

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



## **Newsletter**

September/October 2020

### **Meán Fomhair agus Deireadh Fomhair 2020**

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

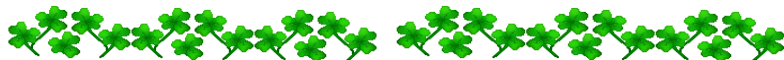
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Due to the COVID19 pandemic, until further notice, there will be no regularly scheduled in-person sessions, workshops or ceilis.

For specific music events, check the calendar on the website as many are outdoors and weather-dependent; also, some recurring calendar events have been cancelled so it is best to check with the host before attending.

The **weekly sessions** on Sundays in Greece are planned to continue until the weather gets too grim: 3:00 at Basil Marella Park, bring a chair and a mask and space out appropriately.



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



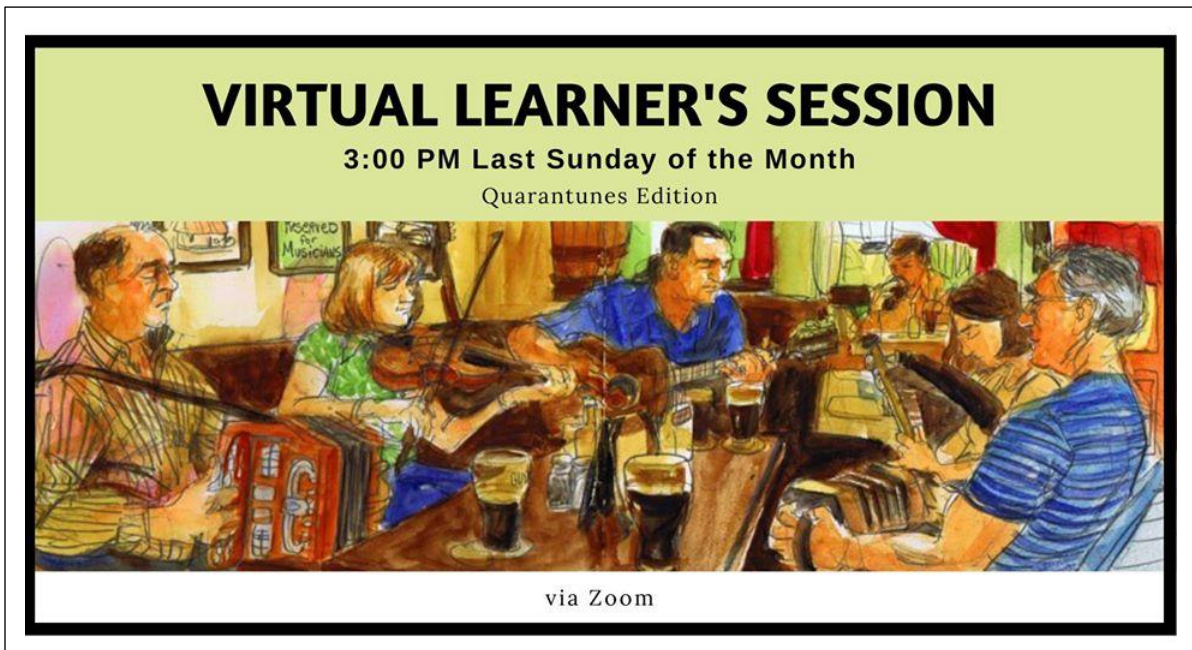
**Watch your email for announcements of  
Irish music and cultural events.**

We wish that you, your families and loved ones are well anxious to hear many tunes. We have been able to establish several virtual sessions, thanks to the amazing local musicians, and locate some beautiful music and tunes on the internet.

**Sunday Johnny's Learners' Session with Mark Ballard**

September 27 and October 25 at **3:30 pm**

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



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

**Virtual Irish Music Session in Lima: cancelled**



# VIRTUAL IRISH TUNES BY EAR • FREE WORKSHOP

SECOND SUNDAY OF EVERY MONTH

All melody instruments welcome! Learn Tunes! 2:00-4:00pm



Photos: Cathy McGrath & Bill Hallahan

via Zoom

September 13 and October 11

2-4 pm

**WHERE:** via Zoom

Join Zoom Meeting:

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.

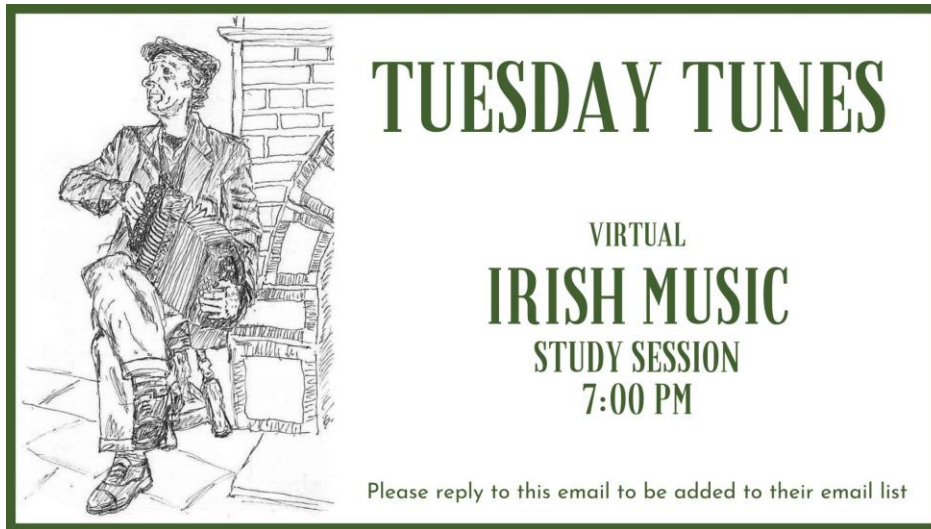
**WHAT DO YOU NEED?**

- Your instrument
- A recording device (smartphone will do!)

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

**COST:** Free





*If you would like to be informed of the Tuesday Tunes virtual study session, please contact this email and request to be placed on their list.: rochestercce@gmail.com*

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

**Facebook Event Links:**

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



**Edythe Preet writes about Ireland's relationship with its signature crop.**

<https://irishamerica.com/2017/08/slainte-all-hail-the-humble-spud-2/>



## Joe Biden's Irish Roots

By Megan Smolenyak, genealogist in Irish America, August 22, 2020

By heritage, Joe Biden is roughly five-eighths Irish. His mother's entire family tree traces to Ireland with ancestors named Arthurs, Blewitt, Boyle, Roche, Scanlon and Stanton accompanying her Finnegan kin. The last one-eighth comes from his father's side, which contributed the Hanafee name.

Most of the immigrants in the Vice President's family were born in the early decades of the 19th century and made the journey to America mid-century, so the Famine was undoubtedly a key factor in their departure. With a couple of exceptions, they converged almost immediately on Scranton, Pennsylvania. By the time the future Vice President joined the family in 1942, they had been settled there for roughly 70 to 90 years, so it's little wonder that Scranton features so prominently in his narrative.

Biden's quintessentially Irish American mother was born in 1917 to Ambrose Finnegan and Geraldine Blewitt, so it seems appropriate to focus on the Finnegan and Blewitt branches that played such a strong role in shaping who he would become.

To read more: <https://irishamerica.com/2013/03/joey-from-scranton-vice-president-bidens-irish-roots/>



“Portrait of Kathleen Behan,” by Sarah Henrietta Purser (1848 – 1943).  
(Photo: National Gallery of Ireland)

## Wild Irish Women: Dancer in a Rough Field

By Rosemary Rodgers, Irish America, August 22, 2020

Kathleen was a political powerhouse, raconteur, and gifted singer who, in the course of her long and often tragic life, managed to have a bit of fun along the way. Kathleen Kearney was born in a Dublin tenement to a family of socialists and nationalists who spent evenings speaking Irish and singing patriotic ballads. But patriotism wasn't enough to save the family from the destitution that forced the Kearney children into orphanages. Released in her early teens, Kathleen declined to join a light opera troupe, having sworn herself to the cause of Ireland's freedom. She joined the Cumann na mBan, the women's paramilitary group of the Irish Volunteers led by Countess Markievicz. During the Rising, she was a courier darting through Dublin, running dispatches to and from GPO headquarters.. She was friends with all the leaders especially Michael Collins, her “Laughing Boy.”

To read more: <https://irishamerica.com/2016/10/wild-irish-women-dancer-in-a-rough-field/>





## Play Along to a Beautiful Hornpipe: The Boys of Bluehill #OAIM50

We just absolutely love the video montage this week! The playing is excellent, some videos were recorded outside (which we picked for the thumbnail) and we even had a pair of Irish dancers! There are also some lovely duets and an entire family perched on a rock in the ocean. So, you don't want to miss seeing this week's video. We had 42 musicians (plus Grogar the goat in a blue hat!) this week from 14 countries: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Netherlands, Northern Ireland, Poland, UK, USA and Zimbabwe! Yet again, an amazing geographical spread. A massive thank you to each and every one of the musicians who contributed their time and talent to this week's video 🙏. It's always exciting to see new faces and the return of musicians who took a week or two off. What an amazing global Irish music community.

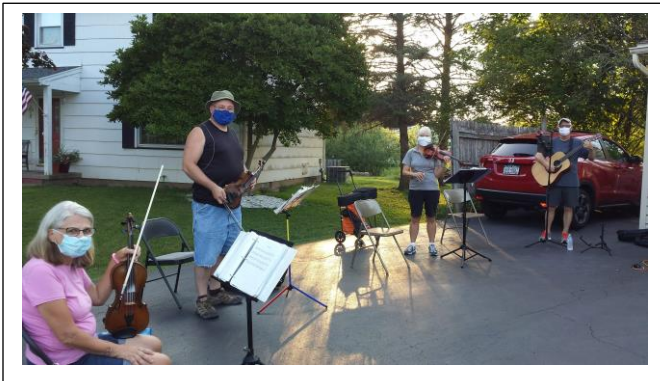
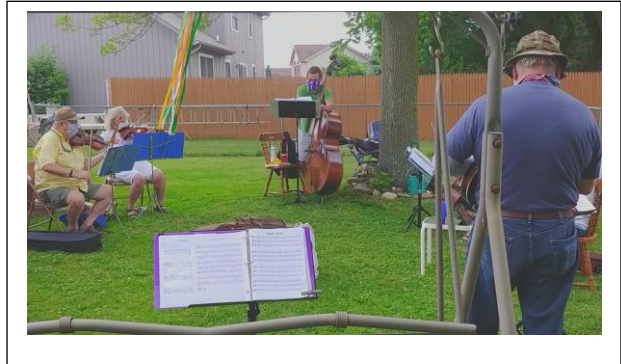
We hope you'll consider joining us and this growing Irish music community from all over the world. The OAIM team.

**Watch the video and play along:**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rnsKIRR1oho&feature=youtu.be&utm\\_source=sen dinblue&utm\\_campaign=NONMEMBERS\\_The\\_Boys\\_of\\_Bluehill&utm\\_medium=email](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rnsKIRR1oho&feature=youtu.be&utm_source=sen dinblue&utm_campaign=NONMEMBERS_The_Boys_of_Bluehill&utm_medium=email)



Local musicians from the Monday group play Irish music out-of-doors with masks and social distancing.



With constraints on our movements and general way of life becoming more and more restricted, we are feeling a loss of control. In being confined to our homes, we are missing our normal social support from friends and family, and our freedom to control our day-to-day lives. But making music provides a means to regain control.

### What is the power of music to help us cope?

For musicians and performers, this is the perfect opportunity for them to practice, share their music on social media, and use it as a means to connect with the world outside. The good news is, you do not have to be musically inclined to reap the benefits of music! Aside from playing a musical instrument, music listening in itself releases endorphins in your system. When listening to music that you enjoy, dopamine, the “feel-good” chemical and serotonin, the “happy” chemical is released in your brain giving you a sense of pleasure and boosting your mood. Music is a great motivator and music with a strong beat will make you want to move due to a psychological phenomenon called entrainment. This is why so many people listen to music when exercising and dancing. **How can music help relieve stress?** Along with dopamine and serotonin that is released when listening to music, oxytocin is a hormone released while singing which can alleviate stress and anxiety. Studies have found that singing decreases feelings of depression and loneliness. You don't have to be a great singer to sing! Also, any kind of active engagement in music can help relieve stress such as playing an instrument or moving/dancing to music.



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**Rince Na Saor**

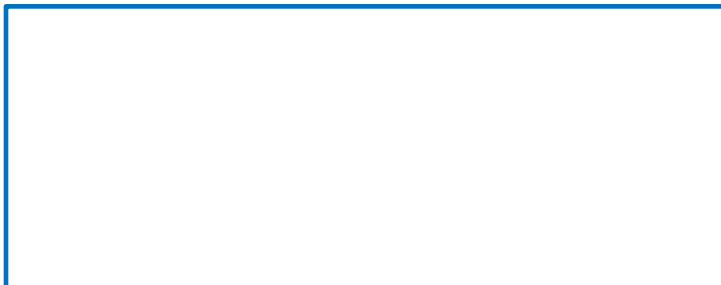
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 [www.rns.dance](http://www.rns.dance)   
 227-6614

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



**Brennan Genealogical Research**  
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Runai (Secretary)  
Bill Hallahan  
Cisteoir (Treasurer)  
Lynn Pilaroscia  
Micheoir (Auditor)  
Peg Halligan  
Youth Officer  
Lydia Fanara  
Youth Protection Officer  
Gavin Barry  
Public Relations Officer  
Jess Kamens

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Ceili Dancing  
Arlene Miller  
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Singers' Session  
Chris Brennan  
Music Learner's Session  
Mark Ballard  
Website & Facebook  
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 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](mailto:whallah3@naz.edu).





*We Banjo 3 performing at Sellersville Theatre.*

By Christine Kinealy, Contributor Irish America, August 15, 2020

### **A band from Galway plays a blend of traditional Irish, old-time, and bluegrass music they call Celtgrass.**

The banjo has a long, contested, and even controversial history. Musicologists now generally agree that an early form of the instrument was first brought to America by enslaved people from west Africa. It was possibly an akonting, a three-stringed instrument with a long neck, mostly associated with Gambia. The modern American version of the banjo is credited to Joel Sweeney, who was born in Virginia in 1810. He, in turn, probably learned about the instrument from enslaved African Americans. Sweeney popularized the playing of the banjo by bringing it over to Europe during his successful tour in the early 1840s. In 1844, the “Virginia Minstrels” made it to Ireland. In the advance publicity, Sweeney was described as “the original banjo player,” although the Minstrels included Dan Emmet, also a banjo player. Other members played the violin, the tambourine, and the bones. Their repertoire included “negro melodies,” which they promised would be delivered with “not a shade or trace of vulgarity.” The Virginia Minstrels played in Belfast, Dublin, and Cork. In the latter, the lord mayor introduced them as “the greatest combination of novelty and talent for years produced in this city.” The Minstrels did not make it to Galway. Today, however, County Galway is a hub of banjo activity: since the 1980s, handcrafted Irish banjos have been made in Clarinbridge, while the county is the home to the stunning musical quartet collectively known as We Banjo 3. The name reveals their passion; hearing them play in concert reveals their genius.

Watch video (with Sharon Shannon): <https://youtu.be/cbjB9MGxLzU?list=RDzazrDVeczbA>

