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2009 Marks A Happy Half-Dozen for BCMFest

"Fringe Events" will enliven sixth annual festival

When it comes to spotlighting different kinds of Celtic music, there's lots of room in the BCMFest tent.

The sixth annual Boston Celtic Music Fest, which takes place the weekend of January 9-10, 2009, will once again feature some of the finest performers of Irish, Scottish, Cape Breton and other Celtic music in the Greater Boston area. The more than 30 acts taking part in this grassroots, community-oriented festival represent a variety of styles and approaches, from dyed-in-the-wool traditional to more contemporary-minded sounds.

And just to charge things up a bit, this year's BCMFest also will introduce several "Fringe Events," such as "BCMFest Boston Olympics," "Performer Makeovers" and a showcase of bands playing music on the "fringe" of traditional/Celtic styles.

Several BCMFest "veteran acts" are on this year's program, including: Annalivia; Matt Heaton and Flynn Cohen; Amanda Cavanaugh and Friends; The New Tyme Sisters; Lissa Schneckenburger; Katie McNally and Jonathan Fagan; Blue Moose and the Unbuttoned Zippers; Michael O'Leary and Friends; Janine Sirignano and Sean Smith;

Mairin Uí Cheide; Highland Dance Boston; and the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society.

But audiences will be able to enjoy a host of bands and performers new to BCMFest: Session Americana; Long Time Courting; Seoige; Fireside; Nor'Easter; the Folk Arts Quartet; Gloucester Hornpipe and Clog Society; Four at the Crossroads; Matching Orange; the Bridgebuilders; Dan Gurney and Friends; and the Free Range English Country Boogie Band.

The festival will begin Friday, January 9, with its customary kick-off concert at Club Passim and the popular Boston Urban Ceilidh at Springstep in Medford. Saturday's "Dayfest" will present concerts continuously from late morning to early afternoon at Club Passim and First Parish Cambridge Church in Harvard Square.

BCMFest will close the festivities with its traditional finale concert at First Parish Cambridge Church: This year's production, "BCMFest Dance Spotlight," will focus on Celtic-style dance, in both solo and ensemble settings, all performed to the accompaniment of a house band comprising some of Greater Boston's outstanding Celtic musicians, along with special guests.

Information about the BCMFest 2009 acts and festival schedule will be available via the BCMFest Web site, bcmfest.com, at a later date.

"We've been pleasantly amazed by the great interest BCMFest has generated in the local folk and acoustic music scene," says BCMFest co-founder and board member Laura Cortese. "BCMFest has always been about involving the community, getting people to feel they can be part of an event that shows the incredible amount of Celtic music we have here in the Boston area. So it's encouraging to see that, in addition to performers

who have supported the festival all along, there are plenty of new acts who want to participate."

Cortese is particularly enthused about "Dance Spotlight," the brainchild of Susie Petrov, an original board member and the guiding light behind most of BCMFest's finale concerts. "We've always had dance as part of the finale concert," says Cortese, "but it's never been the main theme until now. Susie's always come up with brilliant ideas and produced some memorable finales. We're really excited to take Susie's vision and make it into reality."

Cortese's fellow co-founder and board member Shannon Heaton says the "Fringe Events" will add another dimension to BCMFest. "No question, we here in Boston are very dedicated to traditional music. We want to play it well, respectfully, and tastefully -- and we want to have fun with it. Since BCMFest's inception, we have welcomed crazy collaborations. One of the best things about being an independent festival is that we *can* do stupid things like 'Celtic Music Makeover,' or have Celtic-style singalongs of Simon and Garfunkel songs. As long as the musicianship is stellar, the stupider the better.

"Above all, BCMFest is about creating an amazing weekend for performers and audience members alike."