

HIGHLAND HEARTBEAT

-- Centuries-old Tradition Meets Modern Music to Capture the Heart and Soul of Scotland in Song in New TV Special Premiering on PBS beginning February 28 --

Singer/actress Fiona Kennedy, a member of Scotland's leading theatrical family and well-known in North America as the host of "Tartan TV," leads a group of singers brought together from a country-wide audition to represent a range of musical styles. Singers Jim Malcolm, Jillian Isbister, Maureen McMullan, Daisy Chute and Darren Maclean perform at the historic Theatre Royal in Glasgow backed by the Scottish Festival Orchestra. The men wear the traditional Scottish kilt, and the women wear modern designs that riff on traditional Scottish themes. Emmy Award-winning Scottish actor Brian Cox ("The Bourne Supremacy") reads the works of Scotland's national bard, Robert Burns, with stunning footage of Scotland interspersed between songs. The concert was shot in high definition in August 2008.

Opening with the emotive wails of the distinctive Scottish bagpipe, the music performed in **HIGHLAND HEARTBEAT** embodies the pride and passion of a country rich with history, offering a concert that spans genres and generations from traditional Scottish compositions like "Loch Lomond" and "Down in the Glen" to pop hits originally sung by Carly Simon, Bette Midler, and Simon and Garfunkel that infuse Scottish cultural significance to the familiar lyrics. **HIGHLAND HEARTBEAT** premieres nationwide beginning February 28 on PBS (check local listings).

Starting with "Raise the Flag for Scotland (Lightly Swims the Swan)" and "My Heart's in the Highlands," **HIGHLAND HEARTBEAT** speaks to the spirit of Scotland with a diverse repertoire that will satisfy the nostalgia of first generation immigrants and spark a new appreciation for family culture in younger viewers. After the opening traditional songs of Scottish pride, Maureen, Jillian, Daisy and a Scottish youth choir transform Carly Simon's "Let the River Run" from its movie soundtrack origins of working woman empowerment to a song about the fortitude of the Scottish people through generations. In ethereal dresses, the women fully express the story of life and loss of the Scottish classic "Loch Lomond" ("you take the high road, and I'll take the low road...and I'll be in Scotland before ye...") in beautiful four-part harmony. The audience in the Theatre Royal screams their approval when Jim and Darren return in traditional dress to perform "I'm Gonna Be (500 Miles)" by their countrymen, The Proclaimers.

HIGHLAND HEARTBEAT balances the traditional with inspired new versions of classics for broad audience appeal, covering the standards but also introducing new music to the Scottish songbook. Eighteenth century songs by Robert Burns, "Welcome Willie Stewart" and "Rantin', Rovin' Robin," are performed with dramatic verve in a tavern setting that gives

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the audience a taste of the traditional “Burns Suppers” celebrations. Followed by the Burns ballad “Ae Fond Kiss,” the singers clearly enjoy the opportunity to revive these cherished songs. Daisy’s performance of Bette Midler’s “The Rose” is steeped in the Scottish context of the Burns poem “My love is like a red, red rose,” and Simon and Garfunkel’s “Bridge Over Troubled Water” – sung by Jillian and Maureen outdoors on the bridge at Eilean Donan castle – is instilled with Scottish history. Back inside the theatre, Maureen’s heartfelt ballad “Down in the Glen” is followed by “The Wild Geese,” a song based on Scottish poet Violet Jacob’s 1915 poem, sung by Jim, one of Scotland’s finest folk artists who enjoys a following in the United States from frequent tours.

The show’s most specifically Scottish performance is also the concert’s most YouTube-ready highlight. Darren’s *puirt à beul* or ‘mouth music’ – a traditional and very difficult Scottish form of lilted performed in Scottish Gaelic, whose closest American equivalent would be scat singing or fast rap – will wow audiences, who may find the tune impossible to get out of their heads, even though it’s nearly impossible to sing along! A powerful new song by American singer-songwriter Beth Nielsen Chapman, “The Kist,” reflects the adventurous spirit of the Scots. And in a rousing finale the full cast, with bagpipes and help from the audience, performs Burns’ “Auld Lang Syne,” perhaps the most-sung Scottish song in the world -- and the most lasting legacy of the poet’s brief 37 years.

About the singers

Fiona Kennedy, from Aberdeen, is the daughter of renowned Gaelic singer Calum Kennedy, and has performed worldwide, including the G8 Summit launch and the Queen’s 80th birthday. Jillian Isbister, from the Shetland Islands, began performing at the age of 14 and is a member of Shetland pop/rock band, Loveshack. Award-winning singer/songwriter Jim Malcolm, from Perthshire, has a successful solo career and has toured with the top international Scottish folk act Old Blind Dogs. Maureen McMullan, from Coatbridge, was awarded an International Merit-Based Scholarship to study for a Professional Performance Diploma at the prestigious Berklee College of Music in Boston, where she currently studies. Darren Maclean, from the Isle of Skye, comes from a family of well-known Gaelic singers, has won several musical competitions for his ‘mouth music,’ and was nominated in the Up and Coming Artist category at the Scots Trad Music Awards in 2005. Daisy Chute, from Musselburgh, began her career at the age of nine as “Cosette” in the UK touring production of “Les Misérables” and released her debut CD when she was 15 years old.

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HIGHLAND HEARTBEAT Performances

Intro by Brian Cox
“Raise the Flag for Scotland (Lightly Swims the Swan)” - cast
Intro by Brian Cox: My Heart’s in the Highlands
“My Heart’s in the Highlands” - Daisy
“Let the River Run” - Maureen, Jillian, Daisy and choir
Intro by Brian Cox: Loch Lomond
“Loch Lomond” - Fiona, Jillian, Maureen and Daisy
“I’m Gonna Be (500 Miles)” - Jim and Darren
“Welcome Willie Stewart” - Jillian and cast
“Rantin’, Rovin’ Robin” - Jim and cast
“Ae Fond Kiss” – Fiona
Intro by Brian Cox: Red, Red, Rose
“The Rose” – Daisy and choir
“Bridge Over Troubled Water” - Jillian and Maureen
“Down in the Glen” - Maureen
“The Wild Geese” - Jim
Mouth Music Medley – Darren and dancers
“The Kist” - Fiona, Jillian, Maureen and Daisy
Intro by Brian Cox: Auld Lang Syne
“Auld Lang Syne” - cast

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Producers: Morven Kennedy and Maureen White. Musical Director: Kennedy Aitchison (musical director, U.S. *Riverdance* tour). Presented by WLIW21 in association with WNET.ORG. Underwriters: VisitScotland, Saint Andrews Society of New York, Meredith Portfolio Management, Scottish Heritage Society, Public Television Viewers and PBS.

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