

***“Virtuosic, fascinating, dramatic, original, inspired, gloriously adventurous, dazzling, brilliant, stunning, impassioned, electrifying, bewitching, moving, achingly beautiful, influential, revered, unique...”***

- THE TIMES, THE DAILY TELEGRAPH, THE GUARDIAN, THE IRISH TIMES, THE SCOTSMAN, FOLK ROOTS...

The celebrated virtuoso partnership of Máire Ní Chathasaigh (pronounced Moira Nee Ha-ha-sig), “the greatest Celtic harper of our age” (Live Ireland) and Irish Traditional Musician of the Year 2001, and Chris Newman, one of the UK’s more extraordinary and revered acoustic guitarists, made its début at the 1987 Cambridge Folk Festival. They’ve played in twenty-one countries - from the Shetland Islands to New Zealand, from San Francisco to Calabria - and have given TV and radio performances on five continents. Though rooted in the Irish tradition, the eclecticism, emotional range and spirit of adventure of their performances, a breathtaking blend of traditional Irish music, hot jazz, bluegrass and baroque, coupled with Máire’s “clear, warm and expressive voice” and Chris’s “subversively witty introductions” ensure a busy international touring schedule. Their sixth CD together, **FireWire**, has just been released to critical acclaim: “An eclecticism and spirit of adventure that is quite thrilling... Virtuoso playing... bewitching string fantasies and a wonderfully clear and expressive voice...” **The Times** “Maire Ni Chathasaigh is in a class of her own...” **The Guardian** “Dazzling virtuosity... guitar-playing to be marvelled at... exquisitely delivered... delightful” **The Daily Telegraph**

Within the past couple of years they’ve toured in the USA, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Italy, Denmark, Holland, Belgium, Ireland and the UK; additionally, Máire gave a 16-date nationwide lecture tour of the USA in March/April 2006 at the invitation of the Irish American Cultural Institute and a prestigious solo recital at the 2005 World Harp Congress. Broadcasts included a Christmas 2005 concert in Brindisi, televised by **Rai Uno**, the Italian state broadcaster, and appearances on **RTE Lyric FM**, Ireland’s premier classical music station (for which Máire was Artist of the Week) and **BBC Radio 4’s** Woman’s Hour. They’re featured on Irish rock legend Rory Gallagher’s posthumous album **Wheels within Wheels** (BMG, 2003), Polygram USA’s major 1998 Celtic harp album and associated PBS TV special **Celtic Harpestry** and on **Bringing it All Back Home**, the major BBC 2 TV series on Irish music. Máire is harp/voice soloist with the New English Chamber Orchestra and the Choir of New College Oxford on John Cameron’s **Missa Celtica** (Erato Disques, Paris). The Goldcrest film **Driftwood** features her singing, and her harping and compositions feature with other Celtic music luminaries on Dan ar Braz’s Gold Disc-awarded album **Finisterres** (Sony France). In addition to his work with Máire, Chris toured until 1997 as a member of Boys of the Lough in North America, Sweden, Finland, Norway, Estonia, Denmark, China and Italy.

Máire is “one of the world’s greatest harpists” (Edinburgh Evening News) and one of Ireland’s most important and influential traditional musicians. As a teenager in Co Cork in the early 1970s she invented a whole new style of harping that quickly became the norm amongst both her contemporaries and the younger generation of Irish players. In 2001 she received Irish music’s most prestigious Award, that of Traditional Musician of the Year—Gradam Cheoil TG4— “for the excellence and pioneering force of her music, the remarkable growth she has brought to the music of the harp and for the positive influence she has had on the young generation of harpers”. She began to play the harp at the age of eleven. Her background in a well-known West Cork musical family steeped in the oral Irish tradition was at that time unique among harpers, the Irish harp having declined since its 17th century heyday into an urban parlour instrument alien to life in rural Ireland. Having no role models, she developed a variety of new techniques, particularly in relation to ornamentation, which made it possible for the first time to play this music on the harp in a stylistically accurate way - thus re-introducing the harp into the mainstream of the living tradition. She won the All-Ireland and Pan-Celtic Harp Competitions several times and in 1985 recorded the first harp album ever to concentrate on traditional Irish dance music, **The New-Strung Harp** - “a milestone in Irish harp music” (**The Irish Examiner**). Her approach has been profoundly influential wherever in the world the Irish harp is played - “a single-handed reinvention of the harp”. Two volumes of her arrangements have been published: **The Irish Harper** Vols. I and II. She contributed two articles about the Irish harp and modes in Irish music to the **Companion to Irish Traditional Music** (Cork University Press) and is profiled in **Celtic Women in Music** (Quarry Books, Canada) and in the **Rough Guide to Irish Music**. “If Máire wasn’t around, Irish harping would be so much the poorer: her work restores the harp to its true voice.” **The Irish Times**

Chris began to play guitar at the age of four and at fourteen gave his first paid concert in a folk club. He dabbled in the jazz scene in his late teens (playing with and learning from people like Stephane Grappelli and Diz Disley). A foray into the commercial world resulted in a silver disc for producing **The Oldest Swinger in Town**. A prolific composer, arranger and record producer, he now concentrates on traditional music and composition. He has been principal guitar tutor for Newcastle University’s Folk B.Mus course since its inception. His book of guitar compositions and arrangements **Adventures with a Flatpick** was published in 2001. His 1998 solo CD **Fretwork** was “a stunning and stylistically-varied album, heaving with good tunes, from one of the UK’s most staggering and influential acoustic guitarists” **Folk Roots** (UK) “Dazzling” **Acoustic Guitar** (USA) “Revered” **Taplas** (Wales)

*“The singing and playing are so moving, so wonderfully executed with such technical brilliance and beauty... that they actually bring tears to one’s eyes... a lasting and unforgettable memory” - Irish Music Magazine*

*“Máire managed to do things I have never heard a harp do before... I was alternately astonished and delighted with the entire concert. The skills with which they interacted, and the beautiful music they performed left a lasting impression on me and anyone else who was privileged to witness this extraordinary event.” - Classical Guitar Magazine*

*“Their blinding technique, sizzling Irish reels and hot jazz improvisation brought an extended standing ovation... Newman has the great gift of being informative and hilarious simultaneously” - The West Australian*

*“This celebrated harp/guitar duo took the place by storm. Stately Carolan tunes, jazzy Django-ish numbers, Doc Watson style flat picking fliers, driving Irish dance tunes - this pair can nonchalantly do the lot. Their musicianship was enviable. Guitar players applauded and went sadly home to burn their instruments!” - The Belfast Telegraph*

*“The audience were charmed and dazzled by their playing: the speed, the deftness, the emotional range...Máire’s clear, warm and expressive voice...Their stagecraft was masterly and their introductions informative and funny” - Christchurch Press (N.Z.)*

*“Music of fire and brilliance from the high-wire act in traditional music.” - The Irish Times*