

For Immediate Release

Calgary's Biggest Christmas Cèilidh Arrives with Arts Commons Presents and The Barra MacNeils: An East Coast Christmas

October 26, 2023 - CALGARY – The holiday season is officially on with Canada's Celtic ambassadors, the Barra MacNeils. Performing a blend of Christmas favourites, traditional Gaelic music, and step dancing, it's a high-spirit evening of fun for the whole family. Join Arts Commons Presents for **The Barra MacNeils: An East Coast Christmas** on **Friday, November 24 at 7:30 p.m.** in the **Jack Singer Concert Hall at Arts Commons**. Learn more at artscommons.ca/macneils.

For more than three decades, the Barra MacNeils have been sharing the culture and traditions of Canada's East Coast through music and dance to the delight of audiences worldwide. *An East Coast Christmas* incorporates traditional Celtic dance along with performances by Kyle MacNeil (vocals, guitar, violin, mandolin), Lucy MacNeil (vocals, bodhran, Celtic harp, fiddle), Sheumas MacNeil (keyboards, piano, bodhran, fiddle, bouzouki, vocals), Stewart MacNeil (vocals, accordion, tin whistle, flute, bouzouki, guitar), Boyd MacNeil (mandolin, fiddle, guitar, banjo, percussion) and Jamie Gatti (bass). As a group, the MacNeil siblings are widely regarded as one of the greatest live concert acts in the Celtic world. Formed in 1980 (when the youngest sibling, Lucy, was only 10 years old!) the Barra MacNeils have cemented their place in Canadian culture, with four East Coast Music Awards and a JUNO Award to their acclaim. Critics agree, saying "the Barra MacNeils are sure to entertain both young and old with their eclectic array of music" (Canadian Beats) with "captivating vocals, distinctive harmonies, and extraordinary musicianship, the Barra MacNeils inject new life and energy into the sights and sounds of Christmas" (Global News).

"Trying to find that balance is tricky," says Stewart MacNeil about the best way to bring together a Christmas performance. "It's very hard to get all the old favourites in and also do stuff that's new. That's part of the craft. And when you get it right, it certainly makes for a magic evening. The show will take people musically from the 'kitchen party' atmosphere to the sounds of a midnight mass, and everything in between."

One of the most beloved concerts on the seasonal circuit, *An East Coast Christmas* features a highly entertaining mix of traditional seasonal fare along with entertaining stories and dance, lush harmonies, and dynamic instrumental stylings. Home to a strong population of those who hail from the East Coast of Canada (and East Coast appreciators), the Barra MacNeils, and their distinct brand of seasonal cheer, are a beloved Calgary tradition.

"I just moved here from the East Coast! Everyone I meet either has a relative from there, has come from there, loved visiting there, or can't wait to go there! It is a magical place. No matter where your roots are, this event is something truly special for everyone. Sharing this music and sea-blown sound with loved ones and friends is good for the soul," says VP of Programming, Sarah Garton Stanley (SGS). *"The Barra MacNeils have been bringing people together to celebrate the holidays for over 30 years, and we can't wait to share their joy with Calgary."*

BD&P World Stage enters its 23rd season of bringing the best that the world has to offer to Calgary's spectacular Jack Singer Concert Hall, giving our city the chance to experience something completely new. This season we welcomed **The Triplets of Belleville: 20th Anniversary Film in Concert** in early November, followed by the beloved

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holiday tradition of **The Barra MacNeils: An East Coast Christmas**. The New Year brings Australian contemporary circus company **Circa** and their new show **Humans 2.0**, followed by Cuba's leaders in contemporary dance, **Malpaso Dance Company with Arturo O'Farrill & the Afro-Latin Jazz Orchestra**. The season rounds out with **DakhaBrakha**, a multi-award winning Ukrainian folk music group and active ambassadors for Ukrainian music and culture, and multi-GRAMMY Award-winning jazz legend **Diane Schuur with Raul Midón**.

Arts Commons Presents is the programming arm of Arts Commons, presenting a diverse line-up of concerts, speaker presentations, youth programming, and emerging artist showcases including the three signature series of BD&P World Stage, Classic Albums Live, and National Geographic Live. To learn about all the shows in the 2023-24 season of Arts Commons Presents, visit acpresents.ca.

What: Arts Commons Presents – The Barra MacNeils: An East Coast Christmas
When: Friday, November 24, 2023 at 7:30 p.m.
Where: Jack Singer Concert Hall, Arts Commons
Tickets: 403-294-9494 or visit artscommons.ca/macneils

Arts Commons wishes to express our sincere appreciation to ACP Signature Series Presenting Sponsor **Burnett, Duckworth & Palmer**, supporting sponsors **ALSA Road Construction** and **SerVantage Services** as well as the **Government of Canada through Canadian Heritage**, the **Government of Alberta through the Alberta Foundation for the Arts**, and our friends at **The City of Calgary**.

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Arts Commons Presents invites you to discover the transformative power of the Arts. As the programming arm of Arts Commons, the largest performing arts centre in Western Canada, Arts Commons Presents is one manifestation of this mandate, achieved through the programming and presenting of our in-house series: BD&P World Stage, Classic Albums Live, National Geographic Live, TD Amplify Cabarets, as well as special presentations and our outdoor pop-up series, ArtsXpeditions. Through this work, we are able to do our part to further enrich our city, as well as create opportunities for Calgary-based artists to perform, exhibit, reach new audiences, and grow on a multitude of levels.