

## All About...

# MAGICAL STRINGS

With dancing hammers and pulsating strings, Philip and Pam Boulding have created the distinctive music of **Magical Strings**, described by The Washington Post as "warm, graceful and sonically gorgeous." Centered around a tightly-knit blend of Celtic harps and hammered dulcimers, their performances are colorfully augmented by pennywhistles, concertina, valiha (Malagasy harp) and storytelling. Over the past 25 years they have drawn a large and loyal following worldwide, captivated by their energetic arrangements of Celtic music and their own engaging compositions, intertwining Celtic roots with classical/world music influences.

Practically a household name in the Northwest, **Magical Strings** has toured throughout the United States, Canada, the British Isles, and Japan (winter '97 and '99) where, with their family quartet including Brittany and Brenin on violin and cello they performed ten sold-out concerts from Okinawa to Sapporo. Philip and Pam have toured with Dan Fogelberg, sharing their lively, heart-felt music with enthusiastic crowds of up to 15,000 a night in 30 major U.S. cities. They recorded on two of Dan's albums: *River of Souls* and *The First Christmas Morning*.

Since 1980 **Magical Strings** has recorded 13 albums on Flying Fish/Rounder, EarthBeat Records, their own label, Magic Hill Music, and most recently, their new CD, *Where Dragons Dance* on Alula Visions. These works have received a growing stream of international airplay and acclaim over the years. *Islands Calling*, hailed as "their best album yet" by Billboard Magazine, features their family with several guest artists including Alex de Grassi and Hawaiian slack-key virtuoso Keola Beamer. *Legend of Inishcahey* is a return to Celtic roots featuring the family quartet with a special guest appearance by cellist Eugene Friesen. Their newest release, *Beneath the Moon*, is a lullaby compilation of their best original works from previous recordings along with three new pieces in honor of their two granddaughters. It was described by *Victory Review* as "...exquisite... inventive... also a fine introduction for those who have managed to miss Magical Strings over the years."

Philip and Pam have performed on radio and television networks around the country, including "A Prairie Home Companion", NPR's Weekend Edition, CNN both at home and in Europe, and prime time TV in Japan. They have placed first in a group competition in Ireland, have collaborated with Northwest ballet and theatre companies, and performed for Boris Yeltsin when he visited Seattle. In the summer of '98 they returned to Ireland where they composed new music as part of an artist residency in a cottage by the sea, awarded to them by the Cil Rialaig Irish arts organization.

The Bouldings run the well-known **School of Magical Strings**, inspiring students of the Celtic harp and hammered dulcimer since 1978. They design and manufacture instruments for an international clientele (over 2,000 built to date). Philip and Pam love to share their music with children and have performed in schools throughout the country, including Waldorf schools where for over ten years they have taught harp, lyre, painting, and orchestra classes. Called by local media the "Von Trapp Family of the Northwest", their love of music is embraced by all five of their children ages 20 to 31. They return from colleges and graduate schools across the country to present their annual Celtic Yuletide Concerts along with Irish dancers and a host of guest artists in cathedrals and concert halls throughout the region.

Philip and Pam seem to have boundless energy for their creative life, which is nurtured by their home on a beautiful farm nestled against Magic Hill, overlooking the Puget Sound.

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## CRITICAL ACCLAIM

“Magical Strings is the splendid harp and hammered dulcimer duo of Philip and Pam Boulding. Their music is warm, graceful and sonically gorgeous. ...The Bouldings share not only a marriage, but a pure musical empathy. Their instruments -- one plucked, the other struck -- weave in and out of each other like avid Maypole dancers.”

Richard Harrington, *The Washington Post*

“Philip and Pam Boulding have elevated the music of the dulcimer and Celtic harp to the status of a more cultured art with their many original compositions and devoted following. Saturday's concert... was more evidence that theirs is a musical genre whose time has come.” *The Seattle Times*

“The two seem to dissolve into one performing entity.” *Vancouver B.C. Folk Music Festival*

“Pam introduces the tunes, telling tales of the travels that inspired them, with uncontrived simplicity ...Harp and dulcimer combined in orchestral splendor, and the musicianship of this pair was awesome.” *Woodstock Times, New York*

“If the spring rain wrote musical scores it would sound like the Bouldings.... they produce crisp, clear notes that cascade in the air. In the hands of these two, a composition is a seamless garment, not a patchwork quilt.” *The Valley Advocate*

“The performances maintain superb phrasing .... exciting dynamics .... and a lovely background tapestry created by Phil's fine work on the basses and his sensitive whistle playing .... There is throughout a rhythmic sturdiness and pulse so rarely encountered in most harp and hammer dulcimer playing and this really separates the 'men from the boys.” *Shanachie Review*

“...sounds sinfully rich, yet, at the same time, light and almost liberating. The experience of a Magical Strings' concert, especially at the acoustically pure Olin Arts Center, is not one you'll soon forget.” *The Maine Coast Reporter*

“You came away with a deep sense of the music and part of the inner strength of the lovely people who performed. The music is a strong marriage of the bardic tradition... to the moving forces of Phil and Pam today.” Chris Lunn, *Victory Review*

“ ...Magical Strings strive to bring the Celtic tradition into the present and carry it into the future through their own original compositions ... Ambitious ... Poignant and moving.” *Heartbeats*