

Fiddler's death at 21 shocks family, fans

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Wolfville

As classical guitarist Kenneth Davidson waited for Tara Lynne Touesnard to arrive for the pair's live television performance in Halifax Monday, he wondered about radio reports of fatal accidents on Highway 101.

The 21-year-old fiddler from River Bourgeois, Richmond County, was to perform on ASN's Breakfast Television with Mr. Davidson, a part-time professor at Acadia University.

He put the reports out of his mind, and the show aired without her.

"I called her home in Cape Breton, and they hadn't heard either. Her father called me back two hours later with the terrible news."

Ms. Touesnard died on her way to the station when her car collided with a truck on a slippery overpass on Highway 101 in Greenwich.

The winner of numerous awards for her talent and selflessness, she was in her third year of music studies at Acadia University.

Mr. Davidson, reached Monday afternoon at his home in Lower

Sackville, said it was still too hard to believe.

His children had taken a message from Ms. Touesnard on Sunday night that she'd be seeing him at 6 a.m.

Ian Morrison, the station's assistant news director, said Ms. Touesnard had appeared on the morning show three or four times, and that the cast enjoyed working with her and had come to know her well.

"It wasn't until we were off-air that we got the news," he said.

A relative watching the show had phoned in to ask why the fiddler hadn't appeared. The relative then called police, and phoned the station with the news later in the morning.

"It kind of brings it home to everybody. There are people out there travelling across the province every day to be a part of the show. How quickly things can change," Mr. Morrison said.

Mr. Davidson, who appeared alone, said he'd started recording an album with Ms. Touesnard for release later this year and had booked the entire week for recording sessions.

They'd done rough recordings of 4



File

■ Tara Lynne Touesnard

of 12 songs he had composed for her.

"She was just a ball of fire," and her tremendous energy inspired the people around her, he said.

Neither arthritis nor her rare blood condition slowed her down.

He recalled one of their other appearances on Breakfast Television. "The night before we had played the St. Patrick's Day Dance at the (Acadia) Axe. She organized the whole show herself. I just played in the backup band."

He said she played the Orange Blossom Special so fast that he and the drummer could barely keep up.

■ See Fiddler / A2

Fiddler's death at 21

■ continued from / A1

"I never heard it played so fast with such control."

At 1 a.m., she asked him if he wanted to do the Breakfast Television show, which they did.

Kimberley Holmes, who played backup fiddle with husband Skip on *Bowing the Strings*, the fiddler's most recent of three albums, was in tears Monday afternoon as she remembered Ms. Touesnard and the *Orange Blossom Special*.

Mrs. Holmes said she'd competed with Ms. Touesnard at many Maritime Old Time Fiddling Contests, where the four-time winner was a good sport.

"She was super. She was really super to work with."

"God love her," said musician Dave MacIsaac of Halifax, who produced the album Ms. Touesnard did with the Holmes.

"She was just the sweetest girl. Life's not fair."

Ms. Touesnard was a member of the Nova Scotia Youth Orchestra and had won more than 30 trophies and awards, including the Don Messer Trophy.

She had performed in the Cape Breton Summertime Revue two summers running, and was due to return this year with her younger sister Krista.

General Manager Gerald Taylor said the entire cast was anxiously looking forward to her third year.

"It was our intention to have

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DAVE MacISAAC

Halifax musician

both girls back," he said, but at this point, he added, no one is even thinking about the show as they struggle to deal with her death.

Charlie MacIsaac of Halifax, organizer of Cape Breton Celebration '94 set for May 21 at Exhibition Park in Halifax, said the event would observe two minutes of silence for the fiddler who was to have performed.

At Acadia University where Ms. Touesnard was concertmaster of the Acadia orchestra for two years, Christoph Both, director of the school of music, Both, was devastated.

Mr. Both, an assistant professor who taught Ms. Touesnard, said she was a wonderful person who liked to work with people and would have been a wonderful teacher.

It's the second student the school of music has lost this academic year. In September, Fontaine Chen, 22, a fourth-year student from Hong Kong, died in an accident on Highway 101 near Windsor.