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# *MOHAWK VALLEY IRISH CULTURAL EVENTS NEWSLETTER*

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## High Kings, Slide Headline 2011 Great American Irish Festival

Fiery fiddles, blaring bagpipes and dazzling dancers will take center stage when The Great American Irish Festival comes to the Herkimer County Fairgrounds in Frankfort on Friday, July 29, Saturday, July 30 and Sunday, July 31. The official lineup was revealed for the first time at the Halfway to GAIF Hooley held January 30 at Hart's Hill Inn in Whitesboro.

"This is a very exciting lineup," said Festival Director Matthew Sullivan. "While we'll always be bringing back old favorites, one thing we've become known for is introducing our audience to new acts, and we're doing that again this year. With three days of non-stop entertainment, there is sure to be something for everyone. You don't have to be Irish to have a good time at the Great American Irish Festival."

Headlining the traditional stage at this year's festival will be an act that has become a cultural phenomenon, Ireland's Folk Band of the year and winners of Irish Music Award's Top Traditional Performance Show, the High Kings. Boasting a musical pedigree that few can match, and fresh off record-breaking PBS showings, four musical powerhouses, Finbarr Clancy of the legendary Clancy family, Brian Dunphy, son of well-known singer, Sean Dunphy, Martin Furey of the famous Furey family of musicians, and renowned vocalist Darren Holden have come together to create the most exciting Irish ballad group to emerge since The Clancy Brothers and Tommy Makem electrified the worldwide folk revival of the 1960s.

Also making their first appearance at GAIF will be the undisputed No. 1 traditional act on the Irish Festival circuit, Slide, winners of the Arts Council of Ireland's Young Musicwide Award, a band that successfully combines the qualities of traditional Irish music with contemporary musical ideas, giving their music a grace and power that is unmatched.

For those whose tastes are a bit more contemporary, back to headline this year's festival will be high-energy festival favorites, Enter The Haggis and The Elders, leading a lineup that also includes legendary Celtic rockers Seven Nations; the kings of Jig-punk, New York City's Prodigals; GAIF favorites Barleyjuice; Canada's superstar family of musicians, singers and step-dancers, Searson; thinking man's Celtic rock from Coyote Run; and the versatile and energetic Emish.

In addition to the traditional stage luminaries, festival-goers will also enjoy such world-class acts as the top Irish band in New York State, Hair Of The Dog; Goitse, a young, vibrant band direct from the University of Limerick's Traditional Music and Dance program; The Makem Brothers with Mickey and Liam Spain, carrying on the tradition of one of the most famous names in Irish music history; and Burning Bridget Cleary, winners of Album of the Year in the 2010 Celtic Radio Music Awards.

Adding to the non-stop entertainment will be a variety of other local and regional performers, including Central New York's most popular Irish performers, The Blarney Rebel Band, Rattlin' Bog, Vince Colgan, Pat Kane, Donal O'Shaughnessey, Kilrush,, St. James Gate, the Fighting '86's, Triskele, and The Stoutmen, among others.

Proceeds from the annual festival will be used to help establish an Irish Cultural Center in the Mohawk Valley on the recently-purchased site of the former St. Patrick's Church at the corner of Columbia and Varick Streets. In addition to the non-stop music, merchandise vendors from across the U.S. and Ireland, carefully selected from a list of applicants, will be selling Irish and Celtic merchandise, and a variety of food booths will be providing a taste of the Emerald Isle for festival-goers. Returning again this year will be the 5k run, bagpipe competition and Irish Mass. Campsites are also available.

The Herkimer County Fairgrounds is located just off Route 5s in Frankfort NY, just minutes from the New York State Thruway. For directions, tickets or more information, visit the festival web site at [www.gaif.us](http://www.gaif.us).

**Meet the Artists** This year's outstanding GAIF lineup is as follows:

**The High Kings**

The High Kings are not just a musical act, they are a phenomenon. Boasting a musical pedigree that few can match, four musical powerhouses, Finbarr Clancy of the legendary Clancy family, Brian Dunphy, son of well-known singer, Sean Dunphy, Martin Furey of the famous Furey family of musicians, and renowned vocalist Darren Holden have come together to create the most exciting Irish ballad group to emerge since The Clancy Brothers and Tommy Makem electrified the worldwide folk revival of the 1960s. Ireland's Folk Band of the year and winners of Irish Music Award's Top Traditional Performance Show, The High Kings grew up in households steeped in the Irish Musical tradition and each member of the band witnessed first hand the power of well crafted Irish music on an audience. Since their inception, the High Kings have sold out hundreds of shows, in Ireland and the US, made numerous TV appearances, and achieved platinum status with both albums. The quartet now brings a new show that showcases their incredible versatility and skills as multi-instrumentalists, playing 13 instruments between them, bringing a rousing acoustic flavor to brand new songs as well as some old favorites. The High Kings are continuing to live up to their reputation as a phenomenal live band, serving up laughter, good times and even the odd sing along.



**Seven Nations**

Before there were any of the countless Celtic rock bands that dot the festival landscape nowadays, there was Seven Nations. They've been called the best independent band in America, and have become the nation's most successful Celtic rock band of all time. With a passionate, tender, and rollicking style that winningly veers from roots and folk to dance and fusion-rock, Seven Nations has earned a solid reputation as an adventurous band with a charismatic stage presence. Seven Nations officially began in 1993 in New York City with a standard line-up of drums, guitars, and bass, but soon became one of the first acts to incorporate bagpipes into a rock setting, creating their trademark driving Celtic-based sound. The band has been touring full-time since 1994 with successful stops in Europe, Canada, Puerto Rico, and virtually every state in the US, and has garnered over quarter million units in record sales. In addition, Seven Nations has played the Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City, a New Year's Eve performance at Scotland's Royal Mile for some 40,000 people, and at the New York City Marathon. It's been over a decade and close to a million miles logged on the road for Seven Nations since their inception and they're just getting started. With a highly anticipated return to their roots of festivals, touring and recording, this indie band is poised for another amazing decade.



**Enter the Haggis** From the minute they take the stage, the non-stop infectious energy of Enter the Haggis makes it impossible for anyone to stay seated. Returning to the Great American Irish Festival by overwhelming popular demand, Enter the Haggis has built an international touring and recording career based on its unique approach to Celtic-based music and high-energy performances. The group's constant touring schedule has made them one of the biggest draws at Celtic and folk festivals throughout the world, and their recordings have been no less successful, from the band's 2002 recording "Enter the Haggis -Live!", to their most ambitious and successful recording yet, "Gutter Anthem," which once again established the band as possessing tremendous flexibility without abandoning their respect for the traditional Celtic genre. In addition to their recordings, Enter the Haggis has also become stars of the small screen. A television special on the group titled "Live at Lanigan's Ball" has aired on PBS affiliates throughout the U.S. and Canada, the band was recently featured on A&E's twice Emmy nominated "Breakfast With The Arts" program, and their meteoric rise to the top of the Celtic Rock world has continued with recent spots on the popular PBS program Out Of Ireland and on Live With Regis and Kelly.



**The Elders** The Elders, the most popular Irish band throughout the Midwestern United States, are a six-man group that melds the energy of rock with respect for Irish musical traditions. The Kansas City-based group has become famous for their high-energy rock shows that exude a fiery Celtic-influence and comical story telling that is true to the culture they represent. The Elders released their seventh album, "Gael Day," in 2009, and the CD has been garnering accolades everywhere. Since forming in 1998, the Elders have brought their musical mix to theaters, festivals and pubs across the United States and Ireland, consistently attracting capacity crowds with their brand of amped-up roots rock, blazing instrumentals, powerful vocals and top-notch songwriting. Virtually unknown on the East Coast a few years ago, the Elders exploded onto the scene with a four-set performance at the Great American Irish Festival that immediately established them as GAIF favorites and cemented their reputation as one of the hottest acts on the festival circuit. The group consists of Norm Dahlor (bass, banjo, guitar and vocals), Brent Hoad (violin, mandolin and vocals), Joe Miquelon (keyboard and saxophone), Steve Phillips (guitar, mandolin and vocals) and Tommy Sutherland (drums and percussion) and, from County Wicklow, Ireland, Ian Byrne, (vocals and percussion).



**Slide** The Irish Times calls Slide "traditional musicians with attitude" and credits the group with "bringing drawing room grandeur and high spirits together" with its diverse songs, which range from soulful and sorrowful to contagiously energetic. The band's origins date back to Ireland in 1999, when Slide performed in various pubs for a local music festival in Bandon, Co. Cork. The group's intoxicating music easily won over the crowd, and the positive reaction inspired Slide to release "The Flying Pig," which led to Irish Music Magazine awarding them its Best Newcomer distinction in 2001. From there it has become a whirlwind almost as exciting as the music itself. Successive albums have received rave reviews and their live performances have made them one of the top festival attractions worldwide. In 2005, Slide – which consists of concertina virtuoso Aogán Lynch, fiddler-guitarist Daire Bracken, bouzouki and mandolin player Mick Broderick, pianist-flautist Éamonn de Barra and vocalist-percussionist Dave Curley – won the Arts Council of Ireland's Young Musicwide Award. Slide successfully combines the qualities of traditional Irish music with contemporary musical ideas, giving their music a grace and power that is unmatched.





**The Prodigals** Often imitated but never duplicated, the band combines brilliant original lyrics and melody with a genuine passion for the traditional music of Ireland and a funky energy that is pure New York. The roots of the music are unmistakably traditional Irish; the branches that shoot off delve into rock, worldbeat, jazz and punk, and the result has been called “the best Irish trad-rock band” by no less a source than the Village Voice. Fusing ancient melodies with rock rhythms, The Prodigals have emerged as the dominant force on the Celtic-music scene. Audiences are captivated by the raucous punk-inspired sound and the drum-and-bass rhythms from modern dance music and hip-hop, but their strong respect for Irish roots and a solid repertoire of time-honored tunes, along with rock-solid original compositions, has made them a hit with fans of traditional music as well as rock audiences. Dubbed “the kings of jig-punk,” The Prodigals have played throughout the United States, headlining the world’s largest Irish festivals (including every Great American Irish Festival since its inception) and they have received the #1 ranking by readers of the largest circulation Irish-American newspaper, the Irish Echo, beating out acts such as U2, the Saw Doctors, Black 47 and Van Morrison. The Prodigals are one of the most successful bands to emerge from the East-Coast Irish scene.



**The Makem Brothers with Mickey and Liam Spain** Every generation has a few acts that define where a musical genre is going, performers so confident in their chosen field that they are able to completely embrace the genre and yet introduce something new to it. In Irish folk music today, that act is the Makem and Spain Brothers. Not in the past 30 years has a group taken the international stage with such vocal power and stage presence, capturing the essence of their genre, while standing out as something truly unique. A host of various instruments and five male vocals, using precise three-part harmonies, blend perfectly for what has been described as a wall of sound. The Makem and Spain Brothers are at their best onstage where their talent and enthusiasm draw in fans who have never experienced the joy of folk music.



Sons of Irish music icon Tommy Makem, Shane, Conor and Rory Makem continue the lineage of one of Irish music’s dynasties, begun by their grandmother Sarah Makem, who was sought after by song collectors for her store of traditional Irish songs. The Spain Brothers, Mickey and Liam, also learned Irish songs at their father’s knee. The power of their combined talents has formed an act that has been called by one reviewer “the definitive Irish folk singers of their generation.”

**Searson** Searson, three sisters from the Ottawa Valley in Ontario, deliver a strong and fiery live show throughout Canada, the United States and Europe. Growing up learning the traditional Ottawa Valley style of music and dance, Searson has developed a contemporary style of high energy roots, Celtic, country and pop, a sound that they are known and loved for. The live show includes Erin Searson on lead vocals, a boogie style of piano, step dancing and mandolin, Heather Searson on bass and step dancing and Colleen Searson on lead fiddle, vocals and step dancing. Rounding out the live show from Ottawa is Mary Gellner, performing on drums with a passionate and vibrant attitude. Searson has recorded and released 6 albums throughout their careers as musicians. “A Different Kind of Light” (2008) includes 12 vocal tracks, all written by the three sisters, and their latest EP, “Ignite,” an 8 track fiddle album, again written entirely by Searson, was released in the fall of 2009. With fiery fiddle, perfectly blended vocals and rousing energetic step-dancing, Searson presents a unique and original show that is recognized and appreciated by all audiences.



**Hair of the Dog** Over the past decade Hair Of The Dog has entertained thousands of fans of all ages with their unique blend of Celtic, rock, folk and bluegrass music. Their high energy sound, smooth four-part harmonies and tight instrumental attack has made them America's number one Irish folk band, and an international success as well. The band has sold thousands of their CDs, pitching them from stages shared with The Clancy Brothers, Seven Nations, Black 47, The Wolfe Tones, The Young Dubliners, Solas, The Paperboys, The Prodigals, Off-Kilter and the like. They tour Ireland annually, they've been to the Caribbean and they've appeared in concert at pubs and festivals across the US, including The Chicago Gaelic Park Festival, The Bethlehem Pennsylvania Celtic Classic, The Cleveland Summer Fest, The Hunter Mountain Irish Festival, The Coney Island Great Irish Fair, Irish 2000 Music And Arts Festival, The Capital District Scottish Games and the East Durham Irish Festival. Hair Of the Dog – which holds the distinction of being the only headline act to play every Great American Irish Festival – was featured as part of Project Children's 2005 compilation CD, "One Child At A Time," along with artists like, U2, James Taylor, The Chieftains, The Corrs, Mary Black and Carly Simon, and in 2007 released "Donegal," their first new studio recording in ten years and their most ambitious to date.



**Barleyjuice** Barleyjuice's first recording – titled, strangely enough, "Barleyjuice" – was steeped in traditional bagpipe and Celtic vocal songs, but by their second album, "Another Round," more than half of the material was original. Encouraged with numerous comparisons to Shane MacGowan and the Pogues,



Tom Waits, Ronnie Drew, the Rolling Stones, even Monty Python, they continued to add their own original tunes as well as trad favorites, and the result has been phenomenal. Their tongue-in-cheek element delights audiences thoroughly, thanks in large to the musical prowess with which the witty material is presented. The six members pilot a barrage of instruments - guitar, fiddle, accordion, bagpipes, bouzouki, mandolin, harmonica, banjo, tinwhistle, piano, bass and drums. In the past year, Barleyjuice released a third album, Six Yanks, and stretched their avid fanbase across America and into Europe with the help of such fan sites as MySpace, and a seamless live show. Celticradio.net listeners voted "What's Up Yours?" Song of the Year

for 2005. In 2006, Six Yanks made #14 on Paddy Rock Radio's Top Twenty short list (paddyrock.com), and "Whiskey To The Sea" was listener-voted ShowStopper Track on CelticFolkPod.com's last show of the year.

**Goitse** Goitse (pronounced gwi-cha) is a young, vibrant Irish Traditional band which specializes in their unique rhythmic arrangements of well known tunes and original compositions. Traditional melodies, modern rhythms and new compositions are synthesized by this five piece band of students of Traditional Music and Dance at the University of Limerick. All five students are rooted firmly within the tradition and are well known and respected within Irish music circles. Their recently released CD includes many of their own compositions and owes its distinctive sound to the collaborative arrangements by all members, singer and fiddler Áine Mc Geeney, who toured with "Lord of the Dance;" James Harvey, who has claimed four All Ireland Banjo titles in a row and a further three on the Mandolin; Tadhg Ó Meachair, who is recognized as one of Ireland's top young Piano and Piano Accordion players; Colm Phelan, who has won back to back All Irelands and a World title on the Bodhran; and multi instrumentalist Conal O'Kane. Goitse is a Donegal Irish word meaning "come here" and, in that spirit, GAIF audiences are invited to join this exciting new band on their musical journey.





**Burning Bridget Cleary** 2010 was a breakout year for Burning Bridget Cleary, the high energy Celtic Folk Band from SE Pennsylvania. Formed on St. Patrick's Day of 2006 when Genevieve Gillespie joined



forces with the father-daughter duo, Lou and Rose Baldino, Burning Bridget Cleary has been steadily rising in the ranks of Celtic folk bands, culminating in the selection of their second CD, "Everything Is Alright," as Album of the Year in the 2010 Celtic Radio Music Awards. Rose and Genevieve were born into musical families and both have been first place trophy winners at the Celtic Classic fiddle competitions. The natural pairing of these talented young women, backed on guitar by veteran musician, Lou Baldino, and joined by

Peter Trezzi on djembe, has created a polished musical team with an engaging stage presence and a captivating sound. Combing fiery fiddles, choice vocal numbers and spirited stepdancing, Burning Bridget Cleary has wowed packed audiences at festivals all over the Northeast.

**Coyote Run** Every once in a while a band comes along that defies description. In the world of Celtic music, Coyote Run is that band. One reviewer says "imagine Jethro Tull on Broadway and you get the picture." Another calls them "thinking man's Celtic rock." One thing everyone agrees on is that they're one of the hottest acts on the Irish Festival circuit. Over ten years of national touring, Coyote Run has firmly established a reputation as a mythic Tribal Celtic Rock band, taking the stage with an arresting power and energy, diving deeply into history, mythology and whimsy to present a powerful, driving performance, as much theater as music. This past year has seen the release of a two-disc ten-year retrospective album, "Ten Years Running," that tracks the band's development over the years from a folk band to the powerful Progressive Celtic force they have become. A powerhouse act offering far more than just music, Coyote Run puts on a show that is family entertainment appealing to all generations, a musical experience unlike any other, undeniably Celtic, and completely unforgettable.



**Emish** Emish boasts a fresh sound made up of five very talented artists coming from various musical backgrounds to bring a creative edge to the Celtic Rock genre, create their own flavor of Celtic music. Hailing from all corners of New York State, Emish has taken the Celtic scene by storm, creating their



unique chemistry by rocking out traditional Irish tunes mixed with some of their own original pieces and classic Irish ballads. For over a decade, members of Emish have been performing in various professional groups including anything and everything from Traditional Irish, Irish Rock, and Punk to Symphony Orchestras. Individually, they have toured as far as Europe and Japan honing their performing skills. With their versatility and well-seasoned skills, combined

with on-stage foot stomping energy and off-stage charisma, Emish has been making fans from one coast to the other. They have been honored with twice being voted the "Best Band of the Hudson Valley" and have two critically acclaimed albums to their credit, their debut CD "This Light" and their most recent release, "One More Round."

**Pat Kane** Pat Kane is a seasoned showman, having performed as a singer, dancer, actor, and instrumentalist since childhood. On his farm in the hill country of the Canisteo River, he was raised in the traditions of the Grange and of his Irish family. Pat's cousins still run the family farm in West Clare, Ireland, which Pat visits often; hence, the name of the band, and his company, West O'Clare. Performing as a soloist or with his band, West O'Clare, Pat Kane may entertain for hours without a break or repeat. On fiddle, guitar, and bodhran, he plays jigs, reels, square dances, and hundreds of ballads from Ireland and America. He has twice won first place for singing at the NYC Fleadh Cheoil and hosts a weekly radio show in Elmira, New York.



**The Blarney Rebel Band** The Blarney Rebel Band is a group of musicians from the Celtic hotbed of Central New York performing all types of traditional Irish music, from rollicking pub songs to traditional



folk fare, from rousing sea songs to moving ballads, from stirring rebel songs to hand-clapping jigs and reels. Their second CD, “Buy My Soul” has sold all over the world, including Holland, Scotland, Australia and throughout the United States and Canada. A cut from that CD, “Stand With Me Boys,” recently placed No. 1 in the Irish and Celtic Music Podcast Best of 2009 Listener’s Poll. BRB followed that effort in 2010 with “Beneath The Surface,” which has garnered rave reviews everywhere. The Blarney Rebel Band consists of Mark Sisti -banjo, mandolin, mandola, pennywhistle, concertina, accordion, flute, vocals; Al Sisti -bass guitar, vocals; Dan Sisti – guitar, vocals; Amanda Straney, fiddle, vocals; Jessica Voce -bodhran, tambourine, percussion,.

**Donal O’Shaughnessy** Donal O’Shaughnessy is a multi-talented performer, playing guitar, fiddle, keyboards, pipe organ, bodhran and mandolin. Donal is probably best known for his live performances. His quick wit and spontaneity with his audience keeps people in their seats until the very end of the night. He is also known for his work ethic as he rarely takes a break. Donal’s versatility with musical instruments and singing style makes every occasion special. Donal was the winner of the 1996 Fleadh Cheoil Mid Atlantic Regional Irish Singing Contest and placed seventh in the fiddle contest at the same event.



**The Stoutmen** For 10 years The Stoutmen have been belting out Irish and Scottish folk songs in and around the Binghamton area of Upstate New York. Their love of big harmonies really shows as they work



to keep alive a style of singing made famous by the Clancy Brothers and Tommy Makem. You’ll hear well-known and a few obscure songs that cover the breadth of the Irish and Scottish experience, including songs of drinking, rebellion, sailing, and humor. Consisting of Tim Lynch (vocals, guitar, octave mandolin, bodhran), Sean Walsh (vocals, guitar, pennywhistle, bodhran), Bob White (vocals, 12-string guitar, banjo), and Roy Bartram (vocals, bass, pennywhistle), the band has crafted a finely balanced show that really grabs an audience’s attention.

**Vince Colgan** The term is often too easily and inappropriately applied, but Vince Colgan is a true legend in central New York Irish Music circles and beyond. A master storyteller as well as a consummate balladeer, Vince has entertained generations of Central New Yorkers and is now working on the next generation. The Great American Irish Festival is honored to welcome him back to its stages.

**Cassidy/McCale** Cassidy/McCale is an acoustic Celtic trio from Syracuse, NY. Formed in December 2005, they play a variety of Irish and Scottish pub songs, rebel tunes and sea chanteys. The band – whose performances have been described as energetic and crowd pleasing – consists of Bryan Watson (guitar, vocals,) Matthew Douglas (guitar, vocals, bodhran) and Scott Schroetter (percussion). In just a few short years Cassidy/McCale has become a regular part of the growing Celtic folk scene in Central New York.

**Kilrush** Kilrush is a high energy band based out of Elmira in the Southern Tier of New York. Fusing world percussion with traditional favorites, Kilrush brings an entirely new approach to Irish music, while still playing the jigs and reels that have been passed down generation after generation through time honored tradition. From dance halls and festivals to sessions and pubs, Kilrush has turned their passion for Irish music into a lively, energetic stage-show enjoyed by everyone who experiences it. Kilrush has played with various Irish Folk and Progressive groups, and countless Irish sessions all over New York, Pennsylvania and Eastern Canada.

**Rattlin' Bog** Long-time veterans of the local Irish Music scene, Rattlin' Bog is made up of tenor Rick Kincaid and baritone Joe Rowlands applying their tight vocal harmonies to Irish folk music and accompanying themselves on various acoustic instruments, including six and 12 string guitars, banjo, accordion, melodica, penny whistles and harmonicas, and will be joined. Hailing from the Utica area, Rattlin' Bog encourages audience participation with its catchy musical performance and its irreverent good humor. They will be joined at the festival by upright bass player John Brett.

**St. James Gate** St. James Gate, one of the Capital Region's newest Celtic bands, was formed in the summer of 2001. Inspiration for the band came from Bill Connelly's cousin Martin Connelly of Newbridge, County Kildare who used to perform in the band Mac's Fancy in Ireland. Martin, over the years, has assisted the band with many great tunes and ballads from Ireland. The band toured Ireland in November of 2005 and was a great success. A few highlights over the past two years include the band performing at Connolly's Pub in NYC. They also opened twice for Derek Warfield; formerly of the Wolfetones. They have performed at the Irish 2000 Festival for the past two years and last year also performed at the East Durham Irish Festival. St James Gate currently consists of four members: Robert Daly on percussion (bodhran, djembe and zendrum), Rick Russo on bass, six string guitar and lead vocals, Cassidy Buckley on fiddle, bass guitar, mandolin and background vocals, and Bill Connelly on guitar, banjo, mandolin and lead vocals.

**Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Eireann** Craobh Dugan, the Central NY branch of Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Eireann, has been preserving and promoting the traditional music, song, dance and language of the Irish culture with weekly Céilí, music and language sessions for over thirty years. They perform for local nursing homes and also at a variety of other venues including St. Patrick's Day Parade, Celtic Festival at Rome Capital Theater, General Herkimer Historic Site concert, Utica Monday Night Heritage Celebration, Great American Irish Festival, Western Town Hall cultural series concert, and the Thea Bowman House concert.

**The Syracuse Irish Session** The Syracuse Irish Session has been performing in Central New York since 1995. Their music originates in the dance traditions of Ireland and Scotland but also includes related music from America, Canada, and elsewhere. Tunes are drawn from the thousands of jigs, reels, hornpipes and other dance melodies which have been passed down from generation to generation. The Session is neither a band nor a free-for-all jam. The musicians perform in a "session" ("seisiun" in Gaelic), which is a spontaneous social gathering unique to the traditional music culture. A musician might start up one tune and then pass it on to another player with a simple nod or glance as others join in. At its best, the music is unpredictable, joyous, thrilling. In any case, it is always fun.

**Fighting 86's** Making their first trip to the Great American Irish Festival, the Fighting 86's are a Celtic Rock band hailing from Albany, New York. They have become a mainstay on the club and festival circuit and perform at many esteemed venues. They continue to share the stage with numerous great names in Celtic music. The band is comprised of Brian Gibney on guitar and vocals, Mark Frederick on fiddle, and Steve Butler on bodhran. The Fighting 86's draw from their diverse experiences in a multitude of genres. The trio delivers a tremendous amount of energy and create a sound that is all their own.

**Triskele** Triskele (pronounced "tris-kay-lee") is the Capital Region's premiere all-female Irish Group. Featuring mystifying harmonies that touch your soul, Triskele was born at Albany Medical Center in the winter of 2009 when Noeleen Whelan, a Dublin-born native, joined forces with co-worker and fellow lover of traditional and Gaelic music Sharon Wheeler. Multi-instrumentalist Wheeler and bodhran and guitar player Whelan have since added Noeleen's daughter, bassist Christine Whelan-Taylor and Jennifer Kiliniski, on flute, vocals and percussion, adding yet another dynamic to their evolving sound. They currently have one self-titled CD.



# Hon. Michael Dwyer Chosen 2011 Parade Grand Marshal

When the Utica St. Patrick's Day Parade steps off at 10 AM on March 12, Oneida County Court Judge Michael L. Dwyer will be trading his gavel for a ceremonial shillelagh. Judge Dwyer was chosen from among a list of worthy nominees to serve as 2011 Grand Marshal in recognition for a lifetime of devotion to his community and to his Irish heritage.



“When I was asked to be the Grand Marshal I was very humbled,” said Judge Dwyer, “I was obviously proud and honored but I was a little concerned there were people who were more deserving of the honor.” Despite his misgivings, the honor is well-deserved. Michael Dwyer has worked for the local Irish community in a number of capacities, chiefly in connection with his membership in the local John Devereux chapter of the Ancient Order of Hibernians. An AOH brother for 16 years, Judge Dwyer served as vice president for four years and played a pivotal role in raising money for the Irish monument erected at Our Lady of Lourdes Church in Utica to commemorate the Great Hunger. He also has played an important part in the annual AOH Mass in honor of fallen brothers, serving as main speaker for a number of years.

Judge Dwyer's ancestors made the trip from Ireland to Montreal in the mid 1800's and spent a few years in the upstate town of Chateaugay before joining the Utica community in the 1940's. The central New York area obviously agreed with Michael, who never left, attending St. John the Evangelist in New Hartford and Notre Dame High School. After a brief time away to attend St. Lawrence University and St. John University School of Law, Mike returned to begin a lifelong service to the Central New York legal community. Following a 15-year stint with the Oneida County District Attorney's Office, Dwyer was elected to serve as Oneida County Court Judge, a capacity in which he serves to this day.

But his major contribution to local charitable causes comes through his tireless work with the American Cancer Society, a cause to which he devoted himself after his son Liam was diagnosed with brain cancer in 2003. Today Liam, an Assistant District Attorney in Erie County, is cancer free, but the Dwyer family's commitment to the cause hasn't wavered. Through their hard work, including sponsorship of Team Liam in the local Relay for Life, approximately \$120,000 has been raised to benefit the American Cancer Society. And Judge Dwyer has no plans to slow those efforts. “We plan to continue to do whatever we can for this cause,” promises Judge Dwyer. A lifelong resident of Central New York, Mike and his wife Marty have four children, Liam, Caitlin and twins Sean and Kevin.

## Chieftains to Play Troy Music Hall

Bringing in a musical act as legendary as the city for which it was named, the Troy Savings Bank Music Hall proudly announces a February 17<sup>th</sup> concert by the fabulous Chieftains. The Chieftains -- Matt Molloy (flute/whistles), Sean Keane (fiddle), Kevin Conneff (bodhran and vocals) and the iconic Paddy Moloney (Uilleann pipes and tin whistle) -- boast a career that spans forty-eight years, resulting in forty-five albums and having earned them six Grammy nods, and are Ireland's premier musical ambassadors and a creative and influential force in Celtic music. “We're still unique,” says founding member Moloney of the group's staying power. “A lot of bands have come and gone, but we're still here.” Tickets for the 8 PM show range from \$48-\$69, and are available at the Box Office, (518) 273-0038, via email at [info@troymusichall.org](mailto:info@troymusichall.org), or on-line, [here](#). The Troy Savings Bank Music Hall is located at 30 2nd Street, on the upper floors of the First Niagara Bank building.

## Homer Welcomes Cherish the Ladies

Celebrating 25 Years as “...one of the most engaging ensembles in the history of Irish music,” Joannie Madden and Cherish The Ladies visit Homer’s Center for the Arts, on February 26<sup>th</sup>. Cherish the Ladies – the name comes a time-honored Irish traditional jig -- has grown from a one-time concert concept to an Irish traditional music sensation, literally the most successful and sought-after Irish-American group in Celtic music history. Organized by folklorist/musician Mick Moloney and sponsored by the Ethnic Folk Arts Center and the National Endowment for the Arts, they began as a concert series featuring the brightest lights in Irish traditional music. Though initially the group won recognition as the first and only all-women traditional Irish band, they soon established themselves as musicians and performers without peer and have won many thousands of listeners and fans of their music. With their unique spectacular blend of virtuosi instrumental talents, beautiful vocals, captivating arrangements and stunning step dancing, this powerhouse group combines all the facets of Irish traditional culture and puts it forth in an immensely humorous and entertaining package. Cherish the Ladies also accesses a roster of regional, national and world champion step dancers who join them in every performance. Tickets for the 8 PM show are \$40 for adults (\$36 for members), \$35 for seniors (members are \$32) and students get in for \$15. The Center for the Arts is located on Main Street in the historic Village of Homer, New York.

## Butler Sheehan Pub Night

Join The Butler-Sheehan Academy of Irish Dance for an evening of dancing, music, and plenty of fun at the Academy’s Fourth Annual Pub Night, set for Saturday Feb. 5 from 7 to 11 p.m. at the Utica Elk’s Lodge #33, 1315 Champlin Ave, Utica. The Blarney Rebel Band will be playing favorite Irish tunes, as well as the new songs from their recently released CD “Beneath the Surface. The students of the Academy will entertain with traditional Irish dances and there will be raffles and door prizes. Light food, two beverage tickets, and five raffle tickets are included in the cost of admission. Tickets are \$12 advanced sale, \$15 at the door, age 6 and under free. Tickets are available at the following locations: Piggy Pat’s, Washington Mills, Nail Creek Pub & Brewery, Utica; and Valley Music, Utica. The Blarney Rebel Band is a favorite with Celtic music fans, and they are the perfect complement to the Butler-Sheehan dancers. The dancers are all students of Ms. Patty Sheehan, director of North America’s oldest continually run Traditional Irish dance school, and herself a world champion dancer. They’ve performed throughout Central New York and many of the dancers have won honors Statewide.

## Rosin Up Your Bow for Kitty Hoynes’ 4<sup>th</sup> Annual “Fierce and Fiery Fiddle Fest”!

The weekend of February 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> at Kitty Hoynes Pub is going to be a special one for great music, fiddle players, or just for people who enjoy either. Kitty’s has lined up an impressive array of local and national fiddlers for a full afternoon of workshops and music on the 5th. The schedule of events is:

### Friday Feb 4

9 PM Live on stage, Old Friends featuring Tom Dimock on fiddle

### Saturday Feb 5

Noon – 1:30 (Bar) Kittys Irish session featuring Jonathan Chai (fiddle), Pat Reynolds (fiddle), David Deacon (guitar), Pat Kenny ( Tin whistle), Michelle Osborne (Bodhran) and friends

1–2:30 PM (Dining Rm) Guest Fiddler Tony Demarco “All instrument Workshop” Sign-up sheet available. Limited seating

2 – 3 PM (Bar) Wind (Uileaan Piper Nick Whitmer) & Wire (Fiddler Jonathan Chai)

3-4:30 PM (Bar) Ashley & Kelsey McLeod Scottish style Fiddle Showcase

3-4:30 PM (Dining Rm) Sligo style fiddler Tony Demarco “All instrument Workshop” Limited space available

4:30– 5:30 PM (Bar) Kittys Irish session

5:30 – 7:00 PM (Bar) Featured Sligo style Fiddler Tony Demarco showcase & session

9:00 PM (Bar) Neil Emberg & Fiddler Ashley McLeod and guests

Note: All times are approximate and subject to change. Please call for schedule. Limited seating for Tony Demarco fiddle workshops (\$25 per person.) contact Jonathan Chai@neofiddle@me.com or 315-447-0784

## Therapy Session Or Session Therapy

*This month, veteran session musician Mark Sisti has put together a piece on Session Etiquette; those “unspoken secrets” that help make the Irish traditional session a truly great experience.*

As those who have attended any of the monthly Irish traditional music sessions being held locally can attest, the session scene locally is absolutely exploding. I’ve been to many sessions, in the states and in Ireland, and have rarely seen any as well-attended, by musicians or by spectators, as the ones hosted by the local Comhaltas branch, Craobh Dugan, at the Nail Creek Pub on Varick St. on the first Tuesday of every month, and at the Mill in Rome on the third Wednesday of every month.

The great thing about that is that it brings in a number of people who have no familiarity with Irish sessions. The bad thing about it is, well, that it brings in a number of people who have no familiarity with Irish sessions. This can be a problem if the person has no understanding of session etiquette. While it is important to the atmosphere to keep things relatively informal, there are a few general guidelines that will make your contribution to the session a pleasant experience for all concerned.

As we discussed in an earlier newsletter, sessions are gatherings of musicians where tunes are played by any number of musicians who know the tune. The last part of the sentence is one of the keys to being a welcome sessioner. If you do not know the tune, you are welcome – no, you are encouraged – to sit the tune out, or at least play quietly. Trying to learn the tunes at the same time others are trying to play them can be very annoying to musicians and listeners alike. Since most tunes are structured to repeat three times, a good rule of thumb for unfamiliar tunes is to listen to a section the first time through, play very quietly the second time and join in the third time if you’re comfortable enough with it by then.

Sessions are built around tunes that have set melodies; they are not jam sessions. Do not impose your own bizarre interpretations of tunes upon the rest of the session. These tunes have survived for hundreds of years without your variations, improvisations and harmonic modifications, no matter how brilliant you believe them to be. Trust me, there is no place in “Bucks of Eranmore” for an F# diminished with a flatted 9<sup>th</sup>. Period.

That being said, while the melodies will have only slight variations from session to session, every session can have its own chordal accompaniment. Follow the chords of the session you’re attending, even if you think you know a better arrangement. Remember, there may be no one right way to accompany these songs, but there are most assuredly wrong ways to do it.

At many sessions it is considered bad manners to expect to sit in as a performer without an invitation. While this is not the case with the Craobh Dugan sessions, where newcomers are welcome, first-timers still would be well-advised to listen before jumping in. You wouldn’t run out uninvited and man shortstop after watching a softball team play a few innings. Approach a session the same way. Introduce yourself first and ask if you can play with them that evening. Make note of who appears to be leading the session and defer to how they like it done, always staying alert to what’s going on. As in all group musical functions, listen to the other musicians. If you aren’t going to listen to the music being played, a session is not for you. In fact, music is not for you. Sell your instrument.

Be honest with yourself about your ability; if you can’t keep up, it’s OK to sit out. If you are an accompanist – and this refers to guitarists, other rhythm instruments and Bodhran players – be sensitive to what’s going on around you, both in terms of volume and tempo. Play quietly so as not to drown out the melody instruments. And don’t be a speed snob. This advice is applicable to melody instruments also. While slowing down to the abilities of the least accomplished in the group is not necessary, a moderate tempo that allows everyone to join in is more conducive to a session atmosphere than showing that you’re the Van Halen of the fiddle. Or whistle. Or Bodhran.

Remember, it’s supposed to be fun, and there’s no reason following these few guidelines should impinge on that fun. It’s all about common courtesy and common sense: just be as polite as you ordinarily would be when joining a group of people who are engaged in an activity in which you would like to participate.



# Craobh Dugan “Tune of the Month” – The Frieze Britches / D Modal

This month’s tune is inspired by the recent cold spell, and is probably what will happen if you venture out in twenty below zero weather...! Actually, Webster’s dictionary defines “frieze” as follows: “(1) a heavy durable coarse wool and shoddy fabric with a rough surface and (2) a pile surface of uncut loops or of patterned cut and uncut loops,” so perhaps a pair of frieze britches would be appropriate for this weather. From the Fiddler’s Companion, a passage is cited from a pamphlet by a Scottish fiddler, *A Spring on the Fiddle* (1915):

*In 1863 I went to Ireland, Co. Galloway, and on to Tipperary, where I stayed for about six years, getting out of touch with all players of my former acquaintance, meeting occasionally some very fine jig players and dancers who could give a very interesting exhibition. The dress of these men were kneebreeches, frieze coats of the dresscoat style, green stockings, red vest, a soft felt hat, and a short stick a "shillelagh."*



“The Frieze Britches” is also known as “The Friar’s Britches” (and even the “Vicar’s Knickers”) due to the similarity of the pronunciation of “frieze” (i.e., fries) and “friar.” It is also sometimes referred to as “I Buried My Wife” - the melodies are similar in structure, however, they also have quite a few differences.

## The Cook in the Kitchen

Cook in the Kitchen Set

G D or Dm G D C G D or Dm C D G Jig



## The Frieze Britches

DMix Jig



Here’s your 5 minute music theory lesson for the month - One often hears of “*modal*” Irish tunes. This simply means that it is something other than “Major” or “Minor” that most folks in Western music are used to. “Frieze Britches” is a typical Mixolydian mode tune: (there are actually 7 modes in Western music, of which Major and Minor are the two most common) while the key signature is G major (one sharp: F#), the tune is centered around the note D, which is the 5<sup>th</sup> note of the G major scale, rather than the 1<sup>st</sup>. Normally, a tune in the key of D would be played with two sharps (F# and C#). If you are able to play a G major scale on your instrument, start on the 5<sup>th</sup> note of the scale (which is D), and play up to the next D – that is a D Mixolydian scale, based on the 5<sup>th</sup> note of a G major scale! It won’t sound either major or minor - something in between... and that is what gives Irish music some of its characteristic sound. So for you rhythm players, rather than playing a lot of G chords, in this Mixolydian tune you will be playing mainly D and C chords with perhaps an occasional G thrown in.

When played at seisiúns, we often pair this tune as the second following another popular jig, “The Cook in the Kitchen.” This tune can be found in *O’Neill’s Music of Ireland: 1850 Melodies*. Open to some hearty discussion over a pint or two, “Cook in the Kitchen” is often played with an F natural (rather than an F # as the key signature of G would indicate) in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> measures, which would make the backing chord a D minor for those measures instead of a D major. Ah, but that’s also part of what makes Irish music interesting...

## RANDOM RAMBLINGS

- ✚ **Tannahill Weavers, Sara Milonovich at Caffè Lena** Caffè Lena adds to its legacy of high quality entertainment with the appearance of two big names in traditional Celtic music. On Saturday, Feb. 12, award-winning fiddler Sara Milonovich brings in her band **DaisyCutter** for a very special 8 PM show. Usually a 5 or 6-piece band centered around Sara and guitarist Greg Anderson, they'll bring a more acoustic quartet, being joined by Leo Traversa on bass and Steve Holloway on drums and percussion. Tickets are \$16 in advance and \$18 at the door. Then on Saturday, Feb. 26 at 8 PM, **The Tannahill Weavers** take the storied stage. The Tannahill Weavers are one of Scotland's premier traditional bands, with a diverse repertoire that spans the centuries with fire-driven instrumentals, topical songs, and original ballads and lullabies. Tickets are \$22 in advance or \$24 at the door.
- ✚ **"Nuacht as Craobh Dugan"---news from the Dugan Branch** Chris Hoke of Craobh Dugan reports: "Our date for the Comhaltas North American Tour Concert has been confirmed! We will host this wonderful concert of very talented All-Ireland musicians and dancers on *Friday October 14*. We are very excited by this and look forward to a great performance. We will be looking for people to chair various committees, so please be ready to help...and remember that many hands make for light work!" In other news, Kevin Mathews will offer a series of 4 classes for beginner bodhran players. The classes will be on Sunday Feb 27<sup>th</sup>, March 6<sup>th</sup>, March 27<sup>th</sup> and April 3<sup>rd</sup> from 2:30 until 4:00. They will be held at Kevin's home in Clinton. There will be no charge for Comhaltas members and a nominal fee of \$10 per class for non-members. If you are interested, please contact Kevin at [kevinm2d@gmail.com](mailto:kevinm2d@gmail.com).
- ✚ **Rince Na Sonas Hooley** The Rince Na Sonas School of Irish Dance will be hosting a hooley from 3-8 PM on February 12<sup>th</sup>, at Meghan MacMurphy's Pub in Liverpool, NY. Tickets are \$5/dancer, \$10 (ages 5 and up) and \$40/household. Entertainment will be provided by The Blarney Rebel Band, with Rince Na Sonas performances throughout the day. A cash bar, food, water, soda, laughs and good times will also be available.
- ✚ **Emish, Glengarry Bhoys In Winter Concert** On Saturday February 5, the Albany Division 5 Ancient Order of the Hibernians presents Emish and The Glengarry Bhoys performing as part of their Winter Concert Series. Tickets for the 8 PM show are \$20 per person, and all proceeds go to the AOH NYS Convention Fund. For reservations please email [aohconcerts@gmail.com](mailto:aohconcerts@gmail.com) or contact Tim Weklar at 518-487-8636. The Albany Irish American Center is located at 375 Ontario Street in Albany, NY.
- ✚ **Irish-French Connection at Old Songs Concert Series** Saturday, February 12 will find John Whelan, Donna Hébert and the Irish-French Connection 8:00 PM • \$20 (\$5 age 12 & under). Award-winning French-Canadian fiddling, legendary Irish button accordion, brilliant flatpick and fingerstyle guitarists, incandescent songs in Gaelic, English & French! Joining John and Donna are Flynn Cohen, Molly Hébert-Wilson and Max Cohen.
- ✚ **GAIF Volunteers Still Needed...But It's Filling Up Fast!** Great American Irish Festival Volunteer Chairperson Claudette Johnson wanted us to remind you that the festival still needs volunteers for the 2011 festival, and that the Volunteer portion of the [web site](#) is now open for the new season. She also notes that you need to sign up via the web page even if you've volunteered with the festival in the past. Several venues could use your help, and of course, volunteering 8 hours of your time over the course of the weekend makes you eligible to get all the great perks that aren't available to the general public.
- ✚ **Interested in learning to speak Gaelic?** Our own language expert Tom Malley can help. Starting on February 9<sup>th</sup> and running for six weeks, Tom will be teaching Basic Irish Language at the Herkimer BOCES. The course will introduce participants to the basic conversational Irish (Gaelic) language. Common expressions, pronunciation, conversation, songs and poetry will be discussed. Classes run from 7 to 8:30 PM. Pre-registration is required by February 7. The fee is \$53.

**Celtic Club Calendar** Finally, here's the Irish Musical and Cultural calendar for February:

Feb 1	“Nail Creek Sessions”	<a href="#">Nail Creek Pub</a>	Utica	7:30-10 PM	Free
Feb 3	Traditional Irish Session	<a href="#">Marcellus Legion Hall</a>	Marcellus, NY	4-7 PM	Free
Feb 4	Blarney Rebel Band	<a href="#">Piggy Pat’s Pickled Pig Pub</a>	Washington Mills	6-9 PM	Free
Feb 4	“Mostly Irish” Monthly Jam	Irish American Club	Amsterdam NY	7:30 PM	Free
Feb 4	Old Friends	<a href="#">Kitty Hoynes</a>	Syracuse	9 PM	Free
Feb 4-5	4 <sup>th</sup> Annual Fiery Fiddle Fest	<a href="#">Kitty Hoynes</a>	Syracuse	See <a href="#">Schedule</a>	Free
Feb 5	Butler-Sheehan Pub Night w/ Blarney Rebel Band	Elks Lodge	Utica	7 – 11PM	\$12 adv/\$15 door
Feb 5	Neil Emberg	<a href="#">Kitty Hoynes</a>	Syracuse	9 PM	Free
Feb 7	Trad Irish Music Session	<a href="#">The Susquehanna Café</a>	Bainbridge NY	5:30-8:30 PM	Free
Feb 10	Traditional Irish Session	<a href="#">Marcellus Legion Hall</a>	Marcellus, NY	4-7 PM	Free
Feb 11	Blarney Rebel Band	<a href="#">Piggy Pat’s Pickled Pig Pub</a>	Washington Mills	6-9 PM	Free
Feb 11	Pat Kane	<a href="#">Kitty Hoynes</a>	Syracuse	9 PM	Free
Feb 12	Rince Na Sonas Hooley w/ Blarney Rebel Band	Megan MacMurphy’s	Liverpool	3-8 PM	\$10,\$40/household
Feb 12	Trad Irish Music Session	<a href="#">Kitty Hoynes</a>	Syracuse	2-5 PM	Free
Feb 12	Sara Milonovich & Daisycutter	<a href="#">Caffè Lena</a>	Saratoga Springs	8 PM	\$16 adv/\$18 door
Feb 12	John Whelan, Donna Hébert & the Irish-French Connection	<a href="#">Old Songs Concert series</a>	Voorheesville	8 PM	\$20
Feb 13	Donal O'Shaughnessey & Bryan Hyland	<a href="#">Coleman’s Irish Pub</a>	Syracuse	4-7 PM	Free
Feb 14	Trad Irish Music Session	<a href="#">The Susquehanna Café</a>	Bainbridge NY	5:30-8:30 PM	Free
Feb 16	Traditional Irish Session	<a href="#">The Mill</a>	Rome, NY	7:30 PM	Free
Feb 16	Traditional Irish Session	<a href="#">Marcellus Legion Hall</a>	Marcellus, NY	4-7 PM	Free
Feb 17	The Chieftains	<a href="#">Troy Savings Bank Hall</a>	Troy, NY	8 PM	\$48-69
Feb 20	<a href="#">Syracuse Irish Session</a>	Johnston’s Bally Bay Pub	Syracuse	4-7 PM	Free
Feb 21	Trad Irish Music Session	<a href="#">The Susquehanna Café</a>	Bainbridge NY	5:30-8:30 PM	Free
Feb 24	Traditional Irish Session	<a href="#">Marcellus Legion Hall</a>	Marcellus, NY	4-7 PM	Free
Feb 25	Blarney Rebel Band	<a href="#">Piggy Pat’s Pickled Pig Pub</a>	Washington Mills	6-9 PM	Free
Feb 25,26	Neil Emberg	<a href="#">Kitty Hoynes</a>	Syracuse	9 PM	Free
Feb 26	Trad Irish Music Session	<a href="#">Kitty Hoynes</a>	Syracuse	2-5 PM	Free
Feb 26	Tannahill Weavers	<a href="#">Caffè Lena</a>	Saratoga Springs	8 PM	\$22 adv/\$24 door
Feb 26	Cherish the Ladies	<a href="#">Center for the Arts</a>	Homer	8 PM	\$40, \$35 Srs, \$15 Students
Feb 28	Trad Irish Music Session	<a href="#">The Susquehanna Café</a>	Bainbridge NY	5:30-8:30 PM	Free

If you have anything you want to share with us, feel free to send it to us ([sistia@roadrunner.com](mailto:sistia@roadrunner.com), [bloftis@gmail.com](mailto:bloftis@gmail.com) or [marksisti@roadrunner.com](mailto:marksisti@roadrunner.com)), and we'll be happy to include it. As always, while we try to get things – prices, places, genders, etc. -- as accurate as we can, sometimes Mark makes mistakes. It always makes sense to call ahead to confirm some of these further-out trips. In the meantime, we're going to have to get right to work on the March issue... there's a lot going on that you are going to want to check out, and we'll also get back to including our recipe and book review features that we had to leave out of this issue!