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For the attention of:

20 March 2011

**Friday 8 April 2011 (previously 19 February)
at Chequer Mead, East Grinstead**

CARA DILLON

Support: **James Findlay**

2010 winner of the **BBC Radio 2 Young Folk Award**

Returning two years after her last visit to Chequer Mead, Irish songstress Cara Dillon has that rare talent that you only come across a handful of times in your whole life. Her staggeringly beautiful voice has the ability to reach inside the soul of a song and imbue material with not only profound sweetness but also poignancy and depth.

Born in Dungiven in 1975, Cara was brought up in a close musical family immersed in the rich cultural heritage of her native Co. Derry. Having won the All Ireland Traditional Singing Trophy aged only 14 she went on to sing with Oige, De Dannan and then Equation. It was in this band that she met her husband and musical collaborator Sam Lakeman. The combination of Cara's expressive vocals and Lakeman's rippling piano and fresh production squeezed new life into ancient material. Their original songs sit happily alongside the traditional, reinforcing the debt they owe, whilst pointing to a distinct and distinguished musical identity all of their own.

It was Cara's unrivaled vocal talent and Sam's musical and arranging skills that first saw them signed to major record labels - first, Blanco Y Negro (Warners) and then the enviably hip Rough Trade Records, who released her first 3 solo albums. 2008 saw the release of Cara's first live DVD 'The Redcastle Sessions' and in February 2009, she released independently her widely acclaimed 4th album 'Hill Of Thieves', which won Best Album in the BBC Radio 2 Folk Awards. In 2010, a DVD 'Live At The Grand Opera House' was also released, with Cara performing the album and other selected songs, for one night only in Belfast.

Whether she's singing her native traditional songs of lost love and emigration, or their original compositions, you will be hard pressed to find a more emotive and captivating performer. Cara Dillon is at the very top of her field and one has the feeling she'll be there for a very long time.

Tickets are £17.50 (Concessions £15) - Box Office 01342 302000 or email info@chequermead.org.uk. More information can be found on the Acoustic Sussex website (www.acousticsussex.org.uk).

Biography overleaf



Cara Dillon performing at Chequer Mead in 2011

Quotes - what others say:

"What may well be the world's most beautiful female voice..." Mojo

"Dillon's crystalline, angelic voice is an instrument of rare beauty capable of melting the sternest of hearts" BBC

"The Irish, of course, breed prize winning musicians like racehorses, but even among these Dillon's a wonder - wide-eyed all-Ireland champion... Dillon's vocals, expressive beyond her years, are right on the money." - Q

What is Acoustic Sussex?

Acoustic Sussex is a non-profit making organisation that promotes quality singer/ songwriters and other acoustic musicians in the mid-Sussex area, using different venues. We encourage new and local talent by providing support slots for the main act and other opportunities such as 'open mic' evenings. Any profit we make from events is used for charitable purposes.

Biography – Cara Dillon (www.caradillon.com)

Cara Dillon was born in 1975 in Dungiven in County Derry, Northern Ireland. She grew up in a close musical family in an area steeped in Irish traditional music. She demonstrated a striking vocal ability from an early age winning the All Ireland Singing Trophy when only 14. Whilst she was still a teenager she went on to sing with Oige, De Dannan and from there, joined the highly lauded folk supergroup Equation in 1995. However, in 1996 Dillon left with original band member Sam Lakeman because of musical differences before the release of the band's Blanco Y Negro (WEA) debut album and together they immediately signed a separate deal with the same label.



Cara and Sam (now named Polar Star) spent the next four years writing, recording and experimenting with different musical directions. However, although they look back on that period as an essential step towards affirming their strong musical tastes and developing their songwriting craft, it was full of frustration and the constant pressure from the label to have commercial success. During this time Cara sang "Man In The Rain" on Mike Oldfield's Tubular Bells III which was released as a world wide single. But by 2000 they had parted company with Warners without releasing a single track and in stark contrast to their recent recordings with the label began working on an album of mostly traditional material which they quietly released on an unsuspecting audience via Rough Trade Records.

Cara Dillon (2001) was met with astonishing critical and popular acclaim. The combination of Cara's expressive vocals and Lakeman's lyrical piano work squeezed new life into ancient material which was artfully supported by the understated arrangements and seductive production. Sam's brother Seth also made an appearance on the album and toured with them. A shower of accolades followed including BBC Radio 2 Folk Awards for 'Best Traditional Track' and 'Horizon Award', 'Best Traditional Act at Big Buzz and Hot Press Magazines and Irish Tatler's 'Woman of the Year') and the album swiftly placed Dillon firmly amongst the leading lights of the new generation of young acoustic artists emerging onto the mainstream.

Recorded at their new home in Somerset in the rural West of England, Cara's second album, Sweet Liberty (2003, Rough Trade) proved to be as beguiling and intimate as the first. Using a wide range of instrumental textures it included five original Dillon/Lakeman songs which, alongside the traditional, revealed Cara's ability to reach inside the soul of a song and imbue material with not only profound sweetness but also poignancy and depth. 'Sweet Liberty' also featured Cara's already famous version of Tommy Sands' heartbreaking narrative about 'the troubles' in Northern Ireland. Originally recorded at the behest of Billy Connolly to accompany his TV series about Great Britain, "There Were Roses" was a rare and overtly political song in Cara's repertoire and perhaps had all the more impact because of this. In 2004 she won the prestigious Irish Meteor Award for Best Female Singer in a category which also included Sinéad O'Connor, Enya and Roisin Murphy.

By this stage Cara's enviable reputation had meant she was regularly performing to appreciative audiences at major festivals throughout Europe and had toured as far afield as Australia, New Zealand, Japan, China, South Korea and Singapore. She had featured in a sell out tour of the USA with 'A Woman's Heart' with Mary Black, Sharon Shannon and Maura O'Connell and had performed with the Ulster Orchestra for a BBC TV special. February 2006 saw the release of Cara's 3rd album, After The Morning (Rough Trade). As with the first two it was produced by husband Sam and gave Cara her most successful radio hit to date with Never In A Million Years which featured on the BBC Radio 2 playlist for six weeks and was record of the week on BBC Ulster and RTÉ Radio One. The album is a mix of original and traditional material and features several guest appearances such as acclaimed guitarist Martin Simpson, string members from the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra, traditional Irish musicians Mairtin O'Connor and Cathal Hayden and Paul Brady, who sang a duet with Cara on the album highlight 'The Streets Of Derry'. The album reinforced the considerable musical relationship that Cara and Sam have and saw them fulfill their contract with Rough Trade Records.

Whilst touring the album Cara performed at the opening ceremony of the 2006 Ryder Cup at The K Club in Ireland in front of a TV audience of more than 300 million people. In November the same year Cara gave birth to their twin boys Noah and Colm, who were born extremely premature and subsequently spent a great deal of time in hospital. The resulting year saw very little professional work, but highlights included their appearance on the 'Transatlantic Sessions 3 ' with Jerry Douglas and Aly Bain and a club remix of 'Black Is The Colour' (Cara Dillon vs 2Devine) which was released on Ajunabeats to huge acclaim and was voted #1 Trance Track 2006 in Mixmag. Cara also sang the single, 'Ordinary Day' which entered the UK dance chart at No 3. and was taken from Judge Jules album ' Proven Worldwide'.

May 2008 saw the release of a duet with singer-songwriter John Smith called 'If I Prove False' to promote the release of her first live DVD, 'The Redcastle Sessions' (June 2008). The DVD was filmed entirely on location in Co. Donegal and Co. Derry, Ireland and features outstanding live performances of some of her best loved songs in a breathtaking location on the shore of Lough Foyle.



In February 2009, she released independently her widely acclaimed 4th album 'Hill Of Thieves', which won **Best Album** in the **BBC Radio 2 Folk Awards**. In 2010, a DVD 'Live At The Grand Opera House' was also released, with Cara performing the album and other selected songs, for one night only in Belfast.

Cara has an incredibly rare talent that you only come across a handful of times in your whole life. Her gentle charm and natural personality combine with a mesmerizing gift to relate a great story through song and has helped her to defy borders, cultures and even languages. She is an emotive and captivating performer at the very top of her field and one has the feeling she'll be there for a very long time.

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