

# MOUNTAIN Xpress

WWW.MOUNTAINX.COM

Vol. 12 No. 8 May 11-17, 2007

## The continuing migration of Celtic musicians to Asheville

by Ali Marshall

Celtic music is sort of like the rock of the acoustic-folk world. It's fast, it's loud, it encourages foot tapping, knee slapping and full-on dancing. It also fosters a keen sense of competition, not to mention heavy drinking. But somehow the message got confused along the way and audiences attending Celtic shows (not all, but enough to warrant a stereotype) seem better suited for chamber-music concerts. Or senior centers.

However, recent Asheville transplants Jamie Laval and Ashley Broder could change that. The champion duo played show at the Asheville Arts Center last Friday (June 8) by way of introducing themselves to their new hometown. It was nice spot for a concert.

They not only blend Celtic with other forms of folk and American music, but they manage to render technically challenging pieces playful and lighthearted. Both musicians come from technical backgrounds (she plays violin and cello, but mainly octave mandolin; he plays violin), but they make playing look like fun. Both musicians are also composers and arrangers, explaining that they give both historic and new pieces their "treatment," which means they like to filter old tunes through modern techniques and play newly created music as if it's been around for centuries.

But Laval and Broder don't just noodle (though, no doubt, they have the chops). Instead, each arrangement is tightly crafted and rife with surprising stops and starts and exciting experiments. At one point, Laval used a set of chopsticks to hammer out a complimentary rhythm on Broder's violin while she played a jig. (Or was it a reel ... the point is, a listener doesn't need to know in order to enjoy the music.)

But, for Celtic-music aficionados, it's worth noting that Laval was invited to teach at this summer's Swannanoa



Gathering before the event's organizer, Jim Magill, realized Broder had moved into the area. And the Swannanoa stop-off is only one of a select few local dates for the high-demand duo. Their busy touring schedule has them traveling to across the U.S. and Scotland regularly.

Still, keep watch for upcoming appearances by Laval and Broder. They've suggested a possible Celtic jam whenever they're in town, and many Celtic music fans would agree that's how the music is best enjoyed. Surrounded by food and friends, played with whimsy and plenty of beer. —Alli Marshall, *A&E reporter*