

THE ISLAND FIDDLER

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Her gift of music

Not quite as many shows, but good quality

Cynthia MacLeod takes home five individual awards and a sixth award as a member of Fiddlers' Sons at the recent P.E.I. Music awards.

Christmas came a little bit early for a rising young fiddle player on Prince Edward Island this year.

Cynthia MacLeod, 17, of Harrington was nominated for five individual P.E.I. Music Awards this year and one group award as a member of Fiddlers' Sons.

And at a gala awards show Saturday, Nov. 23, at the Confederation Centre of the Arts in Charlottetown, this talented teenager won all five of the individual awards and took home a sixth with Fiddlers' Sons.

Her individual awards included: female artist of the year, album of the year, roots/traditional artist of the year, instrumental artist of the year and new artist of the year. Fiddlers' Sons, who she joined earlier this year, won for group of the year.

"I really didn't expect this," MacLeod told *The Guardian* newspaper after the show.

"It was just unbelievable...the whole thing. Overwhelming. I don't think it's really sunk in yet."

In addition to making several trips to the awards



2002 has been a terrific year for young Island fiddler Cynthia MacLeod as she launched her first CD, *Head Over Heels*, performed both on and off P.E.I. and won every category in which she was nominated at the recent Prince Edward Island music awards in Charlottetown.

podium, MacLeod was one of the musicians selected to perform on stage during the show. As well as a set with Gordon Belsher, she and Island international fiddling star Richard Wood capped off the show with a fantastic set of tunes.

The six awards were the icing on the cake for an impressive break-through

year for MacLeod, who is also a member of the Queens County chapter of the P.E.I. Fiddlers Society.

She played in the 72-hour jam at the East Coast Music Awards in Saint John in February, debuted with Fiddlers' Sons in March, released her first album in May and was the topic of a television documentary

later in the spring.

In addition, she performed virtually non-stop across P.E.I. and around the Maritimes at festivals, concerts, benefits and private engagements.

One of these performances included sharing the stage with legendary Cape Breton fiddler Buddy McMaster and pianist Joey Beaton at a concert in October in eastern P.E.I.

She was also one of only three Prince Edward Island performers to be invited to play at Cape Breton's highly rated Celtic Colours, also in October, where she reportedly had the audience jumping out of their seats with her tunes.

Information off her Web site says that Cynthia, who is a Grade 12 student at Charlottetown Rural high school and she became interested in music at the age of six when she first took up piano.

However, on her 10th birthday she expressed a desire to play the fiddle and began taking lessons from the Kathryn Dau-Schmidt of Brackley Beach, P.E.I.

With a little help from her dad she began step-dancing at age 15.

Anyone who would like to keep up-to-date with Cynthia's latest projects can check out her Web site, www.CynthiaMacLeod.com. She also welcomes letters at Cynthia MacLeod, Winsloe RR#9, Harrington, P.E.I., C1E 1Z3.

The Prince County Fiddlers had a quiet year in 2002, being very selective in their performances, due again to the availability of players.

The group's biggest show this summer was at St. Mary's Church in Indian River, truly a wonderful place to play.

The Prince County Fiddlers have been staging two-hour concerts there with the Ladies Slipper Step Dancers and guest performers in July for the last several years.

Another of the year's highlights was the group's chance to appear on stage with the Queens County Fiddlers at the Delta Hotel for the Softworld convention.

This was a short performance, but it was enjoyed by everyone, and it was very well put together by Ward MacDonald.

The group continues to play at various manors and nursing homes in the Prince County area along with local festivals and benefits.

Most recently, the Prince County Fiddlers performed their annual Christmas Concert at the *Summerset Manor* in Summerside on Dec. 2.

The group would like to wish all musicians across P.E.I. a very happy holiday season full of music.

Another great weekend for fiddlers in Rollo Bay

In other P.E.I. fiddling news, the chapters gathered as usual in the green hills of Rollo Bay to take part in the 26th annual Rollo Bay Fiddle Festival, July 19-21.

There were plenty of group and individual performances, including Cape Breton fiddler Kinnon Beaton and pianist Betty Lou Beaton, ECMA Nominated Kindie, Andrea Beaton, the Queens County Fiddlers, the Judy McLean Dancers, Cynthia MacLeod, J.J. Chaisson, Timothy Chaisson, Elmer Deagle and Stephen Chaisson, the Eastern Kings fiddle students, the husband and wife duo Jeff and Kim Matheison from Hampton, N.B.; Stacey Lynn Read from Sackville, N.B.; Cape Breton fiddler Raymond Ellis, Peter, Kevin and Kenny Chaisson, the Carmichael Sisters, fiddlers Ward and Al-

lan MacDonald, step-dancers Vanessa Bernard, Father Gerard Chaisson and Kirsten Mallard, Ban-shee, fiddler Francis MacDonald, singers Donna Peters, Urban MacAdam and more, piper Ellen MacPhee, guitarist Brent Chaisson and hammered dulcimer player Dan Sullivan and wife Meg on bodhran from Deerfield, Mass.

There was also a full series of workshops organized by Ward Allan MacDonald, who is a member of the Queens County Fiddlers.

The smooth, rolling hills surrounding the festival grounds have always been popular for their natural amphitheatre appeal and this year was no different. Although there have been challenges along the way, the festival is now self-sustained, and it is the oldest of its kind on the island.

MUSICIANS READY FOR THE STAGE



PHOTO BY GARRY CHIFFERS

Decked out in their performing best, members of the Prince County and Queens County Fiddlers get ready to take to the stage in May for the Queens County Fiddlers annual spring concert. It was held before a packed house at the Carrefour Theatre in Charlottetown and featured group performances, as well as solo fiddling, step-dancing and singing numbers.

MUSIC FROM PRINCE COUNTY

LARRY O'GAFF REEL

as played by the late Erynn Sevier and the late Toronto Arsenault

Violin



Another one has come and gone

Well, it took a little longer than I would have liked, but a second newsletter for the P.E.I. Fiddlers' Society Inc. is now a reality. More or less in time for Christmas, this will bring you up-to-date on some of our activities and maybe even move you to make some more suggestions. The goal still is to eventually publish three to four times annually, but more help will be needed for this to happen. Thanks this time around to Robert Gallant for his Prince County report, as well as the reel. The next issue should be out sometime in the spring. Contact Carolyn Drake, 629-6036, or kstyles@theguardian.pe.ca.

WHAT'S NEW?

Kevin Chaisson is continuing to improve after being stricken with an aneurysm late this summer. Members of the Queens County Fiddlers performed in a benefit for him this fall. All wish him continued improvement to his health.

Nancy MacDonald of Blooming Point, piano accompanist for the Queens County Fiddlers, graduated from UPEI with her bachelor of arts degree in English and is now in the bachelor of education program at St. Francis Xavier University, Antigonish. Jennifer McQuaid is the new accompanist for the group. Welcome aboard!

The **Queens County Fiddlers** recently entertained residents of three nursing homes in the Charlottetown area with some traditional fiddle tunes and Christmas selections.

Ward MacDonald of the Queens County Fiddlers is back in Antigonish, N.S., where he is final year of the two-year bachelor of education program at St. Francis Xavier University.

Congratulations to **Kenneth Stewart**, a member of the Queens County Fiddlers, and his wife, Elvira, on their recent 50th anniversary.

There are lots of new, young faces this year at **Queens County Fiddlers** practices. Keep up the good work. It's great to have you!