

Pianist will accompany duo

By Dave Whitaker
Staff Reporter

Melanie Monsur, who will be appearing with the Washington Sisters during the Flatwater Festival, also appeared with them in Lincoln earlier this year for Women's Week '89.

Monsur generally accompanies the Washington Sisters on the piano, but also has the opportunity to perform a few of her own numbers.

Monsur, the more serious member of the combined act, reflects this in her album, "DragonFly." Her strength is on the piano; she plays in a wonderfully open improvisational style. She effortlessly swings from ethereal to somber, to a playful scampering of notes, which she does in many of her instrumental on side two of her album

Monsur sings on side one of her album. Her voice, like her piano playing, has an inviting quality -- wistful at one moment and quite strong the next. In a few songs, her voice resembles that of Carol King's, but she is always distinctly Melanie Monsur.

The album opens with a playful boogie-woogie number with a Bourbon Street trumpet romping around the background. The rest of the album is more introspective, with a minimum of accompaniment, with the focus always on Monsur and her piano.

It's hard to define her style, although an obvious influence exists from blues, jazz, folk and just a little bit of light rock. Monsur pulls all of these together into an album that becomes more enjoyable and sounds richer with repeated play.

Monsur will appear with the Washington Sisters at 7:45 p.m. Saturday on the Main Stage at 13th and Q streets.

Married couple fiddles, blows and strums

By Mark Lage
Staff Reporter

The critically acclaimed Omaha-area musical duo of Deborah Greenblatt and David Seay will bring a mixture of traditional and original folk music, employing a wide variety of instruments, to the Flatwater Festival's main stage.

The pair performs folk, traditional, Irish, Cajun, Renaissance and bluegrass music on a list of instruments that includes fiddle, harmonica, hammered dulcimer, recorder (soprano and alto), penny whistle and banjo. They also perform some of their own original compositions, which Seay calls "definitely folk-influenced."

Besides creating original music together, Greenblatt and Seay are also married and have two sons. The family aspect of their lives influences both their creative work

and their performances, Seay said. "When we play to a family crowd, we do more originals, because our two sons have influenced what we've written," Seay said. They also have special shows for senior citizens, adults, students of all ages and children. In fact, the duo's Flatwater Festival performance last year took place on the children's stage, Seay said.

He said they have nothing special planned for this year's performance, besides their usual variety of musical styles and instruments.

The two met in March 1978, when Seay's band, Whole Wheat, placed an ad for a fiddle player, which Greenblatt, a prize-winning fiddler, answered, Seay said. Greenblatt and Seay were married four months after that and played in a couple of other bands together until, seven years ago, they decided to perform and write as a

duo, he said.

In addition to her championship fiddling, Greenblatt plays the hammered dulcimer, limberjack, banjo and other instruments. She also has written three fiddle tune books, composed the score for the Emmy Gifford Children's Theatre production of "The Return of Johnny Applesseed," which she and Seay performed, and recorded the fiddle for the Wells Blue Bunny commercials.

When Seay met her, she was playing in the Omaha Symphony, for which she received her formal training at Boston University, he said. In 1982 she received the Carl Carson Award, a yearly national award given by The National Traditional Country Music Association for "perpetuating the art of old-time fiddling."

Seay said he specializes in harmonica, but like Greenblatt, he

also plays a variety of other instruments, including penny whistle, tabor pipe, Sioux Flute, military fife, and guitar. He is a private teacher of harmonica and penny whistle, and he also teaches songwriting classes.

Both Greenblatt and Seay are very active in the Omaha and Nebraska arts communities, including involvement in The Metropolitan Arts Council's City Arts Program and The Nebraska Arts Council touring program.

Seay said the duo has released a couple of homemade "basement tapes," the most recent being "Gonna Getcha Train," released in 1987, which entirely consists of original music. Their tapes haven't made it too far outside of Omaha, he said.

Greenblatt and Seay are scheduled to perform Saturday, June 17 at 5:30 p.m., on the festival's Main Stage.

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