Shaking off the cold of winter the warm voices of Martin and Eliza Carthy washed over the West Village on Friday night with songs of sea, love, and despair. Presented by the Folk Music Society of New York, iconic English folksinger Martin, and his feisty fiddling daughter Eliza, brought fiery tunes and delicious songs from their new release The Moral of the Elephant on Topic Records. Eliza has big shoes to fill with the absence of her mother Norma Waterson, who although recovered from a serious illness a few years back, isn’t touring with them now.
Martin is still a force majeur in the English trad world and is now teamed up with his blue haired fiddle phenom, who has the voice of an angel. Eliza’s incredible version of the song Diegos Bold Shore rises and falls with the roll of the waves telling a tale of the whalers out on the high seas, with only her voice to evoke the water and the wind.

Martin soared on the classic High Germany and romped through the wonderful gypsy story of Queen Caraboo.

Eliza gave fantastic back stories to many of the songs, which included the song Happiness which she got from the singing of Nick Drake’s mother Molly Drake. She also talked of the collection of the song The Bonny Moorhen by Alan Lomax (introduced to him by Ewan MacColl) telling the tale of the people eating the black grass during the time of the enclosures following the Napoleonic Wars.

As with many family groups, the harmonies and incredible synchronization were truly wonderful and you could feel the love and respect between them. The flow of the show was as if you were in their living room listening to them trade songs back and forth.

The show finished up with a tune Eliza got from the playing of Quebecois fiddler Lisa Ornstein of La Bottine Souriante. A sprightly ending to a magical night!

Check out their CD The Moral of the Elephant and catch them the next time they come through town!
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