

Karen Ashbrook & Paul Oorts - *Music from the cultural crossroads of Europe*

Karen & Paul joined musical forces in 1996. They tour and perform at festivals around the USA and also in Belgium. Their first recording together “Celtic Café,” on the Maggie’s Music label is based on Karen’s Celtic music, with visits to France and Flanders. Paul’s world music influences add an exotic and driving sound to mix and you have a Celtic Café sound! Their most recent CD “Spring Will Come” is from a 2006 live concert, celebrating Karen’s 30 years of playing dulcimer. Performance highlights include the Smithsonian Institution, National Geographic and the Kerrville Folk Festival.

Karen Ashbrook

hammered dulcimer, wooden flute, pennywhistle

In 1976, Karen built her first hammered dulcimer as a high school project. In search of Irish music, she went overseas and spent 5 years playing in Europe and Asia, traversing the globe twice.

Based in the Washington, DC area, Karen teaches and performs Irish, contra dance, and Jewish music. She has several recordings both solo and with the group Ceoltoiri, on the Maggie’s Music label. “Playing the Hammered Dulcimer in the Irish Tradition” book/CD set is a standard text in dulcimer literature. Karen is active in the revival of the dulcimer or *hakkebord* in Belgium. Sponsored by Muziekmozaïek (the Flemish folk music guild), in 2007 Karen produced the first dulcimer tutorial (for fifth-tuned instruments) in continental Europe, “Learn to play the Hammered Dulcimer,” a DVD and booklet with instruction in English, Dutch and French.

Paul Oorts

harpuitar, cittern, musette accordeon, hommél (*the Flemish mountain dulcimer*)

Belgian multi-instrumentalist Paul Oorts has wide-ranging musical tastes and talents. As both a lead player and accompanist, he has a flair for Celtic, Brazilian chorro, swing, American, and many European traditions including his native Flemish and French music. He has been a favorite accompanist for dulcimer players on the East Coast. Since moving to the DC area in 1997, he quickly established himself as a free-lance musician - heard many a night playing for contra and vintage dances at Glen Echo. “Carillon” is a hammered dulcimer orchestra Paul directs. In his spare time (weekdays), Dr. Oorts teaches Italian and French at Peabody Conservatory of Music and Loyola University in Baltimore, Maryland.

“...wonderfully energetic and exquisitely arranged collaborations.” the Washington Post

Met Celtic Cafe onderzoekt het duo de pan-Europese muziek met een ongewone geestdrift, gratie en fantasi. De Morgen (trans. “With Celtic Café, the duo explores pan-European music with uncommon enthusiasm, grace and imagination.”)

Wij, Avondlanders, mogen Ashbrook & Oorts wel heel dankbaar zijn voor de manier waarop zij onze traditionele muziek bij de Amerikanen introduceren, koesteren wij deze schitterende CD.”

Review of Celtic Café in Goe Vollek! from Belgium.

(“The duo manages steadily to “catch” its audience with moving harmonies and surprising rhythm changes. We, denizens of the old country, should be very grateful to Ashbrook and Oorts for the way in which they introduce our traditional music to the Americans...we cherish this brilliant CD.” Trans.- Paul Oorts)