

Rooted in tradition with an ear toward the future, contemporary folk duo Rakish embody earnest musical exploration and an infectious playfulness on their new album *Now, O Now*. Fiddler Maura Shawn Scanlin, acclaimed for her expressive playing, was raised in North Carolina's Appalachian Mountains. Her songwriting and clawhammer banjo technique hint at regional old-time ballads. Further north, guitarist Conor Hearn grew up steeped in the venerated Washington, D.C. Irish music scene and developed a keen interest in literature and poetry. His setting of James Joyce's poetry on the title track as well as "Lightly Come or Lightly Go" epitomizes the duo's approach: the dextrous alchemy of the old and the new into something wholly Rakish. The pair's deep musical connection and unbridled love for pushing traditional sounds forward is striking. Just listen to the fiddling on "765" featuring trancey electronic dance production by Jamie Oshima or the epic tune "The Morning Glory" which is set atop an evocative, melancholic drone. It's clear Rakish refuses to be pigeonholed into one genre and are most comfortable occupying the inbetween. On *Now, O Now* they journey through Celtic and Americana styles, deftly showcasing how to bring forth something new from the deep well of tradition.