

# Greenfire

**Ken Kolodner, hammer dulcimer • Laura Risk, fiddle**

**Ken Kolodner and Laura Risk's** approach to Celtic music reflects both a deep respect for the tradition and a healthy spirit of creativity, as they effortlessly combine classical ensemble precision and musicality with a mastery of the improvisational freedom essential to traditional music. The duo plays with a lightness, quickness, and precision that captivates audiences of all ages, and their enthusiasm for the music is infectious.

**Hammer dulcimer player Ken Kolodner** and **fiddler Laura Risk** are seasoned traditional musicians who found each other in a truly time-honored fashion: through informal, spontaneous playing together. Ken, of the world-acclaimed instrumental trio Helicon since 1986, met Laura at an all-night jam session at the 1996 Winnipeg Folk Festival; the musical chemistry felt between them was something unique, magical, and instantly recognizable. Laura was therefore an obvious choice on Ken's solo dulcimer CD *Walking Stones* in 1997.

By the end of that recording session it was clear to the musicians and to the record label (Dorian) that a new group had been born. *Walking Stones* was Allegro Corporation's #1 World Music Title for over three months and was named one of BMG's Top 15 Bestsellers in 1998.

**Recent Greenfire performances** include a concert-length Radio Canada broadcast recorded live at Montreal's Maison de Culture, Frontenac; an appearance at Baltimore's Meyerhoff Symphony Hall; concerts at Longwood Gardens (PA) and the Frontier Cultural Museum (VA); headliner spots at the Clarion Folk College and the Texas Acoustic Music Winter Festival; and an appearance as soloists with the Baltimore Choral Arts Society. The latter concert, which included a suite of traditional tunes arranged for Greenfire and string orchestra, was broadcast to over 500,000 viewers in the Washington DC area on WMAR TV (ABC).

As a soloist and an alum of *Helicon*, **Ken Kolodner** has toured extensively throughout North America and Europe. Known for his expressive and improvisational style, Ken has taught at countless festivals and music camps and has been featured in nationally broadcast concerts on NPR, German National Radio, CBC, and the Voice of America. His 1999 appearance as soloist with a combined chorus (The Baltimore Choral Arts) and chamber orchestra from the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra was broadcast in an Emmy-nominated CBS-TV Christmas special. His recording "A Winter Solstice with Helicon" recently won an Indie for Best Seasonal Recording.

A California native, **Laura Risk** began playing Scottish fiddle music as a teenager. Her love of traditional fiddling has led her into a rich journey of performing and teaching the beautifully diverse repertoires of Scotland, Cape Breton and, most recently, Québec, where she now lives. Still in her mid-twenties, Laura has two solo albums on Dorian Records and has performed with many notable names in Celtic and American traditional music, including *Ensemble Galilei*, *The John Whelan Band*, Darol Anger's 'World of Fiddles', *Helicon*, *Hesperus*, Scottish fiddler Alasdair Fraser, and American roots band *Cordelia's Dad*. Laura recently completed five years as an Instructor of Fiddling at Wellesley College, where she founded the college's first Celtic music ensemble, the Fiddleheads.

**3806 Fenchurch Rd, Baltimore, MD 21218 410-243-7254 kenkolodner@aol.com**

# Greenfire

**Ken Kolodner, hammer dulcimer • Laura Risk, fiddle**

[Greenfire] plays with the soul, emotion, inspiration, and (when needed) the oomph that should be the envy of many a Celtic band... The repertoire runs the stylistic gamut from hornpipes to polkas to slow airs to jigs to strathspeys, and the geographic gamut from Ireland to Cape Breton to Scotland to Chicago, and even to Finland... Fresh, authentic, invigorating. **Dirty Linen**

[Greenfire] explores the spirit and soul and mysticism of Irish music and kindred styles... [On *Walking Stones*] the combination of Kolodner's deft touch and the dulcimer's shimmering tones inevitably conjure contemplative and sometimes courtly moods, but not before we're treated to a lively set of Irish, Scottish, and Irish American reels. Risk's aggressive attack, which accounts for much of the music's rhythmic force early on, is later supplanted by a bittersweet lyricism... But it returns again, vigorously. The beauty and the beat of Celtic music are always well served.

**The Washington Post**

Exceptional musicians... Greenfire's approach combines a loving respect for tradition and a thoroughly playful sense of creativity. The result is controlled artistry that should appeal to all fans of Celtic music. Ken's dulcimer playing has been described elsewhere as 'astonishing' and 'virtuosic' but I think his greatest gift is his ability to contribute to an ensemble sound that is stunning in its musicality. OK, it's astonishing too, and, clearly this is a 'must have' album for Celtic fans. **Dulcimer Player News**

What's most impressive is the tight interplay among the musicians. **The Baltimore Messenger**

Greenfire, a Baltimore-based Celtic group featuring Ken Kolodner on hammered dulcimer and Laura Risk on fiddle, played an inspiring set of tunes on Thursday, Aug. 16, at beautiful Longwood Gardens in Kennett Square, Pa. The perfect summer evening was a fine complement to the musicianship of these two, which, as always, was first-rate. Opening with two Kerry polkas, "Salmon Tails Up the Water" and "Knocknaboul," they moved seamlessly through French-Canadian, old-timey, Scottish and Cape Breton styles, as well as an original tune by Kolodner... The interplay between the hammered dulcimer's precise percussive qualities and the graceful fluidity of Risk's fiddling was a real treat... This was a fine performance by two veterans who obviously enjoy working together. **Rambles**

*A Roof for the Rain* sparkles through excellent musicianship, a great selection of tunes, and superb production... [It] is assertive but not overbearing, a delight to the ears.

**Green Man Review**

A very rewarding musical journey... Delightful listening. The instruments weave seamlessly in and around each other and deliver that 'Celtic pulse' that, done right, seems as effortless and natural as breathing... This is magical music. **Dulcimer Player News**

# Greenfire

Ken Kolodner, hammer dulcimer • Laura Risk, fiddle

## Recordings by Greenfire

- **A Roof for the Rain** Greenfire, (Ken Kolodner, Laura Risk, and guests Keith Murphy and Joseph Sobol) Dorian, DOR-90598, 2001.
- **Greenfire**, A Celtic String Ensemble (Ken Kolodner, Laura Risk and Robin Bullock), Dorian, DOR-90321, 1998.
- **Walking Stones: A Celtic Sojourn**, Ken Kolodner with Laura Risk and Robin Bullock, Dorian, DOR-90248, 1997.
- **The Road from Erin: Ireland's Musical Legacy**, various artists, Dorian, DOR-90021, Summer 2002
- **Christmas Gift: A Dorian Sampler**, various artists, Dorian, DOR-90321, Fall, 1998.

## Recordings by Ken Kolodner

- **A Winter Solstice Celebration**, Helicon, Dorian, DOR-90531, 1999.
- **Horizons**, Helicon, Dorian Discovery, DIS-80103, 1992.
- **The Titan**, Helicon, Dorian Discovery, DIS-80115, 1989.
- **Helicon**, Helicon (Ken Kolodner, Chris Norman and Robin Bullock), Jeb Records, JEB 002, 1987.
- **Daybreak**, Chris Norman and Ken Kolodner, Jeb Records, JEB 001, 1985.
- **Highlands**, Chris Norman (with Ken Kolodner and others), Dorian, DOR-90321, 1997.
- **Glenelg: Variations in Light and Shade**, Elke Baker (with Ken Kolodner and others), Spring, 2001.

## Recordings by Laura Risk

- **The Merry Making**, Laura Risk (with Susie Petrov, Dennis Cahill, Christopher Layer). Dorian, DOR-90282, 2000.
- **Celtic Dialogue**, Laura Risk with Jacqueline Schwab, Dorian, DOR-90264, 1999.
- **Journey Begun**, Laura Risk and Athena Tergis (with Steve Baughman, Peter Maund, Pat Klobas, Alasdair Fraser), Culburnie 105, 1994.
- **Spine**, Cordelia's Dad (with Laura Risk), Appleseed 1023, 1998.
- **Host of the Air: Contemporary Music for Scottish Country Dancing**, Laura Risk with Susie Petrov and James Gray, 1998.
- **Petit Fou**, Matapat (with Laura Risk and others), Borealis, BCD-113, Spring 2001
- **Visions of Bach: Transcriptions and arrangements inspired by Bach**, various artists, Dorian, DOR-90016

## Books (all published by Mel Bay)

- **Walking Stones: A Celtic Sojourn**, Ken Kolodner,
- **Anthology of the Masters of the Hammer Dulcimer**, Ken Kolodner and others, 2000.
- **Fiddler Magazine's Favorites: Tunes from and Interviews with 36 of the World's Greatest Fiddlers**, Laura Risk and others, 1999.
- **Helicon: The International Acoustic Tune Book**, Helicon, 1995.

# *Greenfire*

**Ken Kolodner, hammer dulcimer • Laura Risk, fiddle**

## **Greenfire – Selected Appearances**

Longwood Gardens, Kennett Square, PA  
Strathmore Hall, Rockville, MD  
Green Mountain Concert Series, Hagerstown, MD  
Myerhoff Symphony Hall, Baltimore, MD – guest artists at 'A Winter Solstice Celebration with Helicon'  
"Christmas with the Baltimore Choral Arts Society", The Basilica of the Assumption, Baltimore, MD, broadcast on WMAR TV  
'Memoires Vives' (sponsored by Radio-Canada), Maison de Culture Frontenac, Montréal, Québec – broadcast on Radio-Canada  
Headliner at Texas Acoustic Music Winter Festival, Arlington, TX  
Headliner at Clarion Folk Festival, Clarion, PA  
Frontier Culture Museum, Staunton, VA  
Virginia Highlands Festival, Abington, VA  
Spooner Heritage Festival, Spooner, WI  
Institute of Musical Traditions, Tacoma Park, MD  
Club Passim's, Cambridge, MA  
May's Chapel, Baltimore, MD  
The Cellar Stage, Baltimore, MD  
Music on the Square, Jonesborough, TN  
Hayward Half-Marathon, Hayward, WI  
International Conference of Ophthalmologists, Baltimore, MD  
International Conference of Immunologists, The Breakers, Palm Beach, FL  
The Society for Gynecological Investigation Annual Convention, Toronto, Ontario  
Selected Community Concerts: Westford, MA; Madison, WI; Hayward, WI

## **Ken Kolodner – Selected Appearances**

International Hackbrett Festival Munich, Germany  
John Campbell Folk School, Brasstown, NC  
Upper Potomac Dulcimer Festival, Shepherdstown, WV  
Featured soloist with Nova Scotia Symphony Orchestra, Halifax (CBC)  
"Morning Edition," National Public Radio (NPR)  
"All Things Considered," NPR  
The Spoleto Festival, Charleston, SC  
Bethlehem Musikfest, Bethlehem, PA

## **Laura Risk – Selected Appearances**

Celtic Connections, Glasgow, Scotland  
Celtic Colours International Festival, Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia, Canada  
Newport Folk Festival, RI  
Winnipeg Folk Festival, Manitoba, Canada  
Philadelphia Folk Festival, PA  
City Stages, Birmingham, AL  
The Roda Theater, Berkeley, CA  
The Bottom Line, New York, NY