

LAURA CORTESE

Acoustic Project

“Ambition often follows talent, and Laura Cortese has an embarrassment of both. Her open-armed approach to her art reveals a determination to spread the word about folk music and dance without watering down their distinctiveness.” John Wenzel, *Denver Post*

Welding the propulsive grace of ancient fiddle styles to disarmingly open-hearted original pop songs, Laura Cortese has emerged among the most intriguing and versatile musicians in the bountiful New England post-folk scene. At home in any number of traditional styles, her highly-visible work as a supporting musician (on fiddle, vocals, and bass) includes appearances with Uncle Earl, Tao Seeger, Band of Horses, and – as part of Pete Seeger’s 90th birthday celebration at Madison Square Garden – Patterson Hood and Michael Franti. The past two years have found Cortese in creative overdrive, balancing sideman duties, solo tours, and recording sessions with an increased devotion to her own music: a kaleidoscopic hybrid that is enriched by roots music undertones and yet remains defiantly contemporary. 2010 finds Cortese gearing up to release an EP trilogy which will be followed by a full length LP.

At the outset of the EP series, the outgoing Cortese reached out to her community of friends and fellow musicians to create 3 unique ensembles for each recording. *Two Amps, One Microphone* came first, a duet between Cortese and Jefferson Hamer. After spending a year performing as a duo they recorded a string of celtic-influenced American rock songs in one night. The two singers shared a mic and the set came together with nary an overdub.

With more than enough material mounting from solo tours and disciplined writing sessions (along with a few of her favorite songs by others), Cortese approached three women Natalie Haas, Brittany Haas (Crooked Still), and Hanneke Cassel to record her *Acoustic Project*. The EP features five songs and two instrumentals played by Laura and company on fiddles and cello. From the driving, Cajun-influenced “Perfect Tuesdays” to the sparse plucked “Women of The Ages” the arrangements of Cortese’s *Acoustic Project* explore the potential of a fiddle-based string quartet.

Acoustic Project is now in the final stages of production and will be released in mid August.

The variety of textures, styles, and approaches reflect Cortese’s own rich musical background. Raised in the trad hotbed of the San Francisco Bay area, Cortese was introduced to music early on, via school orchestras and musicals. That interest was subsequently expanded at the fiddle camps and festivals she attended as a teenager, where she developed a keen understanding of and aptitude for various traditional fiddle strains. She attended the Berklee College of Music – where her classmates included Carrie Rodriguez, Casey Driessen, and April Verch – which further fueled her collaborative instincts and modern sensibilities. Cortese self-released two acclaimed solo albums (2004’s traditionally-minded *Hush* and the more personal *Even the Lost Creek* in 2006), which she supported with increasingly dynamic, spontaneous performances where she could be backed by anything from a large ensemble to just drums and her own surging fiddle. Her showmanship, charm and virtuosic technique made her a favorite among musicians and music lovers alike, at home in New England as well as overseas in the UK, Ireland and Denmark. Extensive touring in these countries earned her numerous fans and gave a fresh perspective on Cortese’s art.

Tireless and always looking to the future, Laura Cortese is excited to put the finishing touches on what she feels is her most vivid statement yet. “This EP series,” she reflects. “gave me a chance to work with many different artists I respect greatly, and I opened myself to their ideas. I worked with them to create an environment that allowed me to showcase my range of influences and to incorporate their input, while staying true to my own voice.”