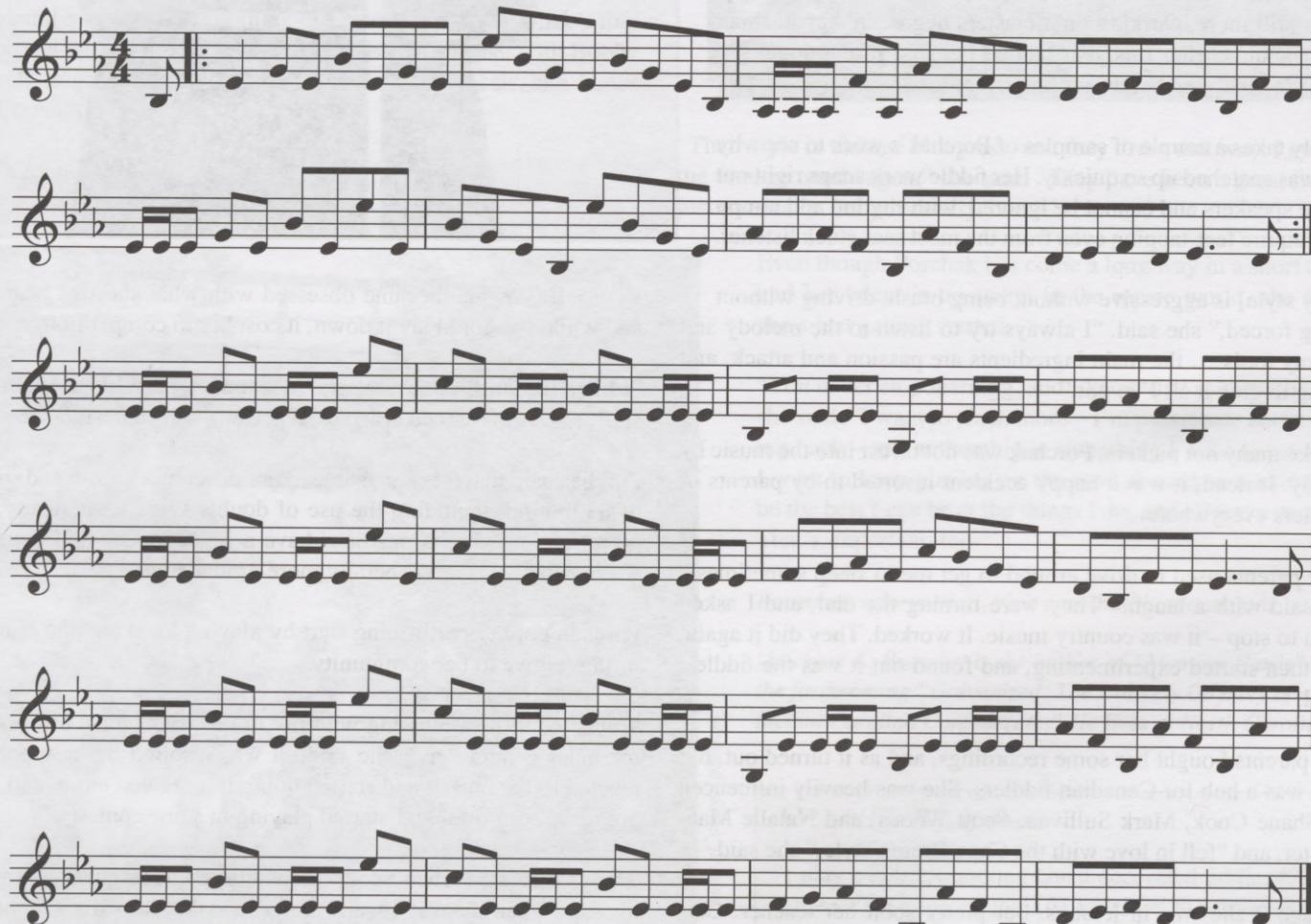
*For more information, visit Rebecca's website at [rebeccalomnicky.com](http://rebeccalomnicky.com) and The Fire's site at [firescottishband.com](http://firescottishband.com).*

*[Danielle Montague-Judd grew up playing classical violin before discovering fiddle-playing through a folk band class at university. She enjoys fiddling for contra and British Isles dances and in various other settings. She teaches fiddle and violin in Wanship, UT.]*

## The Dancing Piper

By Rebecca Lomnicky. Recorded on *Inspired* by Rebecca Lomnicky & David Brewer.

"The first time I met bagpiper David Brewer, I was impressed by both his technical expertise and energy on stage. I wrote this tune to celebrate the joy he expresses while playing. Over the last 10 years, our partnership has been incredibly influential in shaping my own musical style and performance technique. Just as David dances across the stage while he plays, this tune is a fast reel, meant to make the listener want to get up and dance."



► See Pete Clark's Scottish Fiddling column in this issue for more on coaxing the bagpipe sound out of your fiddle.