

Kelowna Community Concert Association opened the 2012/13 season last Saturday with an extraordinary group of some 30 highly talented youngsters known as The North Shore Celtic Ensemble from Vancouver. Their ages range from 15 to 18. It is not often that I am totally captivated from start to finish, but this was the case that night. In fact, I was totally blown away by the group.

The stage lit up as they entered with their fresh, young faces and colorful costumes, and they wasted no time picking up their instruments to start the show in rollicking style. This was toe-tapping music at its finest. My friend commented that it wasn't fair to listen to all the fine music, and be unable to dance.

Their eclectic programme was full of energy and joy covering a range of Celtic, Western and even the Beatles, all played with professional precision, musicianship and élan. We were treated to many forms of Celtic styles, literally from around the world. I didn't even know there were so many variations.

The instrumentation included fiddles, recorders, drums, piano, guitars, ukulele and even spoons with many of the group playing several instruments, as well as singing. The ensemble sound was impeccable, the intricate rhythms were precise.

There were a number of soloists throughout the evening, as well as a couple of dancers, all of whom were splendid.

Adding to our enjoyment was the stage presence of every performer. They were totally relaxed and seemed to be having a great time, bouncing, smiling and moving around the stage. It was a total entertainment package.

The group was founded twelve years ago by Claude Giguere and Jay Knutson as a whole new kind of musical experience for young people. They play a spirited, no-boundaries repertoire reflecting a wide range of musical influences, opening a world of performing opportunities seldom experienced at any age.

The founders are to be commended for their vision and their creativity.

To top off the evening, they performed what they called "West Coast Celtic", a fusion of styles that brought us to our feet with prolonged applause and sent us home, dancing (at least inside) all the way.

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Marvin Dickau is an Organist, Pianist and Conductor who has an A.Mus. from the University of Alberta. He has conducted choirs and small orchestras, given solo piano and organ recitals and accompanied many singers and instrumentalists in Kelowna and Calgary. He is currently Minister of Music at First United Church and Executive Director of the Kelowna Kiwanis Music Festival.

