

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



## **Newsletter**

May/June 2021

Bealtaine  
agus  
Maitheamh  
2021

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

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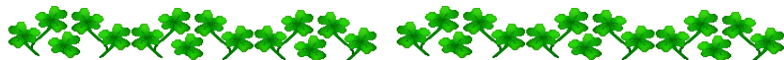


Due to the COVID19 pandemic, until further notice, there will be no regularly scheduled in-person workshops or ceili dances.

For specific music events, check the calendar on the website: <http://irishrochester.weebly.com/calendar.html>

Some recurring calendar events have been cancelled or modified so it is best to check with the host before attending.

**We hope that the new year of 2021 will renew your optimism and restore your faith in humanity - and, of course, bring health and happiness to everyone.**



Branch website: [www.irishrochester.com](http://www.irishrochester.com)  
Facebook: rochester irish musicians association

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

## Local IRISH MUSIC SESSIONS & Workshops

**Last Sunday each month:**

### Johnny's Learners' Session with Mark Ballard

A playlist of videos with the sheet music for this month's (and previous months') tunes is available on Facebook and [www.irishrochester.com](http://www.irishrochester.com). Watch your email for an invitation.

**If you are not on the email list, contact Mark at [mark55ballard@gmail.com](mailto:mark55ballard@gmail.com)**

We will also do Zoom from Johnny's for those who are still not comfortable with in-person gatherings.

Every month on the Last Sun, until Mar 27, 2022, 12 occurrence(s):

May 30, 2021 03:00 PM	Jun 27, 2021 03:00 PM
Jul 25, 2021 03:00 PM	Aug 29, 2021 03:00 PM
Sep 26, 2021 03:00 PM	Oct 31, 2021 03:00 PM
Nov 28, 2021 03:00 PM	Dec 26, 2021 03:00 PM
Jan 30, 2022 03:00 PM	Feb 27, 2022 03:00 PM
Mar 27, 2022 03:00 PM	

Please download and import the following iCalendar (.ics) files to your calendar system.

Monthly:

[https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/tZEIc6uqDlrHdGF8mgmvIBXw6Ira1YQNLHi/ics?icsToken=98tyKuGtpj0tHNKcsR6CRpwMGo\\_oKO7wplhcgqd6ukfoBC1FbiHOIbRrILMuKen-](https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/tZEIc6uqDlrHdGF8mgmvIBXw6Ira1YQNLHi/ics?icsToken=98tyKuGtpj0tHNKcsR6CRpwMGo_oKO7wplhcgqd6ukfoBC1FbiHOIbRrILMuKen-)

**Join Zoom Meeting:**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85867669175?pwd=M05oQ2Q3RFZDbTAzbStkamVBWVY4UT09>

**The Last-Sunday-of-the-month Johnny's session (5 pm)** back in-person.

Capacity is limited to 15 people at a time; be sure to register via the Google Form link:

• [https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScidPUgVpM4cCF-SKn-DwLnPk1kTliWU3O2flcb1w\\_u0KL63A/viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScidPUgVpM4cCF-SKn-DwLnPk1kTliWU3O2flcb1w_u0KL63A/viewform)

### Virtual Irish Tunes by Ear – Free Workshop

**Second Sunday of every month: May 9                      2-4 pm**

**June workshop is cancelled due to the Celtic Faire at GCV&M** (see next page)

**WHERE:** via Zoom. For details: Facebook and [www.irishrochester.org](http://www.irishrochester.org)

**WHO IS WELCOME?**

*All acoustic melody instruments. The only prerequisite is that you can play the D and G scales on your instrument*

**GOAL:** *That everyone will learn at least one tune by ear, modeling the method used in most traditional music camps*

**WHAT DO YOU NEED?** *Your instrument. A recording device (smartphone will do!)*

**WHEN:** *Second Sunday of the month, 2:00-4:00 pm*

**COST:** *Free*

Zoom link for the ear workshop is the same each month:

- Join Zoom Meeting: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87482729512?>
- Passcode: 207159
- Meeting ID: 874 8272 9512



**Intermissions session** every Wednesday night in Geneseo is back in-person.

**On the third Sunday of each month:** from 5-7 PM, we added a Zoom session.

Zoom link is the same each month:

- Join Zoom Meeting: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82646049717?>
- Passcode: 644659
- Meeting ID: 826 4604 9717

**CALENDAR of all events** <http://irishrochester.weebly.com/calendar.html>

**Facebook Event Links:**

<https://www.facebook.com/pg/RochesterIrishMusiciansAssociation/events>

## **Celtic Faire at Genesee Country Village & Museum**

**June 12, 2021 to June 13, 2021**

From the Scottish Highlands, Emerald Isles, and rugged Welsh coastline to the Genesee Valley, Celtic traditions and roots run deep. Explore this rich culture at our pan-Celtic celebration of heritage music, dance, and authentic food and drink.

Rock out to the stirring rhythms of A Bit of Irish and **Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann**. Listen as the campus echoes with the thrum of traditional pipe and drum melodies as played by Feadán Ór, Gates Keystone Club Police Pipes & Drums, and Rochester Scottish Pipes & Drums. Heart-pounding dance demonstrations by Drumcliffe Irish Arts, Main St. 56 Dance Company, and Rochester Academy of Irish Dance will keep you on your feet.

Enjoy the humor and storytelling blarney of Deirdre McCarthy, and demonstrations of Celtic history and weaponry by Children of the Myst. Take a walk with the "little people" on our fairy door trail at the Nature Center, and visit unique animals on the Great Meadow. Follow fast-paced matches with Roc City Hurling and Roc City Camogie. Kids, don't miss our Feats of Strength competition where you can be part of Scottish games!

### **Specialty Vendors**

From delectable Welsh cookies to exquisite knotwork jewelry, and fairy paraphernalia to gorgeous knits, be sure to bring your màileid-pòca (wallet) when exploring our array of specialty vendors!

### **Clan Booths**

Chat with visiting clan representatives for more information on lineage, genealogy, tartan history, and a host of other topics!



## Virtual Session with Rochester (Tom Finucane) Branch

Time: May 29, 2021 03:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86331434554?pwd=RWsrUGkwdUJJSmROcVlVRW16MkJjUT09>

Meeting ID: 863 3143 4554

Passcode: 866825

To register:

Contact Tim Quinn at: [quinntimothym@gmail.com](mailto:quinntimothym@gmail.com)

**Catskills Irish Arts Week** is virtual this year, starting July 12, 2021. Workshops and concerts will be online. The schedule, registration and other info can be found at:  
[Catskillsirishartsweek.com](http://Catskillsirishartsweek.com)

**Barry's session is back on at the normal time, 2:00 pm.**

### **On Line Opportunities Continue for Trad Lovers**

By Dave Halligan

The Pandemic is getting really old for us all and unfortunately it isn't over just yet. Luckily there are still plenty of online events to help us get through this. For the past year, two NY City based musicians have been hosting weekly presentations on Thursday evenings. The hosts have facilitated over 60 events in the past year. Many of the New York based musicians had been gathering pre virus at a Manhattan Pub called Mary O's. Trad musicians, singers and dancers from North America and Europe contribute to this effort. The Irish Echo just awarded Tune Supply with an Arts and Cultural Award as a Hero of the Pandemic. The weekly session/concerts are free but contributions are welcome. The funds are spread out among the many great musicians who have not been able to work for over a year. I watched the one year anniversary show that hosted 90 artists! Please check out **Tune Supply** at [tune.supply](http://tune.supply), as well as on Youtube and Facebook. Don't forget to sign up for their email list and you will be updated weekly.



## Ellis Island Immigrant Database!

By Megan Smolenyak (Irish America, April 2021)

In April of 2001, a miracle occurred. Well, it certainly seemed that way at the time. The Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Foundation (SOLEIF) opened the American Family Immigration History Center (AFIHC), launching an [online database](#) — digitized and indexed — of the passenger records of millions of immigrants who took their first steps in America at Ellis Island.

Demand was so great that the database logged eight million visitors in its first six hours — this in an era when many were not yet online. It took just 54 hours for the number of page views to exceed the number of immigrants who passed through Ellis Island in the 32 years (1892–1924) covered in the launch (later expanded to 1820–1957).

Making this all the more astounding were the millions of us who tried, but couldn't get in. Dedicated genealogists across the country set their alarms for 3:00 a.m. EST to improve their chances of completing their searches. To their credit, SOLEIF responded swiftly, adding servers at a serious clip, but even a month later, we were rising early to gain access. Eventually, the fresh servers caught up with demand and researchers could dive in at any hour.

I hope I've managed to convince at least a few how fortunate we are to be able to take all this for granted. Next time you find yourself digging for traces of your great-great-grandfather, spare a thought for the good folks at SOLEIF who brought us the [Ellis Island database](#) and set the standard for what was possible. Thanks for joining me on this meander through genealogy's not-so-distant past — and also, I hope, in toasting their special anniversary.

Megan's Pro Tip: No luck finding your ancestor? Use [Steve Morse's search tool](#) to help unearth those who might be hiding under unexpected spellings or other misleading details.



Megan Smolenyak is a genealogist and the author of six books, including *Trace Your Roots with DNA* and *Who Do You Think You Are?* a companion to the TV series. Her articles for *Irish America*, include a piece that she wrote about her decade-long search that finally turned up the [Irish cousins of Annie Moore of Ellis Island fame](#). Her articles for the magazine also include such hidden discoveries as, "[The Spy in the Castle,](#)" which concerned the Dublin Metropolitan Police officer and Michael Collins spy David Neligan. Follow Megan on Twitter [@megansmolenyak](#) or visit her website [www.megansmolenyak.com](http://www.megansmolenyak.com) to learn more.



**Irish American Cultural Institute (IACI) events:****PARTICIPATE IN OUR NEW MEMBER BENEFIT - MONTHLY VIRTUAL PROGRAMS**

In partnership with the IACI Jersey Shore chapter, we are proud to announce a new monthly virtual program, which is **free** to IACI Members.

This month, on **May 10th**, we invite you to join us for "Memories of Our Fathers in the Irish War of Independence." Oral histories of three Irish rebels as told by their children, Cormac O'Malley, Peggie O'Brien, and Mícheál Ó Máille

Unlike previous conflicts for Irish freedom, the Irish War of Independence was a guerrilla war fought between the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and British Crown Forces from 1919 to 1921. The notoriously brutal "Black and Tans" were authorized by the British Government to carry out reprisal attacks on civilians for supporting Irish nationalists. The IRA responded with "Flying Columns" campaign—small, independent units capable of rapid mobility who secured weapons and ammunition from military installations and were a vital source of tactical intelligence. Three men, all from County Mayo, were IRA leaders in this war of resistance—Ernie O'Malley born in Castlebar, George Bell born in Holymount, and Martin O'Malley born in Belderrig. The stories of these brave individuals will be shared by three of their children, Cormac O'Malley, Peggie O'Brien, & Mícheál Ó Máille, respectively. They will recount the remarkable legacies of their Irish rebel fathers who fought for Ireland's freedom. This was the last conflict in the sevenhundred-year domination of Ireland by Great Britain, culminating with the signing of the AngloIrish Treaty which ended British colonialism in Ireland and resulted in the creation of the Irish Free State, the precursor to modern Ireland.

In this continuing series, the June, July, September, October and November monthly online programs will be live-streamed from Ireland and presented by well-known Irish historians. [Learn More](#)

All IACI Members are welcome to attend the presentation online via Zoom, however, advance registration is required. If you are an IACI Member you will automatically receive a link to register. If you are not a member, but would like to join to take advantage of this member benefit [join now](#).

**June 14:**

"Ireland Divided: Eamon De Valera and Michael Collins" Lorcan Collins (Dublin), creator and host of "Revolutionary Ireland" podcast

**Comhaltas Ireland to Present Fleadhfest this Summer**

CCE Ireland will be joining with TG4 to broadcast four Provincial Fleadh Cheoil programs in July and a follow on All Ireland Fleadh in Sligo in August. The Fred Finn branch in Sligo that happens to be a Sister Branch of ours will be the host and lead organizers of the Festival. Please follow both [comhaltas.ie](http://comhaltas.ie) and Irish television at TG4 to enjoy these "almost back to normal" annual events.





## Jean Butler: Dancer, Choreographer, and Teacher

By [Tom Deignan](#), Columnist, Irish America, March/April 2021

A few years back, the Irish dancing community was a series of devastating losses. Four celebrated dance masters – Jimmy Erwin, Jerry Mulvihill, Michael Bergin, and Peter Smith – passed away in close succession. “All I could think,” recalls Riverdance choreographer and dancer Jean Butler, “was the steps and stories that died with them. The dances live in the body and memory of the people who have danced them.”

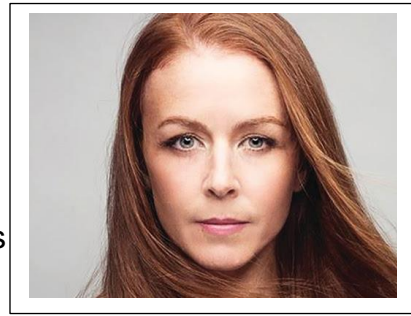
For Butler – who has spent her post-Riverdance career exploring more intimate forms and expressions of Irish dance, as well as teaching in Ireland and at New York University – something had to be done to chronicle the extensive history of Irish dance, to tell a part of the Irish diaspora story that had yet to be told. “I just got this fire in me: this has to happen now,” Butler recalls. She has created the Our Steps Foundation, whose mission is to reclaim “the essence of Ireland’s traditional dance, the story of its people, and the evolution of the form through a range of innovative archival, performance, and multi-disciplinary projects.”

In May, Butler and an Our Steps crew will embark on their first research trip to Dublin, as well as Belfast, London, and Scotland. They will be talking to as many people and performers as they can about Irish dance, documenting the personal part they’ve played in this history, as well as – whenever possible – recording their performances, and tracing their distinct influences.

“Her desire to safeguard the legacy of Irish dance is one that the Jerome Robbins Dance Division shares, and we were honored to serve as partners on this project.” Our Steps will be a “living archive” for scholars, dancers, and other artistic storytellers, who too often fail to grasp or even acknowledge the depth, complexity, and richness of Irish dance and how it relates to, and reflects, the history of Ireland and the Irish diaspora. Also in the works is an installation entitled The Stepping Fields, which will use material collected by Butler as part of the Our Steps project, but also include artistic works about dance, by artists working outside of the field, such as writer Enda Walsh. For Butler, competitions and commercialism have become so dominant in the world of Irish dance that they are crowding out other important discussions – on big topics, such as history and power, as well as more personal matters.

Butler originated the principal female roles and co-choreographed the wildly popular show. She was first exposed to Irish dance by her mother, Josephine, who was born in Mayo, and came to the U.S. at 17. “I come from a long line of very strong women,” declares Butler, when asked what drove her to pursue dance with such passion. “I don’t think I could have articulated this (when I was younger). But it had to come from them. My mom’s story is such a big part of this story.” Butler attended Birmingham University in the U.K., where she studied drama. “I always had theatrical aspirations. I knew I would be a performer, but I never expected it to be through dance. And then, obviously, Riverdance happened.” That was in 1993, when she was still in Birmingham and received an invitation from producers Moya Doherty and John McColgan. The rest, of course, is history. Riverdance became a global phenomenon – though Butler moved on from it in 1997.

Female Irish dancers, meanwhile, have long been objectified on stage and screen in disturbing and unsettling ways by male show creators. All of which can obscure what is



powerful and beautiful about Irish dance, how it expresses the tragedies and triumphs of a relatively small island culture that, against tremendous odds, has managed to conquer the world.

It is Jean Butler's hope that the forthcoming The Stepping Fields installation and the broader work of the Our Steps Foundation inspires audiences to think about all of this – to appreciate Irish dance in all of its glory and complexity. Because, to a substantial degree, the story of Irish dance is the story of the Irish people. "This is about the diaspora," declares Butler. "Everywhere the Irish are, they bring dance with them."

**The Irish Repertory Theatre invites you to a one-night-only live event conversation with biographers Joseph Hassett and Kim Bendheim on their new books on Yeats and Gonne, respectively. The evening will be hosted by Irish Rep member and Yeats scholar, Rufus Collins.**

## **Yeats / Gonne: Echoes Over Time**

### **#IrishRepOnline**

A conversation with authors **Kim Bendheim** and **Joseph Hassett**  
With host **Rufus Collins**

Featuring readings by **Obi Abili, Terry Donnelly, Colin McPhillamy, and Sarah Street**  
Directed by **Rufus Collins**  
Filmed by **Rory Duffy**

#### **[WATCH HERE](#)**

In this one-night-only live online discussion about the lives and legacies of **William Butler Yeats** and **Maud Gonne**, biographers **Joseph Hassett** and **Kim Bendheim** discuss their new books about Yeats and Gonne, respectively, with Irish Rep company member and Yeats scholar, **Rufus Collins**. The authors discuss the relevance of Yeats in the 21st Century and the impact of his complex relationship with Irish activist Maud Gonne, who continues to intrigue almost 70 years after her death.

Pertinent poems by Yeats read by **Obi Abili, Terry Donnelly, Colin McPhillamy, and Sarah Street** intertwine the discussion, along with presentations of photographs and artwork that have inspired and informed both books.

**This event is free** and is available to the public on the Irish Rep [YouTube channel](#) and below. Donations of \$10 per viewer are suggested for those who can afford to give.







In a small town in County Cork, Ireland, a monument stands in appreciation to the American Choctaw Indian Tribe. Although impoverished, shortly after being forced to walk the Trail of Tears, the tribe somehow gathered \$170 to send to Ireland for famine relief in 1847.

Comhaltas Rochester T-Shirts  
 Only \$15. To purchase a t-shirt,  
 Contact Kate Ballard at  
[katekballard@gmail.com](mailto:katekballard@gmail.com)

# Rince Na Saor

Rochester's Non-competitive Irish Dance School since 1997!

Irish Stepdancing, Ceili, Sean N6s, and Country Sets

Classes for ages 7 to Adult  
 at Dance Biz  
 Longview Plaza--1742 Long Pond Road



www.rns.dance  
 227-6614



## This space available, paid advertisements and classifieds.

Only \$100 per year (six issues of the newsletter) – goes out to 200+ people  
 For information, please contact Bill Hallahan (whallah3@naz.edu)



**Branch Officers – 2020-2021**

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 Runai (Secretary)  
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**Programs**

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 Kate Ballard  
 Ceili Dancing  
 Arlene Miller  
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 Bill Hallahan  
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 Chris Brennan  
 Music Learner's Session  
 Mark Ballard  
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 Ben Hockenberry  
 Newsletter  
 Bill Hallahan  
 Music Instrument Library  
 Mark Gowman

Look for us on Facebook:

**Rochester Irish Musician's Association**

## Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann

### MEMBERSHIP AND DUES for 2021

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 (2020) TO OCTOBER 31 (2021). 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.

