

## COLUMNISTS



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# All the Bits & Pieces in Pat Chafe's new collection of music 🎵



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Bits & Pieces is a new collection of marches, strathspeys, jigs, reels and more, just released by pianist Pat Chafe. It contains over 200 of her compositions, some new but many already well-known to most players. For example: Stella's Trip to Kamloops was recorded by Jerry Holland (and by many others since it was written in the 1980s); Glasgow House and Compliments to House Piper Ann Boozan were both recorded by John Allan Cameron on his Glencoe Station CD; Carl MacKenzie's Hornpipe was included by Carl on his Fiddle Medleys recording in 1996.

There are tunes written for fellow musicians, for friends for special occasions or locations, and tunes that were written because they just had to be written. As you go through the book, many of these tunes are followed by interesting notations that give their history and makes the whole work special.

The new publication also contains something extra — 40-plus tunes written by Doug MacPhee and his late mother Margaret. This is the first time their total collection of music has been contained in one book.

The book launch was a grand party, with a full house of musicians who travelled from as far away as New Brunswick to be there. In addition, a portion of the book sales at the launch was given to Every Woman's Centre.

Pat states that Bits & Pieces is likely just the beginning. Since she already has over 600 compositions under her belt, she has enough for several more books.

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Two of the tunes from Bits & Pieces are strathspeys written for a pair of great young Inverness County fiddlers, Andrea Beaton and Robbie Fraser. As it turns out, both have released new CDs this summer.

Andrea's new release, Branches, comes out of the starting gate with a bang, leading off with King Arthur's Reel. It's one of two dozen of her compositions spread across 15 cuts and more than an hour of music.

You expect her usual vim and energy, and you're not disappointed. You also get creative arrangements helped along by wonderful backup from pianist Tracey Dares, Rémi Arsenault on guitar and Jamie Gatti adding bass on one cut. And that cut is the big surprise, a vocal rendition of Patricia Murray's Hector, a dark and brooding song done to the tune of Hector the Hero. Andrea's vocal work is excellent, a high point on the CD for me.

Everything Old Is New Again, Robbie and Isaac Fraser's new CD, takes a more traditional approach to things. Robbie has dug deep into the old music books for many of these tunes, combining them nicely with works from modern and more local composers (including Andrea).

There are some wonderful (and very powerful) cuts here, including an 11-minute group recorded in a late night session at St. FX University that is dedicated to Buddy MacMaster. My personal favourite is almost as long, the closing cut that starts with Johnny Cope. I've always said that Robbie is a player old beyond his years and he plays this cut like a veteran.

Look for Branches and Everything Old Is New Again, both excellent CDs that you will enjoy. Search out Pat Chafe's Bits & Pieces as well. You don't have to be a musician to get a lot from it.

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On Saturday Mike Hall and Joel Chiasson are playing for a dance at Sydney's Cedars Club.

The North Shore Gaelic Heritage Society invites everyone to the world's only festival of Gaelic-language films. The 2nd Annual Féis Fhìolmaichean na Reul-iùil (Film Festival of the North Star) will run from Friday to Sunday at the Gaelic Singers Hall (and selected other venues), on Cape Breton's North Shore.

Dan MacDonald (BA Celtic Studies, Cert. Heritage Studies) is a former Inverness County resident who now resides in the Sydney area. Involved in the Cape Breton music scene for more than 20 years, he operates his own company, Creignish Hills Entertainment. Contact him at creignish\_hills@hotmail.com.

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