

Vaughn Watson | Providence Journal | December 12, 2002 | Providence, RI

Music

Two CD-release concerts: Folksinging twins, dance-mix DJ

Two record-release concerts will be held in Rhode Island this weekend.

The first is for *Clearwater*, the fourth disk from songwriter twins Chris and Meredith Thompson. The album creates a vivid world of images and intentions. The Thompsons hold a CD-release show for the disk on Saturday at Stone Soup Coffeehouse.

MUSIC SCENE

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"Chris and I like to paint pictures using words," says Meredith Thompson in a phone interview.

Indeed, *Clearwater* brings to mind Tori Amos's latest album, *Scarlet's Walk*. Amos told the story of diverse communities through the perspective of a single protagonist, the Scarlet of the title. The Thompson sisters, Classical High School graduates now based in Somerville, Mass., write and perform richly told stories of native communities and cultures.

The characters on their journey are natives of the Andes region and coastal Africa, places where history is secreted away in stories told as songs, accompanied by drums or stringed instruments.

The Latin tinged "Neruda" praises a poet who spoke out on the behalf of peasants, farmers and union workers. The song is named for Pablo Neruda, who turned to activism after a friend and fellow poet, Garcia Lorca, was assassinated for his political beliefs.

"He decided pretty early on that he wanted to be a poet," says Meredith Thompson. "He moved to Santiago — the New York City of Chile. His dad wasn't too happy. He traveled the world and became a consul. He really became a voice of his country.

"... At one point, he was giving a speech. Officials wouldn't open the union hall. These tanks came over the crest of the hill. The people surrounded Neruda so that [the authorities] couldn't get to him."

Forgotten, a gem of melodic singing and bittersweet storytelling, recalls a more

universal story.

"There are days I think that I have almost forgotten the first time we ever met," the sisters sing. "But then the sky turns from gray into silver, and the sun tosses her rays into the river, and I want to tug your sleeve and ask if you can see it."

The Thompsons match the songs' lyrical content to the traditional instruments and sounds of the regions they represent. The sterling vocal harmony in "Harvest Moon" calls to mind a medieval chant. "Neruda" includes conga and other percussion.

"I love Latin music — that percussion is so crisp," Meredith Thompson says. "There is no one person banging on a set of drums. The percussion section is a community effort in itself."

Chris and Meredith Thompson, with Liz Queler opening, play Saturday at Stone Soup Coffeehouse, Slater Mill Historic Site, 67 Roosevelt Ave., Pawtucket; 457-7147. Tickets are \$10 for the 8 p.m. show.



TWINS Chris and Meredith Thompson play folk on Saturday at Stone Soup Coffeehouse in Pawtucket.