

Shared Madness

Haley Richardson with Megan Bennett Irby & Don Penzien

If you've an affinity for "pure drop" Irish traditional music and song, you'll find it wherever this trio is playing! Having played countless tunes together over the years in a variety of settings (on and off the stage), Haley, Don and Megan first joined forces as a trio early in 2017 for the *Ormond Beach Celtic Festival*. The overwhelmingly enthusiastic response from the crowd paired with the pure joy of performing together has compelled this crew to seek out every opportunity to join forces again! In the coming months, you'll find *Shared Madness* performing in North Carolina, Virginia, and Louisiana... and with a little luck, in your home town too! We're mad for Irish music and welcome any opportunity to share our madness with you!

About Haley Richardson....

It's commonplace for people to proclaim Haley is an amazing fiddler given her age—she's 15 years young. Mature beyond her years and a consummate performer on stage, Haley is indeed an amazing fiddler and already has earned her place among the top Irish fiddlers anywhere in the world *regardless of age!*

Perhaps, predictably, Haley is a champion fiddler having earned numerous top honors at national and international competitions... most recently placing 1st in the All Ireland Championships in the *Under 15 Fiddle Slow Airs* category at the All Ireland Fleadh in Ennis, Ireland. She also earned the title *Junior Fiddler of Dooney* in 2015 and 1st place titles at the 2013 All Ireland Fleadh in both the *Under 12 Solo Fiddle* and the *Under 12 Fiddle Slow Airs* categories.

In addition to being a dynamic solo performer, Haley has performed with many of the most top performers in Irish music today including *The Chieftains, Altan, Dervish, Gailfean, Pride of New York, Liz Carroll, Cherish the Ladies, and Paddy Keenan*, and is a regular member of *The John Whelan Band* and *Green Fields of America*. She has also participated as the band fiddler in the Studio2Stage Irish dance production *That's Dancing* from 2014-2017.



After asking to learn to play the violin at age two, Haley began Suzuki violin lessons at the age of three. Her enthusiasm and love of playing was quickly recognized, and at four she began lessons with Gerry Rice of Haddonfield NJ. Before her 5th birthday, Haley fell in love with Irish music inspired by fiddler Kevin Burke during a live performance. She began learning fiddle tunes from Kevin's "How to Play Celtic Fiddle" DVD and by listening to his CD and playing along while riding in the car. Formal study of Irish fiddle began with Kathy DeAngelo of Voorhees, NJ in August of 2007. In July 2009, after winning her first MidAtlantic under 12 Irish fiddle competition at just 6 years old, she met fiddling legend and teacher, Brian Conway, who became her teacher. By April 2014, Haley was a 6X MidAtlantic Region under 12 Irish fiddle

champion. She is a 3X MidAtlantic Fleadh Under 15 solo fiddle champion and 2X Under 15 fiddle slow airs champion, bringing the number of MidAtlantic solo fiddle wins to nine consecutive championships. She has placed numerous times in the All Ireland competition in both solo fiddle, fiddle slow airs, and in trio competitions including second place in both under 15 solo fiddle and fiddle slow airs in August 2016.

John Whelan has been a wonderful mentor to Haley. He recorded and produced Haley's debut CD, *Heart on a String*, in March 2015, Haley also appeared on two tracks as part of Andy Lamy's Mixed Flock on his CD, *The New Blackthorn Stick*. In March 2017, Haley released a CD she produced entitled *Music for Mercy*, a compilation CD featuring donated tracks from many of the best Irish musicians under 21 years old from around the world. All proceeds from the CD benefit the Mercy Centre in Bangkok, Thailand.

About Megan Bennett Irby....

Though she has long been a vocalist, Megan only recently found her inspiration to perform in the Irish music scene after assisting in an impromptu sound check, which moved John Whelan to stand and exclaim, "Don't stop singing!" With the backing of seasoned DADGAD guitarist Don Penzien, Megan brings her own powerful and emotive style to much-loved traditional Irish songs.

While relatively new to the genre, Megan already has captured the attention of top Irish musicians: *John Whelan*, 7-time All-Ireland accordion player, "Brilliant - the perfect voice for traditional Irish music"; *Bridget Fitzgerald*, master sean nós (old style) Irish singer, "Really lovely. Just beautiful"; *Damien Connolly*, All-Ireland accordion/melodian player, "Wow! so much emotion in her voice!"; *Sean Clohessy*, recipient of multiple All-Ireland titles, "Simply beautiful"; *Don Meade*, All-Ireland harmonica player, "Her song was the absolute highlight of this festival for me."

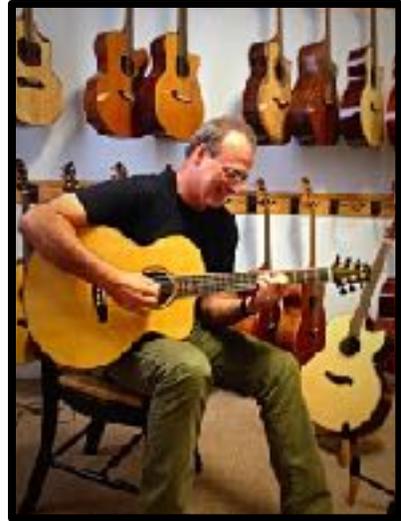


Megan is the heart and soul of *Beirt le Chéile*—the vocal/guitar and vocal duo based in Winston-Salem, North Carolina which also features *Shared Madness* bandmate Don Penzien and performing songs in the Irish tradition. Their name was inspired by two old Irish proverbs, "Giorraíonn beirt bóthar" (two shorten the road) and "Ní neart go cur le chéile" (there is no strength without unity). Taken together, these two proverbs convey the value of friendship: when two share a journey together, united in strength, the path that lies ahead is made more fruitful and harmonious.

About Don Penzien....

Don also has long been a top-flight performer of Irish traditional music. He frequently is on the road playing concerts and festivals with *Gailfean* (featuring All-Ireland winners Brian Conway, John Whelan & Máirtín de Cógáin), *The Máirtín de Cógáin Project*, Jil Chambless, Ed Miller,

Beirt le Chéile (featuring Megan Irby), and most recently Haley Richardson. He's performed in the past with *Captain Mackey's Goatskin & String Band* (Jimmy Crowley, Máirtín de Cógáin & Valerie Plested), and *Legacy* (Plested, Justin Murphy, & Beth Patterson). Along the way, he's performed on stage with the likes of Randal Bays, Tim Britton, Siobhan Butler, Donie Carroll, Sean Clohessy, Pauline Conneely, Tony DeMarco, Kevin Doyle, Mike Dugger, Shannon Dunne, Bridgette Fitzgerald, Jim Flanagan, Rose Conway Flanagan, Ken Fleming, Shannon Heaton, Heather Martin Bixler, Billy McComiskey, Martin O'Connell, Brían Ó hAirt, Patrick Ourceau, and Caitlin Warbelow.



It was the never-ending traditional music playing at the Irish pub he frequented while earning his Ph.D. (clinical psychology) in Athens, Ohio that inspired Don to play. It was back then that he began his exclusive use of the "DADGAD" guitar tuning with tips from such notables as Zan McLeod and Daithí Sproule. Widely recognized for his reserved backing style, Don's dexterous work on guitar provides solid, driving rhythms to traditional tunes as well as perceptive and sensitive accompaniments to songs and airs. When called upon, he occasionally adds whistle, bodhran and vocals to arrangements.

And if there's an Irish trad. tune session anywhere nearby, odds are, you'll find him there.

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