

Rolling Stone

Paul Simon and Joan Baez Team for New York Benefit

Folk icons duet at Children's Health Fund award ceremony



Paul Simon and Joan Baez perform at the 2010 Children's Health Fund Benefit in New York City, June 2, 2010.

By Jennifer Vineyard
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Paul Simon and Joan Baez brought a solid dose of levity to a fairly serious event last night, sharing jokes at the microphone as they treated celebrity guests including Matthew Modine, Jane Pauley and Tom Brokaw to a folk workshop. Simon honored Baez with a humanitarian award from his Children's Health Fund, and Baez passed out the jokes, quipping about Simon's success and incredible pitch. "You can probably do it by ear," she responded to Simon's request for a tuner. "What did you say?" he quipped, feigning deafness.

Simon kept his overall remarks to a minimum, preferring to hand out awards without comment. Most of what Simon said was to his multitalented sideman, Mark Stewart, who accompanied him on cello for "The Sounds of Silence," on guitar on "Mrs. Robinson," on a Baroque clarinet on "Slip Slidin' Away," with

some whistling on "Me and Julio Down by the Schoolyard," and with backup vocals for a cover of the Beatles' "Here Comes the Sun." Simon's sole remark to the audience came when he invited Baez out onstage: "I'd like to thank her for coming tonight... and offering to play," he said. "Actually, we coaxed her."

But Baez didn't seem to need much coaxing. She offered up an alternate lyric to "Diamonds and Rust," her tribute to Bob Dylan ("and if you're offering me diamonds and rust ... I'll take the Grammy"), and little anecdotes about singing Dylan's "Forever Young" at weddings and once waking up Martin Luther King with a rendition of "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," which she demonstrated. Finally, she and Simon closed the show harmonizing on "The Boxer," which ended with her hugging and kissing Simon on his forehead.

Apart from this get-together with Simon ("We just had a little chat about the last 40 years," she told *RS*), Baez said she'd been currently balancing her long-running career with real-life responsibilities like caring for her 97-year-old mother. "Children's health care is an important issue," she said. "But so is elder health care." Baez also said she'll be accompanying her six-year-old granddaughter Jasmine to an event called Kidstock June 19th in Fairfax, California, where they'll do a duet of their own on Dylan's "Farewell, Angelina." After that, there's a summer tour, getting underway on July 6th in Reno, Nevada. "Life goes on," she smiled.