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# MOHAWK VALLEY IRISH CULTURAL EVENTS NEWSLETTER

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Oct 2011

## “Echoes of Erin” 2011 Tour Makes Rare Central New York Stop

When “Echoes of Erin” tour manager James Teevan was lining up cities to host the 39<sup>th</sup> Annual Concert Tour of North America, he could hardly have had Rome, NY in his sights. But then again, he couldn’t have anticipated the tireless efforts of Mike and Chris Hoke and the Craobh Dugan branch of Comhaltas Ceoltoiri Eireann, who have been wooing the world-class musicians to make a stop in Central New York for years. Their efforts paid off when the concert venues were announced earlier this year, and Rome was selected as one of the 11 stops on the October 9-22, 2011 tour.

Echoes of Erin 2011 presents a variety of music, song and dance presented in an entertaining fashion, while simultaneously providing an insight into our authentic Irish cultural traditions. The tour – also marking the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Comhaltas Ceoltoiri Eireann -- features 12 musicians, singers and dancers from among the



very top All-Ireland champions from every corner of the country. And right there, along with Buffalo, Cleveland, Cincinnati, Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Louis, is a performance at the Rome Free Academy Auditorium (95 Dart Circle, Rome) on Saturday, October 15<sup>th</sup>. Tickets for the 7:30 PM show are \$20 in advance or \$25 at the door. Advance tickets are available at the Rome Federal Credit Union on Seneca Street and The Mill on E. Dominick St in Rome, at the Nail Creek Pub (during the traditional Irish Session on October 4<sup>th</sup>), through the Craobh Dugan website at [uticairish.org](http://uticairish.org), or by phoning Mike or Chris Hoke at (315) 827-4291 or (315) 225-6292.

If ordering by mail, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope and a check made to Craobh Dugan to Chris Hoke, 8195 Old South Hill Road, Holland Patent, NY 13354. This is one very special show you do not want to miss!

## 5th Annual Banjo Burke Festival

This year the “Irish Alps” celebrates the 5th annual Banjo Burke Festival, which will be held in East Durham, New York over Columbus Day Weekend, October 7-10. The gathering offers an opportunity to enjoy traditional Irish music, dance and hospitality amidst the beautiful fall foliage of Greene County’s Catskills. The Banjo Burke Memorial Fund is a public charity founded to honor the memory of the late Joe “Banjo” Burke, a brilliant musician, singer and collector of songs who was also a well-known hurler in his native Kilkenny and at Gaelic Park. The Fund helps to support Parkinson’s research, as well as Irish traditional arts and sports. The Banjo Burke Festival is the main event on the Fund’s schedule, and has grown into an amazing tribute to a man who was devoted to traditional music, song, and sport.

This year the festival will feature performances by gifted Irish musicians, singers, and dancers throughout the weekend. Among the musicians and dancers scheduled to perform and/or teach at the festival are button accordionists John Whelan and John Nolan, fiddlers Brian Conway, Rose Conway Flanagan, and John Reynolds, flutists Margie Mulvihill and Linda Hickman, pianist Felix Dolan, drummer Jimmy Kelly, tenor banjoists Pauline Conneely and John Walsh, and Great American Irish Festival mainstay Pat Kane. Various workshops will also be offered, giving aspiring and accomplished musicians alike a chance to study with the experts.

*Book Review:*  
**“Dark Fever”**  
*By Mark Sisti*

I didn't expect to like the "Fever" series. The author, Karen Marie Moning, is best-known for the Highlander fantasy romances, which, as far as I can tell, are basically an excuse to put bare-chested men on a book cover. To top it off, a recent release mentioning that Spielberg had bought the movie rights suggested that it would be the next Twilight series, hardly a ringing endorsement in my eyes. So my expectations weren't all that high when it was suggested as a candidate for a review in this newsletter. Still, it was based in Dublin and supposedly had Celtic mythology as its roots, so I gave it a shot. The verdict is still out. Let's put it this way: if Harry Potter is the high-rise penthouse and the Twilight series is the sub-basement, this is somewhere around the 4th floor.

MacKayla "Mac" Lane is your typical 22-year-old American girl (assuming, like Moning does, that your typical 22-year-old girl is vapid and self-absorbed and has few redeeming characteristics beyond the fact that she's pretty, a fact we are constantly reminded of.) She's more than happy with her life, hanging out with friends and tending bar part-time in a small Southern town. Then she receives a phone call that changes everything.

Her sister, who was living in Dublin, has been murdered, and Mac discovers a cryptic message from her sister that has been left on her cell phone. Over the objections of her distraught parents, she travels to Dublin in search of answers. Almost immediately, she finds herself deep in a world where ancient and lethal powers are vying to uncover an ancient book of indescribable power, the Sinsar Dubh. Teaming up reluctantly with the dark and enigmatic Jericho Barrons (aren't male leads in this type of book always dark and enigmatic?) she discovers that she is one of those rare people who can see the other-dimensional creatures known as the Fae and can sense their objects of power. Delving deeper into a shadowy world that is almost entirely unknown to those around her, she comes to realize that the stakes are much higher than she suspected, as the fates of both worlds, Fae and human, depend on who discovers the all-powerful Dark Book.

If this all sounds a bit cliché, there's a reason for that: it is. Listen, I understand there are legions of fans who love this series, and I respect that, even if the bulk of their comments on it will at some point include the phrase, "OMG, it's, like, SO totally awesome," but it doesn't fully work for me. Part of the problem is that the book tries to create a dark, edgy atmosphere while at the same time maintaining the narrative voice of an insipid airhead obsessed with fashion and her nails – think "Paranormal Barbie," or Buffy with half her brain removed – and the juxtaposition of these competing elements keeps either from being wholly successful. This dichotomy between what the author thinks she's accomplishing and what actually comes across taints much of what is otherwise an entertaining read. The depiction of Dublin, for example, carries absolutely no sense of the Dublin I've seen. It's not just that the geographic descriptions are wrong. When you read Roddy Doyle or Declan Hughes, there's no question they're writing about Dublin, even if the name is never mentioned. The same can't be said of the setting of this book. It just doesn't "feel" like Dublin at any point. Similarly, the scenes that are supposed to be erotic contain an element of farce that strips them of any eroticism and makes them come off as, for want of a better word, stupid.

The author has mentioned that while researching Scotland for her Highlander series she took a side trip to Ireland and became fascinated with the Celtic myths. And therein, at least in the context of this newsletter, is the crux of the problem: the story she tells has absolutely no connection with, and many irreconcilable contradictions to, the myths on which she ostensibly bases her story. When writing this kind of fantasy, an author can either follow an existing line of myths or she can create her own; what she can't do is completely rewrite a mythos that has existed for millennia. Moning could have created a race of demons described exactly as she describes them and that could have worked; she could have portrayed the Tuatha DeDanaan the way they have been portrayed throughout the centuries and that could have worked. What does not work is to portray this race in a way, physically and spiritually, that is directly at odds with the myths.

Bottom line, it was a fun read. It has its moments of effective horror and suspense, some of the characters are interesting, if a bit cliché, and it sets the scene fairly well for what may follow. (It better, since the ending to this installment seemed like the author realized it was close to the 350-page limit and wanted to wrap it up.) I will probably read more in the series (there are four other installments) but I won't wait in line at the bookstore for the next release date, as one of this newsletter's co-editors, whose name of "Al" will not be mentioned, did with the Harry Potter books.

## **From the Irish Kitchen** *(recipes suitable for clipping)*

This month's recipe – **“Evil Bart's Fire Smoked Beans”** *Just in time for the cool weather and tail-gate parties*

### INGREDIENTS:

4 pounds dried white beans, soaked overnight	¾ cup cider vinegar
4 ham hocks	2 Tablespoons Cookshack Spicy Rub, or equivalent (may I suggest a nice Butt Rub* from Piggy Pat's?)
2 bottles Guinness Stout	2 Tablespoons red crushed chilies
2 large garlic cloves	2 Tablespoons toasted coriander
1 pound brown sugar	5 Granny Smith apples, diced
2½ cups molasses	10 bacon strips
2½ cups tomato puree	

### METHOD

Soak beans overnight (we'll wait). Boil with 1 bottle Guinness and 4 hocks. Watch the water level and add more if it falls below the level of the beans. Boil until some of beans are just starting to break up. Pour off liquid until it's at ¾ level of the beans. Clean and dice hocks and add with remaining ingredients. Place bacon on top of beans. Bake at 250F for 5 hours and uncover (the pot, not yourself). Raise temperature to 350F and continue to bake, stirring every 10 minutes for 30 to 40 minutes. Place in a hotel pan (large metal roasting pan) and smoke with hickory for 3 hours, stirring every 20 minutes. If beans are dry, add tomato juice to desired consistency.

\* [Editor's note: “Butt Rub from Piggy Pat's” is a food item, not a service]

*If you try this recipe, feel free to share your experience with all of us; and of course, if you have a recipe you'd like to share, please contact Beth Loftis at [bloftis@ymail.com](mailto:bloftis@ymail.com).*

## **The Legend of Stingy Jack**

As you know from the October '05 issue of this newsletter – I'll wait while you get out your copy from your bound archives – Halloween's origins date back to the ancient Celtic festival of Samhain (pronounced sow-in), when it was believed that the ghosts of the dead returned to earth. But did you know that when you carve your jack-o-lantern, you are perpetuating another old Celtic tradition? In Ireland of old, on the evening of October 31, travelers carried lanterns consisting of big turnips with faces carved in them, the lights believed to keep the evil spirits away. These carved turnips were called “jack-o-lanterns.” When the Irish emigrated to America, they found the large pumpkins much easier to carve, and the jack-o-lantern as we know it was born.

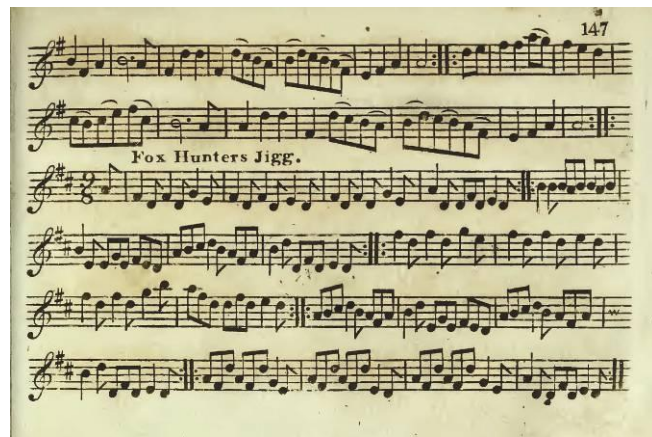
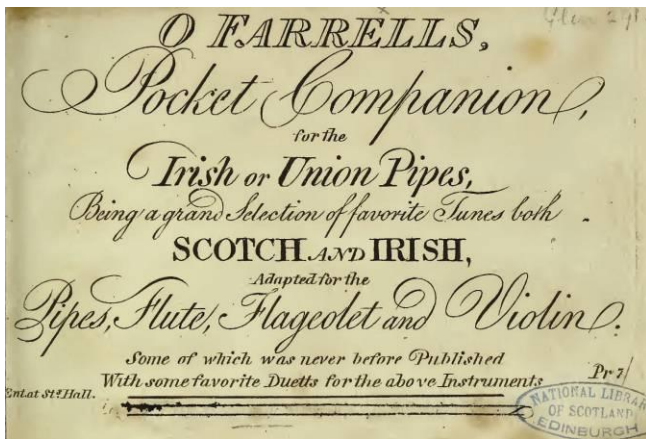
The Jack O'Lantern legend goes back hundreds of years in Irish History. As the story goes, Stingy Jack was a miserable, cantankerous old drunk who liked to play tricks on everyone, even the Devil himself. One day, he tricked the Devil into climbing up an apple tree. Once the Devil climbed up the tree, Stingy Jack hurriedly placed crosses around the trunk of the tree, preventing the Devil from getting down. Stingy Jack would not remove the crosses until the Devil promised not to take his soul when he died.

Many years later, when, to everyone's pleasure, Jack finally died, he was told by Saint Peter at the gates of Heaven that he had led a miserable and worthless life on earth and would not be allowed entrance. But when he went down to Hell, the Devil kept his promise and would not allow him to enter Hell. Now Jack was sorely frightened and, with nowhere to go but to wander about for all eternity in the darkness between Heaven and Hell, pleaded with the Devil to at least provide him with a light to help find his way. The Devil tossed him a glowing ember from the very flames of Hell, which Jack placed in a hollowed out turnip. From that day onward, Stingy Jack roamed the earth without a resting place, with his turnip lantern lighting the way. Those who saw him on his endless wandering began to refer to this ghostly figure as “Jack of the Lantern,” and then, simply “Jack O'Lantern.” *[to hear a musical version of this story, check out the Blarney Rebel Band's CD “Buy My Soul;” available at [CDbaby.com](http://CDbaby.com). Hey, you wanna plug your stuff, write your own newsletter!]*

## Craobh Dugan “Tune of the Month” – The Foxhunter’s Jig – by Skip Mansur

Last month we presented a pair of polkas for our slow session at the Mill in Rome. We recently had a request to play this tune also, which we feature here this month since we have not previously presented a Slip Jig. The slip jig, also known as a hop jig, is a graceful dance sometimes called the “ballet of Irish dance,” and is danced in soft shoes. At one time only men danced it, then for several decades only women, and today slip jigs can be danced by any dancer, though at a competitive level they are almost exclusively danced by women. Slip jigs have an interesting time signature of 9/8, which is typically played as three sets of triple notes (standard jigs in 6/8 are two sets of triples) and is counted as **123 223 323**, with accents on the first notes of the triples; it is important to at least accent the first “1” beat to help musicians/dancers hear the start of each measure.

Foxhunter’s is a well played tune. As mentioned in *The Fiddler’s Companion*, “This melody appears at the end of “The Fox Chase” (AKA “The Irish Fox Hunt”) as printed by O’Farrell in his Pocket Companion for the Irish or Union Pipes (c.1806). (<http://www.archive.org/download/ofarrellspocketc00rugg/ofarrellspocketc00rugg.pdf>)



The tune is a popular slip jig in County Donegal. It was played by the incomparable uilleann piper from County Kerry, James Gandsey (1769-1857).” “The Fox Chase” is a programatic piece (AABCDEFGHIJJKK LMNNOOPPQQ (!)) by which every piper seems to have been judged, at least in the 19th century, when it was ubiquitous among pipers. O’Neill mentions piper after piper in his Irish Minstrels and Musicians who considered the tune the heart of their repertoire. It includes sections with ‘horns’ and the ‘cry of the hounds,’ ‘death of the fox,’ and winds up with “The Foxhunter’s Jig.” This “Fox Chase” was composed by celebrated blind Co. Tipperary piper Edward Keating Hyland (1780-1845) in 1799, who once received a set of expensive pipes from King George IV of England (who heard the piper while visiting Dublin in 1821) as a mark of recognition for his performance. Hyland based his piece on a short, eight-bar song which is based on a dialogue between a farmer and a fox which he had caught red-pawed “with the goods” on him in the form of “a fine fat goose.” Here is our version of The Foxhunter’s Jig:

The Fox Hunters' Jig

CCE Craobh Dugan  
Fox Hunter's Set  
Slip Jig

D D Em D A D G D A D  
G D Em D Bm A D A D  
D Em D A D G D A D  
G D Em D Bm A D A D



## RANDOM RAMBLINGS

☘ **“Nuacht as Craobh Dugan”---news from the Dugan Branch** Well of course the big news for our friends from Comhaltas is the October 15<sup>th</sup> “Echoes of Erin” concert, but they’ve got other stuff in the works as well. Pausing long enough for a quick breath after their successful Traditional Irish Breakfast on September 25<sup>th</sup> (check out this unsolicited [blog](#) for a nice review!), they’re right back in the thick of things, including sessions at the Nail Creek Pub (Oct 4, 7:30 PM), Western Town Hall on Main Street in Westernville (Oct 6<sup>th</sup> at 7 PM), an open session at The Mill in Rome (7:30 PM on Oct 19<sup>th</sup>), and making plans to attend the Northeast Regional Meeting/Hall of Fame Induction in Fairfield, CT on November 5<sup>th</sup>, where the late Jack Pendergast will be inducted into the Comhaltas Hall of Fame. Jack was a Clinton resident who rose to international Comhaltas prominence, and who for years also organized the annual Comhaltas “Echoes of Erin” North American Tour.

☘ **Comas, One More Time** Fresh off their appearance at the Kirkland Art Center, Comas -- one of the hottest up-and-coming Celtic acts around – will be performing at the Old Songs Concert Series on Saturday, October 1<sup>st</sup> at 8 PM. Comas – its name translates to “power” in Gaelic -- brings together their many cultural influences to forge a unique blend of traditional Irish music. Drawing comparisons to Lunasa, De Dannan and Solas, Comas is sure to please. Tickets for the show are \$25.

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

Oct 1	Comas	<a href="#">Old Songs</a>	Voorheesville	8 PM	\$25
Oct 1	Hair of the Dog	<a href="#">Parting Glass</a>	Saratoga Springs	8 PM	\$13, res’v rec.
Oct 1	Pat Kane	<a href="#">Kitty Hoynes</a>	Syracuse	8:30 PM	Free
Oct 2	<a href="#">Syracuse Irish Session</a>	<a href="#">J. Ryan’s Pub</a>	Syracuse	4-7 PM	Free
Oct 3	Trad Irish Music Session	<a href="#">The Susquehanna Café</a>	Bainbridge NY	5:30-8:30 PM	Free
Oct 4	“Nail Creek Sessions”	<a href="#">Nail Creek Pub</a>	Utica	7:30-10 PM	Free
Oct 6	Traditional Irish Session	<a href="#">Marcellus Legion Hall</a>	Marcellus, NY	4-7 PM	Free
Oct 7	“Mostly Irish” Monthly Jam	Irish American Club	Amsterdam NY	7:30 PM	Free
Oct 7	Seamus Kennedy	<a href="#">Caffè Lena</a>	Saratoga Springs	8 PM	\$15 adv, \$17 door
Oct 7-8	The Fighting 86s	<a href="#">Kitty Hoynes</a>	Syracuse	9 PM	Free
Oct 10	Trad Irish Music Session	<a href="#">The Susquehanna Café</a>	Bainbridge NY	5:30-8:30 PM	Free
Oct 13	Traditional Irish Session	<a href="#">Marcellus Legion Hall</a>	Marcellus, NY	4-7 PM	Free
Oct 14-15	Neil Emberg	<a href="#">Kitty Hoynes</a>	Syracuse	9 PM	Free
Oct 15	“Echoes of Erin” concert	Rome Free Academy Aud	Rome NY	7:30 PM	\$20 adv, \$25 door
Oct 16	Blarney Rebel Band	<a href="#">Coleman’s Irish Pub</a>	Syracuse	4-7 PM	Free
Oct 16	<a href="#">Syracuse Irish Session</a>	Johnston’s Bally Bay Pub	Syracuse	4-7 PM	Free
Oct 17	Trad Irish Music Session	<a href="#">The Susquehanna Café</a>	Bainbridge NY	5:30-8:30 PM	Free
Oct 19	Traditional Irish Session	<a href="#">Marcellus Legion Hall</a>	Marcellus, NY	4-7 PM	Free
Oct 19	Traditional Irish Session	<a href="#">The Mill</a>	Rome, NY	7:30 PM	Free
Oct 19	Traditional Irish Session	<a href="#">Marcellus Legion Hall</a>	Marcellus, NY	4-7 PM	Free
Oct 21	Blarney Rebel Band	<a href="#">Piggy Pat’s Pickled Pig Pub</a>	Washington Mills	6-9 PM	Free
Oct 24	Trad Irish Music Session	<a href="#">The Susquehanna Café</a>	Bainbridge NY	5:30-8:30 PM	Free
Oct 30	Flyin’ Column	<a href="#">Coleman’s Irish Pub</a>	Syracuse	4-7 PM	Free
Oct 31	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@ymail.com](mailto:bloftis@ymail.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 we make mistakes. It always makes sense to call ahead to confirm some of these further-out trips.