

SIMON MAYOR : HILARY JAMES

Biography

Fiona Talkington, Late Junction Radio 3

“Just fantastic to go and see live. Do catch them if you can.”

Shetland Times

“Dis multi-talented duo hed joost a magical touch tae dir playing. Left you feelin lik you were floatin on a peerie cloud somewhar . Lovely stuff.”

Mark Radcliffe Show, BBC Radio 2 - Live session

Frank Hennessy, BBC Radio Wales

"Brilliant.... I love it. They really are out on their own these two. The whole thing is just beautifully put together, as you'd expect from such a class act... fabulous"

This fine English duo have a wide variety of accomplishments to their credit. Simon Mayor's current position is as one of the world's foremost mandolinists and composers for the instrument. Hilary James' "elegant singing" (Daily Telegraph) is quintessentially English, but easily crosses the great musical divides from British ballads to blues and Berlioz. She's renowned too for an unlikely taste in bass instruments (she could turn up with her giant mandobass or slimline semi-acoustic double bass), accompanying Simon on guitar on anything from bluegrass to Vivaldi, and even managing a step dance if the wind is in the right direction.

If they have a speciality, it's an ability to perform a truly diverse array of music with respect and affection, held together by Simon's famed introductions which range from the wry to the hilarious. Their shows include a Vivaldi concerto, Scottish, Irish and English ballads, Gershwin, Berlin, ragtime and originals including at least one of their gruesomely hilarious children's songs (reminiscent of Belloc's 'Cautionary Tales').

Originally from the north of England, they met as students at Reading University, where they discovered a shared passion for music. Hilary sang with the University Big Band and presented the University Folk Club while studying for a degree in

Fine Art; Simon studied Russian language, literature and social thought while learning to play mandolin, violin and guitar. Before graduating they won a national music competition and played the Cambridge Festival.

Captivating and experienced live performers, they have now toured the globe from Seattle to Singapore, taking in a truly diverse roster of world, folk and classical festivals, including the Classical Mandolin Society of America, Rudoldstat World Music Festival (Germany), the Vancouver Folk Festival (Canada), the Stephen Leacock Humor Festival (Canada), The Henley Festival, Cheltenham Literature Festival and Sidmouth Folk Festival. With the last four years in particular spent in almost constant touring, this Summer sees them writing and recording several new projects.

They share a passionate interest in children's music and have worked extensively with young people in theatres and schools, as well as writing and presenting music education programmes for BBC Radio and TV for six years. They have recorded five 'Musical Mystery Tour' children's CDs of original songs and the 'Musical Mystery Tour' songbook is published by Faber Music.