

Crowd had fine time with toe-tappin' Traveller

PAUL CHAREST

Edmonton

REVIEW

Michelle Shocked and
Hans Olsen

Where: Myer Horowitz Theatre, U
of A
When: Sunday, 8 p.m.

Michelle Shocked had over 500 people square dancing in the Myer Horowitz theatre only moments after taking the stage.

"Ya'll know what a square dance is? Well, this ain't no square dance. Now, I'm the caller, and if you just do what I say no one will get hurt."

And no one did get hurt as Shocked proved to the audience that music can be painless and fun as well as being insightful.

Backed by a string trio who played mandolins, fiddles, a banjo, a dobro, a hollow body electric bass and a couple of guitars, Shocked took the audience through stripped-down versions of songs from her latest release *Arkansas Traveller*.

The string trio began with the traditional fiddle tune *Cotton Eyed Joe*. Shocked then lent her own intriguing interpretation of the lyrics under the new title of *Prodigal Daughter*.

The original lyrics include the lines "had not've been for the Cotton Eyed Joe, I'd have been married a long time ago/Out the cornfield I stubbed my toe, I called for the doctor Cotton Eyed Joe."

Shocked's interpretation of *Cotton Eyed Joe* and other traditional fiddle melodies proved that they can be contemporary without compromising their original character.

Among the songs from *Arkansas Traveller* were *Contest Coming* (based on the tune *Cripple Creek*), *Shaking Hands* (based on *Soldier's Joy*) and *Jump Jim Crow*.

This latter song was one example of the richness of the album being stripped down for performance on the road. Unfortunately, Taj Mahal's priceless vocal improvisation had to be substituted with a bass solo.

Shocked cake walked and cavorted around stage and told stories about the making of the album, her father's knowledge of fiddle tune history and her personal development over the years.

While *Arkansas Traveller* made up the bulk of the evening, Shocked performed songs from her two previous albums as well as some new material.

Opening act Hans Olsen mesmerized the audience with original compositions and convincing covers of everything from Nanci Griffith's thoughtful *It's a Hard Life* to a strong acoustic rendering of a Jimi Hendrix song.



Rick MacWilliam The Journal

Michelle Shocked was backed by a string trio which played mandolins, fiddles, a banjo and an assortment of other instruments