

# the bookends



From foot-stomping reels to soaring airs, Canadian Folk Music Award nominated The Bookends take their audience on a musical adventure with good natured banter, fascinating footnotes, and a steady switching of instruments. These multi-instrumentalists explore the library of traditional gems and contemporary favourites from the Celtic world and draw on their diverse musical backgrounds to craft a compelling repertoire with distinct arrangements and original compositions.

The tale of The Bookends begins in the storybook town of Stratford, Ontario where the wafting notes of an Irish whistle brought together two neighbouring couples on a warm summer's eve. This serendipitous pairing of Cait & Pete Watson and Miriam & Errol Fischer, with a shelf-full of stories and a collection of instruments between them, became The Bookends.

The Bookends have appeared at numerous Celtic and Folks festivals including the IRL Festival, Stratford Summer Music and Streetside LIVE! festivals and in 2021 were headlined at the gold-standard of Canada's festival scene: the Goderich Celtic Roots Festival.

In addition to their own shows and tours, The Bookends have performed for several years as the backing band for multi-platinum, international sensation Loreena McKennitt, performing in both her Under A Winter's Moon Christmas concert series, which was recorded and released as a live album, as well as in a series of rare performances headlining numerous festivals in Ontario in August 2023. These performances were captured on her live album, *The Road Back Home*, which was released in March of 2024.

The band released their first album, *Chapter One*, in April 2020 during the early days of the pandemic. This timing required creativity and innovation when introducing their music to a world in lockdown. The Bookends' efforts and unique approach to launching their debut album were fittingly featured in legendary journalist Jan Vanderhorst's book *Just Us Folk – We Shift and Remain*. *Roots Magazine Canada* marvelled that The Bookends "think outside the box" in their music and album promotion, crediting them with helping to boost the local economy in Stratford during the pandemic lockdowns.

In 2021 The Bookends began a performance and collaboration relationship with the renowned Stratford Symphony Orchestra. The resulting concert was recorded live and released as their second album, *A Celtic Celebration*, which has been nominated as Traditional Album of the Year for the 2024 Canadian Folk Music Awards. Both *Chapter One* and *A Celtic Celebration* have enjoyed airplay on radio and popular podcasts around the world. Currently, the band is working on completing their third record, *Chapter Two*, which will be released later in 2024.



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## Condensed Bio

From foot-stomping reels to soaring airs, audiences are on a musical adventure with The Bookends. These multi-instrumentalists explore the library of traditional gems and contemporary favourites from the Celtic world and draw on their diverse musical backgrounds to craft a compelling repertoire with distinct arrangements and original compositions.

The band released their first album, Chapter One in April 2020, followed in January 2023 with A Celtic Celebration, recorded live with the Stratford Symphony Orchestra.

In August 2023, The Bookends joined internationally acclaimed artist, Loreena McKennitt in a series of rare performances at select folk festivals in Ontario, these live performances were later released as her album The Road Back Home.





## Cait Watson

Whistle • Flute

Music has always been a major influence in Cait's life. Her musical journey started in early childhood learning to play the piano and it would remain her primary instrument for many years driven by a passion for classical music and film scores. Eventually, Cait began to explore other genres and instruments including death metal on organ, big band on baritone sax, African singing and drumming. She devoted time to creating original works both purely instrumental and as incidental music to stage productions. After studying music and linguistics at Carleton and later York University, and spending a few years working in film and commercial production in Toronto, Cait returned to her roots and moved back to Stratford to share the magic of this place with her husband, Pete.

Some years and two children later, Cait opted to pick up the whistle and dove into the tradition of Celtic music, exploring music both new and familiar having grown up in a home surrounded by everything from Mary Black and The Dubliners to Loreena McKennitt and The Barra MacNeils and fell in love with everything from the haunting airs to the irresistible jigs and reels. When Pete decided to join in he fanned the flame and they both found themselves immersed in a beautiful history captured in the music of tradition. Now with The Bookends, Cait loves exploring the juxtaposition of these traditional tunes with the unique take the band puts on them.

In 2023 Cait composed and performed the music for Here for Now Theatre Company's world premiere of Judith Thompson's play Queen Maeve.



## Errol Fischer

Fiddle • Banjo

Errol was born and raised in Calgary, Alberta, Canada and started playing the violin at age 4. Although he started studying classical music initially, Errol was first exposed to traditional fiddle music as a member of the Calgary Fiddlers and travelled on his first international tour to Scotland with the group at the age of 12. Errol then went on to be a founding member of the fiddle super-group Barrage and toured extensively for the better part of a decade playing for audiences around the world and recording on a number of studio albums and live performance broadcasts. He has appeared on numerous national television programs including the CBC, BBC (Blue Peter), RTL, and PBS and has performed live for dignitaries including His Majesty King Charles III, the Governor General of Canada, the House of Saud, and the Prime Minister of Canada. Errol has also shared the stage with many other great artists such as Loreena McKennitt, Ashley MacIsaac, Great Big Sea, and Mark O'Connor amongst others, and has performed on stages in more than 30 countries. Errol is also an accomplished Stone Mason and has since relocated to Stratford, Ontario with his family, where he continues to pursue his love of trad music with The Bookends.





## Miriam Fischer

Piano • Accordion

Born into a musical family in Germany and transplanted to Canada as a child, Miriam began playing piano at a young age, studying classical music with the Royal Conservatory program. Early on in her musical journey, she discovered her voice in the freedom of improvisation, spending hours exploring melodies and chord progressions on the keyboard. A seasoned performer, Miriam has collaborated with a diverse array of musicians and vocalists, showcasing her versatility and intuitive musicality on stage.

Miriam was first introduced to Celtic music through a vibrant community of traditional musicians in Calgary, Alberta, where many happy jams and spirited sessions led to a love of the music and a deep appreciation for how this traditional music shapes culture and fosters a sense of belonging. Her non-traditional background has allowed her to develop a unique and melodic approach to accompaniment and Miriam is among a growing wave of young, talented pianists in the genre. She has appeared at numerous music festivals and stages across Canada and since moving to Stratford, Ontario with her family, Miriam has also taken up the piano accordion and continues to explore the Celtic music tradition with The Bookends.



## Pete Watson

### Guitars

Pete's roots span the British Isles, including a strong Irish connection on his mother's side where music was always a part of any gathering. He is proud of his heritage and feels it has contributed to his lifelong passion for music.

Upon acquiring his first electric guitar at a young age, Pete knew he had found his passion. By his late teens and early twenties he played with several rock bands and was afforded amazing opportunities when his bands got to share the bill with greats like George Thorogood, Johnny Winter, The Tragically Hip, Steve Earle, Mick Taylor, Black Crowes, and many more roots and rock legends.

Pete has also spent a lot of time in recording studios producing albums and compilations for local independent artists as well as designing the packaging for them. When not playing or producing he worked in record shops and amassed a substantial collection of music.

Following the completion of a university degree, Pete went on to work in the music industry for Universal Music. He worked closely with hundreds of Canadian and International music stars and was a key contributor to Universal's internet and digital strategy. He later shifted into a global business development role with smartphone maker BlackBerry, with a particular focus on entertainment related initiatives. Pete has spoken at major music industry and technology events across the globe, a voting member for the Canadian Academy of Recording Arts & Sciences, co-Chair for Canadian Music Week, juror for the Canadian Folk Music Awards, and is presently a Director for the Goderich Celtic Roots Festival & College.

In 2015, Pete and Cait started to explore Irish and traditional music together. He has since dedicated himself to playing Celtic tunes on guitar as well as producing/mixing The Bookends albums and managing the band's bookings. You could say Pete's Irish roots lit a fire in him for Celtic music that continues to burn bright!



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## Endorsements

*"It's been wonderful to have The Bookends so close at hand and to be able to work with them. Their musicianship is warm, natural, yet invigorating. That they are lovely human beings and great to work with, is a bonus on top of everything else!!!"*

**Loreena McKennitt** - Canadian singer/songwriter; award-winning Recording Artist

*"The Bookends play from their hearts. Their warm personalities and musicality fill the room. Whether a rehearsal or a concert they elevate the gathering with their heartfelt and uplifting tunes. They have great arrangements and consistently keep the audience tapping their feet!"*

**William Rowson** - Principal Conductor & Musical Director, Stratford Symphony Orchestra

*"The Bookends brought their full sound of high energy, driving rhymes and beautifully crafted Celtic melodies to the stage. It was the perfect ending to our Friday night line-up!"*

**Cheryl Prashker** - Artistic Director, Goderich Celtic Festival; Runa percussionist

# Endorsements

*"We've had the opportunity to engage The Bookends at Stratford Summer Music on a number of occasions and they always delight our audiences! They'll lift your spirits and have your toes tapping for sure. On top of which they play some of the Celtic tunes we know and love in ways that are fresh and inspired."*

**Mark Fewer** - Artistic Director, Stratford Summer Music; acclaimed violinist

*"The Bookends were a wonderful addition to our holiday programming in Prince Edward County and thrilled our audiences each and every night. There was not an empty seat in the house, except when most of the audience instinctively rose to their feet to clap and dance alongside. Our only issue is responding to all the patrons' inquiries about when they will return."*

**Graham Abbey** - Artistic Director, Festival Players of Prince Edward County

*"It's been a delight to jump in with The Bookends on a couple of occasions. It's such a fun group of people and I love digging into their music! You gotta check them out!"*

**Romano Di Nillo** - Percussionist/bodhran player, "Come From Away" (on Broadway)

*"The Bookends put on an amazing display of Celtic music and storytelling. The music was uplifting, fun and full of life. One of the best concerts we've ever had at Shaftesbury Hall in Toronto. And best of all, The Bookends were great people to work with, passionate, good natured and down to earth."*

**Claude Vickery** - Shaftesbury Hall, Toronto