

# Musical duo Switchback next on MCPAS bill



By Peggie Miller Performing arts columnist

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SWITCHBACK, the music duo that the MONTGOMERY COUNTY PERFORMING ARTS SOCIETY brings to downtown Conroe's Crighton Theatre Nov. 14, may well be a sleeper. At least to some.

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When these two musicians met, one was a music student and the other a house painter. Both played in bands and hoped for lucky breaks. Perhaps the luckiest break of all came with their merger in 1993.

The two performed in a number of music groups while studying and perfecting their sounds, always intent on becoming professionals. McCormack is a classically trained tenor. They share Irish roots as well, and traditional Celtic is one of their strong points, as is time-honored Americana.

Switchback has traveled the world, playing 200 engagements annually with some audiences numbering 15,000 or more. Their recordings are numerous, including an acclaimed Celtic album, "Bolinree," that legendary Lloyd Maines produced in 2005. A later release, "Falling Water River," won praise for its musical description of a young soldier in Iraq and his family. An earlier album, "Seven Rowdy Irish Tunes (and Two Sad Ones)," came in 1996. In January, Switchback's newest album "Ghosts of the River Folk" will be released.

"Fans not only connect to the music of Brian and Marty, they connect to life, too," observed critic Brenda Winslow, after a concert at Lake Huron on the upper Michigan peninsula. The pair credits Johnny Cash, Willie Nelson, traditional Celtic and other influences for their unique music.

"One of the factors that makes this an outstanding season," said MCPAS executive director, RENNIE KIRKPATRICK, "is that it is so varied. We planned shows that will appeal to a wide-ranging audience from dance to bluegrass/country. We are proud to include Switchback in this collection."

The Crighton appearance Nov. 14 is at 7:30 p.m. Tickets cost \$22 for balcony seats; \$37 for the main level, with students from grade seven through college age paying only \$10. Call the box office at (936)

441-SHOW to reserve, or go by the box office at 234 North Main between 3-6 p.m. weekdays.

Following MCPAS' Bella Sorella show Oct. 30 at the Crighton, several supporters took the four performers to Norma's Italian Restaurant for a late supper. As you know, Norma has moved from downtown Conroe but is only a block or so north of her former locale. The musicians were so grateful to Norma for staying open late for them that they sang a personal concert of favoritesn — in Italian, what else? — just for her.

Information just received from JANNA PATRICK, media director/coordinator for the city of Conroe, is that a special SOUNDS OF TEXAS bonus show is "LOUD AND RICH" Sunday eve, Nov. 8, at the Crighton Theatre, beginning at 8 p.m. LOUDON WAINRIGHT and RICHARD THOMPSON make up this duo, with tickets going at \$45 each. Contact JIM BINGHAM at the Crighton Theatre to reserve.

The highly anticipated choir concert at MONTGOMERY HIGH SCHOOL Tuesday evening includes the CHORALE WOMEN singing a new piece called "High Flight," according to choir director HEATHER ORR. It was written by a fighter squadron after flying for the first time in a Super Marine Spitfire.

The VARSITY MIXED CHORALE sings a moving composition, "Remembrance," written by Jeffrey Ames, with French horn accompaniment. As always, all branches of the Armed Forces will be saluted with their special songs. The 7 p.m. concert is part of several days of tributes at Montgomery schools in observance of Veterans' Day, and is without charge to the public.

A classic opera tale of love and money, Jules Massenet's "Manon," plays at Houston's OPERA IN THE HEIGHTS Nov. 13-14. A woman wavers between love for money and normal love in this song drama. Performances begin at 7:30 p.m. in Lambert Hall, 1703 Heights Boulevard, with ticket prices starting at \$10. Call (713) 861-5303 or [www.operaintheheights.org](http://www.operaintheheights.org).

A number of tickets remain for the JOHN COOPER SCHOOL SIGNATURE AUTHOR SERIES luncheon, but those who wish to hear renowned author JOHN GROGAN, of "'Marley and Me" fame should act quickly. That annual affair at THE WOODLANDS WATERWAY MARRIOTT HOTEL AND CONVENTION CENTER is Wednesday, Nov. 11. Visiting authors' book sales continue from 10 a.m. until 11:30, with lunch at noon, and Grogan's keynote address following. Cost is \$75 per person, with reservations available at (281)367-0900, extension 441 or [development@johncooper.org](mailto:development@johncooper.org).

Part of the proceeds is earmarked for MONTGOMERY PET PARTNERS R.E.A.D. program.

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