

John Swinconeck | *Kennebunk Journal* | December 12, 2002 | Kennebunk ME

## The Thompson twins

**Chris & Meredith Thompson with Curt Besette opening, Saturday, 8 p.m. at the Kennebunk Coffee House at the First Parish Unitarian Church. For ticket information, call 985-3700.**

*By John Swinconeck  
Staff Writer*

**C**hris & Meredith Thompson play a mixture of contemporary folk and world music influences and incredible harmonies. At their Kennebunk performance, they will be playing some traditional holiday music, as well as original music, including songs from their June release, "Clearwater."

John Swinconeck spoke with Chris and Meredith Thompson about the roots of their music, the importance of storytelling, and the harmony and dichotomy of being twins.

**John Swinconeck:** Where did your world music influences originate?

**Chris Thompson:** Meredith and I grew up in Providence, R.I. It is a very diverse city. We would go out to the Stone Soup [coffee house] and hear all sorts of different music – Irish and

contemporary folk. Then, Meredith and I went to Cornell University. Ithaca [N.Y.] has a great and diverse music scene. After graduating, we met members of Rusted Root in Pittsburgh. They have a big world music influence. We've always been interested in listening to different types of music.

**Meredith Thompson:** We feel that by blending instruments it keeps live performances interesting. We use a mix of flutes and drums and other instruments, like guitars. A few years ago, I started learning African drumming, and Afro-Cuban drumming, and fell in love with those sounds.

**JS:** What can we expect at the Kennebunk show?

**MT:** The Kennebunk show is in a beautiful church in the middle of town as a part of a monthly concert series. It'll be a listening experience with a really nice concert atmosphere.

**CT:** Meredith plays flute. Meredith and me play guitar. We tell stories about the songs, and what images sparks a song.

**MT:** That's what the difference is between listening to a CD or the radio and going to a live concert. You get the VH1

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## Thompsons

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Behind The Music thing just by going to a concert.

**JS:** What do you want your audience to feel after one of your performances?

**CT:** A lot say they feel uplifted. I think that's important. The stories we mix in that set is something. That [the audience] recognize the music, but they learned about something else from the stories is kind of cool. We do a lot of storytelling.

**JS:** Being that you are twins who have chosen to pursue a music career together, I take it you don't grate on each other's nerves much?

**CT:** Meredith and I get along very well. We've always been a team. It's a little different for twins. Twins have a very close bond. We don't have trouble get-

ting along. Meredith and I often write songs together. Meredith is the organized partner. She keeps us on track, and she's also an excellent harmony singer.

**MT:** If this was a corporation, Chris would be the Creative Director.

**JS:** Why was "Amazing Grace" included on "Clearwater"? What do you bring that's new to it?

**CT:** Interestingly enough, I didn't want to include "Amazing Grace" on the album. What happened was we were at a folk festival back in 1998. Martin Sexton was on stage. We had met him, and he was singing "Amazing Grace," and he couldn't remember the second verse. He pulled me on stage and I sang the second verse and Meredith joined in. People liked the way we sang it so much. What's different about it is Meredith's harmony.

**MT:** We've heard from other musicians that really like our arrangement of that song. Something that is highlighted is we also sing in unison. Singing the same note right on is very difficult. Being twins, we can sing and if we hit it right it sounds like one person singing, like having stereo speakers.

*For more information on Chris and Meredith Thompson, visit their web site at [www.cmthompson.com](http://www.cmthompson.com).*

### Chris & Meredith Thompson "Clearwater" Independent release

"Clearwater" is the fifth release from this Boston indie duo. The identical twins bring strong musicianship and influences ranging from Latin to Gaelic/Celtic. While much of the lyrical content will seem familiar in the contemporary folk genre, their musicianship,

including powerful harmonies, are first rate.

The Thompson twins start "Clearwater" off with the nearly primitive "Wildest Sea," evoking images of, well, a wild sea. What's more evocative than their lyrics are their impressive harmonies and mix of percussive instruments, as well as the blend of acoustic and electric guitars, while a flute track circles over the song like a gull. Natural imagery continues on the album's title has harmonies evocative of Indigo Girls, but the Latin influences bring depth and a feeling of momentum to the song.

"Harvest Moon" and "Amazing Grace" are a cappella tracks that showcase seasoned, dead-on vocals.

*For more information, go to [www.cmthompson.com](http://www.cmthompson.com). John Swinconeck can be reached at [jswinconeck@seacoastonline.com](mailto:jswinconeck@seacoastonline.com).*