

**Comhaltas Ceóltoirí Éireann
Tom Finucane Branch
Rochester, New York**



Newsletter

January/February 2020

**Eanáir
agus
Feabhra
2019**

An organization dedicated to the advancement of traditional Irish music, language, dance and culture

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Irish Music Concert

February 22, 2020
7-9 pm



Gaelic Storm



Branch website: www.irishrochester.com
Facebook: rochester irish musicians association

**Watch your email for announcements of
Irish music and cultural events.**

Gaelic Storm concert

Hosted by [Geneseo Limelight & Accents](#) and [Geneseo Campus Activities Board](#)
February 22, 2020 at 7 PM – 9 PM

[Wadsworth Auditorium](#)

SUNY Geneseo, Geneseo, New York 14454

Tickets

limelightandaccents.squarespace.com

Facebook Link

<https://www.facebook.com/events/434726880792137/>

Tickets

<https://limelightandaccents.squarespace.com/shows?fbclid=IwAR3qbQoIPoxT65u4dmHPEEGLU4QQXmbuOT5Becc-qBcj4uAv8kgY1rzCaE4>

Back by popular demand ...



Arise & Go returns for a concert on March 12

Details will be in the March-April newsletter

The 50th anniversary of the **Woodstock** Music Festival is revisited by Christine Kinealy (Irish America, Dec. 2019, p. 92) to celebrate the performance of Henry McCullough (guitarist from Northern Ireland) who played with Joe Cocker and the Grease Band.



Henry McCullough, 1971



SCOTTISH FIDDLE PLAYING AND ITS IRISH CONNECTIONS

By Kevin McCann

Scottish fiddle music has been played in Northern Ireland for at least a century and a half, particularly in counties Donegal, Derry, Tyrone, Fermanagh and Antrim and indeed is still going strong in all these counties today, especially in County Antrim.

I have had a lifelong admiration and affection for Scottish fiddle music, as my father who came from the Trillick region of South Tyrone near the Fermanagh border was a good fiddle player in the Scottish mode, and the first tunes I ever heard played on the fiddle were "The Deil among the Tailors" and "Speed the Plough" played with great verve by my father.

Historically the Scots have had a long and close association with the Northern Irish people. The two races are of Celtic origin and probably immigrated from the mainland of Europe to England, Wales, Ireland and Scotland at the same time more than a millennium ago.

The Christian faith was brought to Scotland by Irish missionaries based on the Island of Iona, causing a religious affiliation that lasted at least to the 16th century i.e. up to the time of the Reformation.

There were also close political ties between the two nations for a long time and Scottish and Irish clans existed as allies or foes over many centuries up to the time of time of Eoin Roe O'Neill in the 16th century.

In later times Irish fishermen, from Ulster in particular, fished in the North Sea and had a close and friendly relationship with Highland Scots, Shetland and Orkney Islanders, and as Gaelic was their common language, many songs, airs and tunes were exchanged during this association.

In the 19th century, thousands of Northern Irish people migrated to Scotland, especially in the famine years and in this century many seasonal workers in particular the "Tatie Hokers", or potato diggers travelled annually to Scotland in the autumn to harvest the potato crop for the more prosperous Scottish farmers. These migrants returned home after their work was completed and brought songs and music, both printed and oral with them to Ireland and influenced Northern Irish music to a large degree.

SCOTTISH MUSIC IN IRELAND

Scottish music and reels in particular have been played in Ireland for centuries and even the last of our harpers moved between both countries regularly and frequently and the Gaelic, linguistic and musical unity arising from the racial identity of the Irish and Scottish peoples was never completely broken from the 4th century.

As an example of this musical exchange I quote as an example taken from Donald Dow's music collection in the 1770s some compositions of Ruairi Dall O Cathain, an Irish harper to several Scottish nobles such as "Ludes Supper", "The Fiddler's Contempt" and "Ruairi Dall's Lament".

The violin was first introduced in the Scottish Highlands in the late 17th century by Scottish Lords who hoped to bring new culture to the area. It also became a force for social change. Scottish fiddle music progressed in leaps and bounds to more sophisticated compositions and playing styles in the next two centuries.

Prominent in composition and playing of Scottish fiddle music were the Gow family especially Neil and his son Nathaniel who came from Inver about 60 miles north of Edinburgh. They played a major part in Scottish fiddle music at the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th centuries. Characteristic of the new style of music beginning about this time was the Strathspey, a type of Reel that developed in the Valley (Strath) of the River Spey.

Strathpey reels as they were first called were first published in Scotland in the early 18th century. I would mention here that where played in Ireland the Strathspey was called "Highland" or "Scottische" and was played at a faster tempo than in Scotland.

The two best Strathpey or Highland players I heard in Ireland were the late John Doherty and Francis Byrne, both Donegal fiddlers.

Neil Gow revolutionized Scottish fiddle playing not only in inventing "The





Neil Gow: Scotland's most famous fiddler

"Driven Up Bow" but also by composing some of the now famous strath-peys such as "Abercairney House" and "Alexander Cunningham", and numerous slow airs the most admired being "Neil Gow's Lament For his Second Wife". He composed literally hundreds of other dance tunes, slow airs and marches which are played by Scottish and Irish fiddlers today.

REELS IN IRELAND

It is not too well known that reels were introduced to Ireland from Scotland, as before this occurred the main dance tune played in Ireland was the jig.

I will introduce here the names of some tunes played in Ireland today which originated in Scotland. Jigs that are regularly played in Ireland are "Oiche Nollag" whose Scottish name is "There nai luck about the House", "The Atholl Highlanders" and "Rose Wood". Many reels come to mind: "The Mason's Apron" "The Spey in Spate", "The Soldier's Joy", "The Flowers of Edinburgh" and "The Wind that Shakes the Barley".

Reels which differ in name from their Scottish originals are:

1. An Ril Cam, played as a jig in Scotland about 1775,
2. Cunningham's fancy in Scotland named "Lady Mary Lindsay" in 1775 collection;
3. Rakish Paddy: a Scottish composition found in the Riddle collection 1776;
4. The Copper Plate: originated as "Coper Fey" or the "Deer Horn" arranged originally as a slow air for the piob mor about 1750.

5. Lucy Campbell whose old Scottish name is "Miss Louisa Campbell's Delight" in 1778.
6. "Bonny Kate" Cait Boideach (Breathnach) stated by Neil Gow to have been composed and named The Bonny Lass of Fish erow" by William Marshall in 1761,
7. Sean Frank's Reel (Breathnach) known in Scotland as "Colonel McBain" published 1798;
8. Lord Gordon's Reel: composed by William Marshall and named "The Duke of Gordon's Rant";
9. Boyne Hunt — "Perth Hunt" — "Neil Gow's Reel" (Cole collection).

Most of the tunes named above were obtained from "Ceol Rinnc na hEireann, Leabhar a haon (No. 1).

There are many other composers, players and collectors of Scottish music - too numerous to mention here, but by far the most important Scottish composer of this century was James Scott Skinner, who composed great music, most of which is extremely popular with Scottish and Irish players. I will here mention a few of his best known and most played tunes. They include "The Bonnie Lass of Bon Accord", "Margaret Walker Reel", "The Laird of Drumblair", strathepey, 'Spey in Spate", reel, "The President", exhibition piece and "The Left Handed Fiddler" and scores of others.

In 1953, some Scottish fiddle players were invited and came to Ballymena, Co. Antrim to play for The Derry and Antrim Fiddle Society. The players were: John Junner, Bert Murray and William Hardie, all from the Aberdeen region and gave all present the "low down" on Scottish music, its history and its status at that time.

As John Junner is a fine pianist and accompanist, a lot of the music taped has piano accompaniment and John hopes to convert some of the music to cassette tapes for the edification and pleasure of today's fiddle enthusiasts in Ireland and Scotland.



The article on pages 3 & 4 was extracted and edited from an unknown source.



Celebrate St. Patrick's Day with a Sean Nós Workshop! Beginner Level--No Experience Necessary!

Sean Nós ("shah-noze"), or "old style" stepdancing is a gentler, more traditional style of Irish dance than the high-kicking modern style made popular by Riverdance. With its slower music, close-to-the-ground steps, and relaxed posture (you can use your arms!), Sean Nós allows each dancer to develop their own personal style at a pace which suits them.

When: Friday, February 28, 8:30-9:30 p.m.

Cost: \$15.00

Where: Rince Na Saor Irish Dancing. (Located at Dance Biz in Longview Plaza, 1742 Long Pond Road, near Unity Hospital and just off Route 390.)

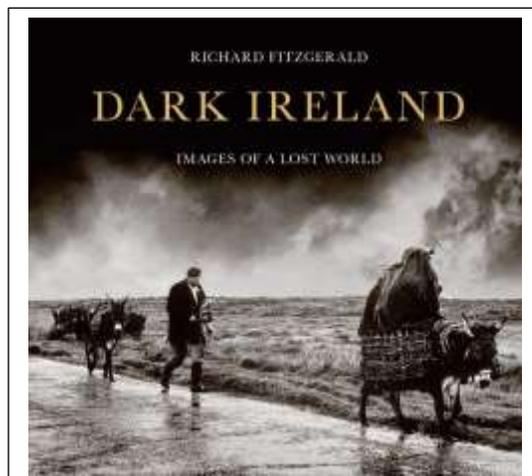
Register: www.rns.dance or call 227-6614

Stunning images reveal "dark underbelly of rural Irish life"

Richard Fitzgerald – new book of photographs taken over past 45 years.

Photographs reflect the childhood of the author, taken before the period of emigration. "The fond memory of that distant time will forever remain the cornerstone of my dark boyhood dreams." People dressed in black, soot-covered fireplaces, black crows, black tar on the stony roads ...

Irish America, Oct/Nov 2019 pp. 94-95 for more.



Music club activities

January 4, 2020

Box Club, 10:00 am – 12:00 noon Meets at home of Jon Berkner
407 Edgewood Ave in Brighton, 585 953 5670. jonasan@rochester.rr.com

January 11, 2020

Irish Tunes by Ear workshop
Location: Pittsford Recreation Center, 35 Lincoln Ave, Pittsford, NY, Room #113.
Time: 12:00-2:00 PM

February 1, 2020

Box Club, 10:00 am – 12:00 noon Meets at home of Jon Berkner
407 Edgewood Ave in Brighton, 585 953 5670. jonasan@rochester.rr.com

February 8, 2020

Learn a tune by ear Workshop, 12:00-2:00 pm. Room #113, 2-4 pm at Pittsford Recreation Center, 35 Lincoln Ave., Pittsford, NY.

Connecting of the First Transcontinental Railroad celebrates its 150th anniversary

The east and west tracks were connected, May 10, 1869. Approximately 12,000 Chinese immigrants built the western branch and 10,000 Irish immigrants built the eastern railroad. Ireland’s Ambassador to the US, Dan Mulhall was a special guest at the commemoration. Irish workers were paid \$45/ month (Chinese workers were paid \$30/month. The workers laid about 10 miles of track per day.

Source: Irish America, May/June 2019, p. 16.



Irish workers on the railroad



Irish worker on the railroad

Early in the nineteenth century America was beginning to rapidly expand to the west, and the railroads were to play a major role. Seeking labor for the construction the Irish were viewed by the Americans as a valuable kind of emigrant to the United States; cheap labor and a way to increase the population in the west. An article in Niles’ Weekly Register dated July 22, 1822 titled ‘Irish Immigrants Wanted’ portrayed the attitude of the Americans towards the Irish. The Americans felt that they were saving the Irish from the horrible living conditions in Ireland at the time. By immigrating to the United States the Irish would be able to obtain permanent relief, by their labor in the prairies and the west, constructing the expanding railroads.

Source: <http://njaohdiv1.org/irish-history/irish-railroad-workers/>





The John O'Sullivan Memorial Film Series

At St. John's Meadows
October - April 2019-2020
4:00 - 7: 00 p.m.

St. John's Meadows has easy handicap access, parking in front of building, full buffet, drinks, and signage will direct attendees to the door.

Join members of the Rochester Chapter of the Irish American Cultural Institute for a feis that celebrates some of Ireland's best films.

Buffet will be supplied by the Briarwood Catering and will change monthly. Cash bar available. We will eat first and follow with the film and discussion.

January 5th: **Song of the Sea** Animation 93 min. 2014

An Irish boy and his sister (a Selkie) go on an adventure to free the Fairies and save the spirit world.

February 9th: **Leap Year** Comedy 100 min. 2010

A woman travels to Dublin to propose to her boyfriend on Leap Day. Will it work?

March 1st: **Hunger** Drama 96 min. 2008

Hunger follows life in the Maze Prison with an interpretation of the events surrounding the 1981 IRA hunger strike.

April 5th: **Circle of Friends** Drama, Romance 103 min. 1995

Based on the Maeve Binchey novel. A coming of age story of 3 girls from an Irish village, attending college in post WWII Dublin.

Contact: Katherine McMahan- Flynn kmcfly@gmail.com

Martin Hayes released a new CD. Renowned fiddle player is joined by the string quartet, Brooklyn Rider. The CD title, "The Butterfly" features some of Ireland's lesser known tunes. Listen to selections or purchase the CD for \$15: <https://brooklynrider.bandcamp.com/>



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 www.rns.dance 
 227-6614

Comhaltas Rochester T-Shirts are only \$15.
 To purchase a t-shirt,
 Contact Kate Ballard at
katebballard@gmail.com



Fiddle lessons: Taught by veteran teacher and performer **Kit Fallon**, various traditional fiddle styles, from Bluegrass to Quebecois. No music background is required. Quality rental instruments available. Pre-registration is required; E-mail ckfallon@hotmail.com (put "Beginning Fiddle" in the subject line).

Brennan Genealogical Research
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 Genealogical and Historical Researcher
 116 Wildwood Drive, Rochester, NY 14616
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Look for us on Facebook:

Rochester Irish Musician's Association

Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann

MEMBERSHIP AND DUES for 2020

Dues:

First Adult	\$25.00
Second Adult	\$ 8.00
Family	\$40.00
Junior	\$ 4.00

Make check payable to: "CCE Rochester"

Mail to: Comhaltas
 6658 North Avon Road
 Honeoye Falls, NY 14472

Your donations are tax-deductible.**Irish Rochester CDs are still available.**

This classic, 2-CD set, produced by John McGraw contains many of the traditional tunes you will hear at sessions as well as local musicians from the Rochester area. **Only \$20.**

To purchase a CD, contact Lynn Pilaroscia:
pilarins@frontiernet.net

Irish music on the internet:

<http://www.clare.fm/listen-live/>

JOIN COMHALTAS AND SUPPORT IRISH MUSIC, AND CULTURE.**NEW MEMBERSHIP YEAR: NOVEMBER 1 (2019) TO OCTOBER 31 (2020). YOU CAN STILL JOIN OR RENEW ANY TIME.**

If you have ideas or articles or announcements or photos to include in this newsletter, please send them to Bill Hallahan at whallah3@naz.edu.



Comhaltas-Sponsored Music Sessions, Dancing, Singing

1st Sunday of every month:

4:00 pm The American Hotel 7304 E. Main Street, Lima, NY

Last Sunday of every month:

**the bar is open but not the kitchen;
bring a snack to share**

Johnny's Irish Pub, 1382 Culver Road, Rochester, NY

3:00 pm Music Learning Session with Mark Ballard

3:00-5:00 pm Singer Session with Chris Brennan

5:00 pm Regular session

Set Dancing Every Wednesday:

McGinnity's Bar & Restaurant

7:30 pm 534 West Ridge Road

No experience, no partner necessary.

Instructors: Arlene Miller (585) 663-4438. James Coughlin, caller.

Every Monday:

Colie's Café, Nazareth College campus

7:00-8:00 pm waltz session

8:00-9:00 pm: jigs, reels, etc. Beginners are especially welcome and the use of sheet music is acceptable, copies & pdfs are available.

Ben's website for the Monday session:

<https://sites.google.com/site/rocnyslowsession/>

OTHER TRADITIONAL IRISH & CELTIC MUSIC SESSIONS

Every Tuesday:

7:00 pm (study session) **Charlotte Tavern**, 2 River Road & Lake Ave.

Every Saturday:

Barry's Old School Irish, 2 W Main St. Webster.

2:00-5:30 pm. Leader: John Ryan

First Wednesdays:

7:00 pm **Scottish Sessions** at 7:00-9:00 pm

Check Facebook for current location:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/rochscotstrad> .

2nd Sunday of each month The **Geneva Irish Music Session**, which had been meeting the second Sunday of every month at Bottomless Brewing from 2:00 - 5:00 p.m. is temporarily cancelled until we find a different venue. So, there will be no January 2020 session. For information on renewed session; Kit Fallon (ckfallon@hotmail.com)

For a summary of all local sessions:

<http://irishrochester.weebly.com/sessions.html>

