



April 3, 2009

## Phoenix Ceili Band

Members of Four Peaks Irish Arts have expressed an interest in the possibility of forming a ceili band. Concertina player Flo Fahy will be heading up this project and lending her authentic experience and expertise. Having been a member of the Inis Og ceili band and various other traditional music groups while in Ireland, as well as being the daughter of a great Clare concertina player who often played with the great [Kilfenora Ceili Band](#) musicians (as well as many others in the 50's and 60's), Flo is certainly an asset to our local music community. Flo will be supported by a small committee to include our music director, Anita Arden.

The goal will be to establish a traditional Irish Ceili Band here in the valley, under Flo's guidance and FPIA's support and sponsorship that can play locally and (eventually) enter in competition. By now you may be asking yourself, "What does it mean to be an authentic Irish ceili band?" First of all, it is **not** at all like just showing up and playing at a session. There are certain traditional instruments that are needed to produce that trademark ceili band sound. A typical band would consist of eight melody players, primarily featuring the following instruments: **flutes, fiddles, banjo, concertina and/or melodeon**. Add the **drums** and **piano** as percussion and you have a typical ten piece ceili band. Some competitions accept bands containing a **tin whistle, Uilleann pipe, cello, viola, double bass, harmonica, piano accordion, saxophone, oboe or clarinet**. However, the goal is to obtain a very balanced and unified sound; ten players playing as one with an even, blended tone. For this reason instruments dissimilar in pitch (tin whistles, etc.) from the original four instruments listed above are often excluded by choice. **Electronic instruments, singers, guitars, bodhráns, war pipes and harps** are **never accepted** into competition. Competitions are judged based on musical uniformity, choice of instrumentation, tune selection, use of harmony and/or chords and band appearance.

Playing in a ceili band is a lot of fun and a lot of hard work. To establish a working band it will mean a minimum of two to three hours of band practice every week for ten months

to a year. Anyone is welcome to participate provided that they meet the above ceili band requirements and can commit to the rigorous practice schedule. While Four Peaks Irish Arts will be lending our support and resources to Flo for this project, being a member of Four Peaks Irish Arts is **not** a requirement to participate (though we hope you'll consider it!). Additionally, every member needs to play the exact same version of each tune to achieve uniformity in sound. This means learning a lot of new tunes, putting together new sets of tunes and re-learning tunes that you may already know. A typical practice session (two to three hours) may consist of playing one set of tunes over and over as a group until the band sounds as one.

While we want everyone to be able to participate, playing in a ceili band is not for everyone and you should carefully consider the above before making a commitment. If you do participate you can expect to hone your music skills, learn many tunes and have great craic. If there is a good response to this project and we end up with more than ten players then all players will be able to practice and participate but may be required rotate on and off during ceilis or competitions based on skill level, optimal band arrangement, or randomization.

If you have any questions or would like to express your interest in being a part of this project, please contact Flo Fahy at:

[flo\\_fahy@hotmail.com](mailto:flo_fahy@hotmail.com)

If you decide that you would like to be a part of the ceili band, please provide Flo with the following information: **your name, instrument, e-mail address and phone number.**

Four Peaks Irish Arts