

## Everything Fitz - It's True!

Submitted by Al Thorleifson Rochelle Drudge opened the Everything Fitz concert with a nod to the Southern Manitoba Concert series 45th year of providing great music to their communities. She then set the tone of the evening by celebrating the positive vibe which had woven through the afternoon's fiddle workshops which partnered some of Southern Manitoba's many fiddle students with the very personable members of the band. The fiddle students had front row seats at this evening's concert! In the opening medley, Everything Fitz began with The Red Haired Boy, a reel set which grew from a single violin and guitar to step dancers trading phrasing with the unison violins. Ottawa Valley step dancing has its roots in the bent knee step dance traditions we might otherwise associate with the Appalachian Mountains, rather than with the straight legged, pointed steps more familiar from Highland and "Riverdance" Irish technique. Their dance steps were performed in routines which were impressive in their precise unison footwork and sharply contrasting phrasing. The Jig Slip featured the fiddling of Julie and Tom Fitzgerald, both Canadian Grand Master Fiddle Champions. This piece reinforced the percussive role being played by the dancers; with the rhythms in the dance, there was no need of a drummer. That does not discount the importance of the rhythm from the piano "Pam and Julie Fitzgerald, and from the guitar "Kyle Waymouth, which both set the pace and supported the soloists throughout the concert. Slowing things down, the murmur of approval, as Everything Fitz launched into a lush version of The Tennessee Waltz, was to be echoed on several occasions during the evening, as old favourites were given performances whose detailing, ornamentation, and trill phrasing spoke of their love of the music, and their love of working together to create it. The phrasing in the performance was consistently accurate. Texas style swing "with Bob Will's It's all your Fault" brought Tom Waymouth's finger picking guitar to the fore. Kerry Fitzgerald's work on the somewhat unfamiliar ukulele bass caught the interest of the audience, as well. Fly in the Pudding, a tongue-in-cheek dance competition between "Superman" and "Batman" ended, as usual, with a precision dance duet. The performance of Danny Boy, slow and reflective, was given emotional depth with what, according to an informant, might be described as Humber College jazz harmonies. These harmonies, with the three fiddlers trading roles, gave the piece a modal quality. Beautiful! Kyle's guitar work in Ready again featured jazz stylings evoked tree-lined city streets on a warm summer afternoon and the unresolved final chord invited expectations of more pleasure to come. The Temperance Reel set, followed by the Old Time nod to Don Messer, Metis and French Canadian fiddling techniques, emphasized the group's versatility. The first half ended with another audience favourite, The Orange Blossom Special, is a piece filled with intricate phrasing often performed to highlight the performers' skills. In this case, with musical jokes added in, referencing the Beatles "Obladi Oblada and Stevie Wonder's I Wish Those Days Would Come Back Again, the tune had a playfulness which brought a smile to

the faces in the audience. The second half of the performance began with a jazz standard, Sweet Georgia Brown, trading plucked violin and impeccable guitar picking along with Julie's step dance percussion. The chair routine which followed, with drum stick rhythms "reminiscent of Morris Dancing!" and seated French Canadian step dance moves, was just plain fun. The group's Mom, Pam Fitzgerald, answered a wide variety of audience questions. The group followed this up with an edgy version of Lyle Lovett's blue grass tune Up in Indiana, a ballad of love gone wrong. Billy Joel's And So It Goes was probably the favourite of the young fiddlers in the crowd. Tom Fitzgerald took his fiddle bow apart, draped the bow hair over the violin, and brought the bow underneath. Then, with the loose bow hair allowing him to play chords using all strings at once, he gave the song a thoughtful performance full of soft harmonies and gentle reminders. Then we discover that Kyle Waymouth is not just a guitarist but is a four time Canadian Open Step Dance Champion "awesome!" He joined the Fitzgeralds in the step dance sets from here on in. This group has a way of finishing their phrases which allows the listener the time to "see" the scenes the music describes in the mind's eye. This was especially so in Louis Armstrong's What a Wonderful World, so reflective, so nuanced, the performers so consistent in their interpretation. The final Jamboree provided the group with an opportunity, one last time, to prove their virtuosity on the fiddle. Everything Fitz received a well-deserved standing ovation and responded by returning for another rousing tune. A fitting ending to a wonderful evening.

17021gm4 Be sure to mark Friday February 24, 7:30pm on your calendar when Southern Manitoba Concerts brings the MTC production of "Last Train to Nibroc" to the P. W. Enns Concert Hall. For more information, look on Southern Manitoba Concerts website: [southernmanitobaconcerts.org](http://southernmanitobaconcerts.org) Tickets will be on sale at the door the night of the performance.