



Four Peaks Irish Arts

A Branch of Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann

February
2010

Volume 3
Issue 2

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www.fourpeaksirisharts.org

Chairperson's Letter

A Chairde, The successful Fingal concert was our most ambitious effort to date. The lads in the band all said they had an enjoyable stay, and say we'll be seeing them again! Just want to thank everyone who helped make this marvelous event possible: Thanks to the ICC for providing the hall and a cordial pub-like atmosphere. Thanks to Kyle Harris for his usual highly professional sound engineering. Thanks to Rick Boyle for hosting Randal Bays, and I must give

Anita Arden a very special thank you for hosting James Keane and also the fiddle and guitar workshops at her home (and feeding the hungry musicians that came to take the classes.-) Most of all, we

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**FPIA general meeting
February 20th at 4:00 pm.
Information on page 5**

St. Valentine's Day Benefit and Dance

Sunday, February 14th 10:00 Am -9:30PM

Irish Cultural Center 1106 North Central Avenue Phoenix

Admission: Adults \$10 Families \$20 Contact: Pat or Mary 602-258-0109 John Good 623-939-0209

The St. Valentine's Day Benefit and Dance is a non-Stop singing, dancing, piping, fund-raising, laughing, drinking, eating all-in-a-good- cause great day out for the whole family! This mini-festival and fundraiser is headlined by internationally recognized Scottish singer Ed Miller, in a rare Phoenix-area appearance. You will also hear Irish diva Brid Dower, The Knockabouts, Brazen Heads, Biffos, Pat McCrossan, members of the McMorrows, Four Peaks Irish Arts, and Mythic Crew (storyteller Liz Warren & John Good). De Mairt Ceol will play for the evening Ceili (Everyone-join-in social dance with instruction!)

One the second stage there'll be Irish step dancing from area dance schools with pipe bands marching through the courtyard throughout the day. There will be a silent auction and a huge 50/50 raffle. Food and a full bar will be available. Special bed and breakfast rates are available at a within-walking-distance hotel.

David Munnelly Band

February 28 - 6:30 pm

Four Peaks Irish Arts, in association with the Irish Cultural Center, is extremely excited to host The David Munnelly Band in Phoenix. The band will be performing at The Irish Cultural Center, 1106 North Central Avenue in Phoenix on Sunday, February 28th at 6:30 PM. General admission price is \$18 for this concert and seating is first-come-first-serve basis. A discount price of \$16 is available for FPIA members and ICC Academy Students.

Tickets may be reserved prior to the show by contacting Mary Hill-Connor via phone or e-mail: mary@fourpeaksirisharts.org (602) 635-9760



2009 Board Members

Mary Hill-Connor
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Fingal Concert a grand success!

Four Peaks Irish Arts did it again! This time it was hosting Fingal at the Irish Cultural Center on January 15th. The band features button accordion by James Keane (brother of Chieftains fiddler, Sean Keane); fiddle great and Friday Harbor host, Randal Bays, and Dáithí Sproule providing



exceptional vocals and guitar. FPIA Chair, Mary Hill Connor was Master of Ceremonies. ICC was virtually filled to capacity for this rare treat of Traditional Irish Music and song. Afterwards, the trio sat in an impromptu seisiun with our local musicians, proving that our music goes far beyond any scheduled performance! Highlights of the evening included the wit and wisdom of the band who somehow managed to pull together a perfect evening, despite not having much time to rehearse together due to the distance between them. Step dancing ensued during the encore not only by our good Jim Daugherty, but by Mary Hill Connor, herself. James Keane was asked what he thought about Arizona's Irish arts community. He was impressed and happy to know that the music, dance, and song traditions are thriving so well in this area. He loved that so many young people in Arizona took interest as well. - *Chris Boydston*

Fiddle & Guitar workshops

The Saturday following the Fingal concert, Randal and Dáithí spent the late morning in workshops. The home of Anita Arden transformed into fiddle and guitar classrooms. Harper Chris Boydston and Fiddler Mick Robins were Randal's fiddle students. Tom Connor, Norbert Baird, Rick Boyle, Dr. John Raush, Charles Moore (Chas), Darren Moore and Steve Colby learned new guitar skills from Dáithí. All are FPIA members, Chas being a new member.
Chris Boydston

Four Peaks Irish Arts

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Membership Fees: Local Chapter Dues \$30.00 Family \$50.00
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The Four Peaks Irish Arts organization will be a recognized tax exempt educational and charitable organization under section 501-C-3 of the Internal Revenue Code and a nonprofit corporation organized in the state of Arizona.



2009 Calendar of Events

February 6 - 7:00 pm Kitchen party at Laura's home

February 14 - 10:00 am to 9:30 pm Valentines Day Benefit and Dance

February 20 - 4:00 pm FPIA General Meeting

February 28 - 6:30 pm Dave Munnelly Band

March 5 - 7:00 pm Knotty Harper Band at ICC - More info in March news.

For more information, contact Johnny Kerr: Johnny@fourpeaksirisharts.org

The Early Fibber's session - Mick

Early session at Fibbers - 3:00 to 4:00. This is a great opportunity for regular sessioners who are learning a different instrument, or for those who simply want to play at a slower pace, as well as for beginners.

Those of us who regularly attend the early session have an e-mail list that gets posted around Friday of every week. This list avoids the "being the only person to show up" problem that has plagued the early session of late. If you want to be on this list e-mail me at mick_robins@yahoo.com

We don't have a playlist, we just play the old standards (Banshee, Maid Behind the Bar, Buried My Wife, Blarney Pilgrim, Boys of Bluehill, various polkas, etc), plus anything that gets thrown in. See you there, Mick.

Irish Alzheimers

Murphy showed up at Mass one Sunday and the priest almost fainted when he saw him. Murphy had never been seen in Church in his life.

After Mass, the priest caught up with Murphy and said, Murphy, I am so glad ya decided to come to Mass, what made ya come?"

Murphy said, "I got to be honest with you Father, a while back, I misplaced me hat and I really, really love that hat. I know that McGlynn had a hat just like me hat, and I knew that McGlynn comes to Church every Sunday. I also knew that McGlynn had to take off his hat during Mass and figured he would leave it in the back of Church. So, I was going to leave after Communion and steal McGlynn's hat."

The priest said, "Well, Murphy, I notice that ya didn't steal McGlynn's hat. What changed your mind?"

Murphy said, "Well, after I heard your sermon on the 10 Commandments, I decided that I didn't need to steal McGlynn's hat after all."

The priest gave Murphy a big smile and said, "After I talked about 'Thou Shalt Not Steal' ya decided you would rather do without the hat than burn in Hell?"

Murphy slowly shook his head and said, "No, Father, after ya talked about 'Thou Shalt Not Commit Adultery', I remembered where I left me hat."

Letters To The Editor

Your place for opinions, recognition, venting, complaints and compliments. Send letters to beverlyfz2@cox.net We can include photos with your letter!

Note from the Editor

Chris Boydston has graciously offered to help with information for the newsletter. Articles of general interest to the FPIA group are welcome, including humor and recipes. If you attend an event and don't see Chris or me there, contact Chris for help writing a story. celticharper@gmail.com

We have to establish a copy/information deadline so the newsletter can go out in a timely manner. The 25th of the month was selected so the letter can go out by e-mail by the end of the month. Cheers! Beverly Fizzell



Home Sweet Home...

Well I am back from my wonderful trip home to Ireland. It was absolutely fantastic to be back home with all my family and friends. We had a very Merry Christmas together indeed and many a tune was played, many beers, champagne and wine drank and good cheer was all around in the Fahy household over the Christmas and New Year!!!! I hope you all had a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to you all. I will give you all a little brief insight into my trip home.

It began December 17th, my friend Tiffany and I jetted off to Ireland from Phoenix. It seems like quite a long journey but to be honest the flights were great with only a 2-hour stopover in Philadelphia until we got on our 7 and half hour flight to Dublin, Ireland. In total, I guess we were flying for 12 hours! I never thought I would end up so far away from home. When I stepped off the plane in Dublin, I could feel the warm sunshine and the cold crisp air on my face. I could also hear the Irish accent. I breathed a sigh of relief and I suddenly felt safe and relaxed. I wanted to kiss the ground, but instead my eyes filled with tears as I knew then I was finally home and within hours and minutes of seeing my family and my new little niece Caoimhe. A year and a half is a long time to not see your family and friends especially when

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Welcome a New Baby!

Congratulations go out to Tim and Jerica Nicolaides their new baby girl Neve.

From Will Thorne:

Gerry O'Connor playing The Bag of Spuds and Copperplate. Thought you banjo guys might enjoy this!

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YNy8wi5vyQg>



The Irish Musicians Repertoire As It Pertains To Building Skills By Johnny Kerr

Greetings fellow musicians! As I found myself pondering this subject on an internet forum I thought it might make for a good discussion article in our newsletter. Questions such as, “how often should I be learning tunes” or “how much time should I spend on a tune before learning a new one” have repeatedly been asked of me as a teacher, session player and general Irish music enthusiast.

I would like to note that the following is not intended to be an end all, be all, answer to these questions; these are but my opinions as someone who has been playing Irish Traditional Music for some years now and as someone who has received grad-level training in the field of curriculum and instruction. The following thoughts are based on my experience as a musician as well as my personal pedagogy. I hope that this discussion will be helpful to you and may, in the very least, cause you to think about tune learning in a way that you might not have before.

First I would like to start by attempting to articulate the makeup of the typical traditional Irish tune. We'll start with the macro to establish general understanding before going to the micro (this should not be new information to most of you but I still include it for the benefit of any newcomers). The majority of Irish dance music follows the pattern of AABB. That is, each tune has an “A” part which is repeated twice and a “B” part which is repeated twice. This pattern will usually be repeated three times before transitioning to the next tune in the set. Tune sets are made up of, on average, three tunes of the same rhythm (i.e., reels, jigs, etc). There are common exceptions to these rules (e.g., single reels which do not repeat the A and B parts, or tunes with a “C” part) but the bulk of the music follows this structure.

To expand on the micro, Irish tunes are, more or less, made up of strings of licks/riffs/motifs. By this I mean that when you are learning a tune, you begin by learning a short sequence of melody notes which make up or approximate a phrase of the tune. You learn several of these phrases, put them together and you have your “A” part or “B” part. Often these licks/riffs/motifs will pop up in more than one place in the tune which helps to unite the overall melody. You will also see common themes among these segments, even if they are not note-for-note copies of each other; again, these help to unite the melody as a unique and recognizable unit. Additionally, portions of these phrases or motifs might be found in more than one unrelated tune. This is where our topic takes off.

As learning musicians we must recognize that it is impossible to become fluent in the music and/or our instruments overnight. By accepting this, we also have to recognize that sometimes we may be the best we can be at this point in the journey and it is necessary to move forward into new territory for the sake of growth rather than staying in the same place for too long. When looking at your tune repertoire, there are two contrasting things which you should avoid: First of all, you do not want to have only a handful of tunes that you are capable of playing well (with the obvious exception of someone who is just getting started into the music or a new instrument). Secondly, you don't want your repertoire to be an inch deep and a mile wide; that is, you don't want to have a repertoire of hundreds of tunes that you play poorly. Hence you must find a balance somewhere between.

When learning a new tune, I will typically spend several weeks working on that tune to achieve a confident and fluent sound. I do not, however, neglect the rest of my repertoire, nor do I abstain from learning other tunes during this period. If you want to grow in your musical ability, learning new tunes consistently is a must. Still, as was mentioned above, quantity does not equate to quality. At some point after learning a new tune, you need to move on to other tunes while still remembering to play it regularly. Otherwise you are risking that tune becoming stale, frustrating or un-enjoyable and this could potentially thwart your progress. You have to accept that this might be the best you can do with this tune given your current abilities. By learning other tunes that exercise different scale patterns/motifs and ornamentation, you are slowly building your skill level. Things learned from new tunes will help to beef up your previously learned tunes in ways that you were not musically able to when you originally learned them.

To summarize in fewer words, learning new tunes will expose you to new exercises, develop existing skills and introduce new challenges to overcome. These are all things that will improve on tunes that are in your current repertoire and will expedite the learning of future tunes. Sticking with the same tune for too long without expanding into other tunes is much like beating a dead horse. By accepting that this may be the best you can do with the tune at this time in your musical journey you can save yourself hours of frustration and anguish. More than likely, you will come back to that tune in a few months

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Building skills from page 4

with several more tunes under your belt and will find that after exercising yourself by learning other tunes, the things which had challenged you when you originally learned that tune are becoming more natural and fluent. As for the riffs/licks/motifs that do pop up here and there in multiple tunes throughout your repertoire, you are increasing the frequency in which you are practicing and playing these patterns without playing the same one tune over and again.

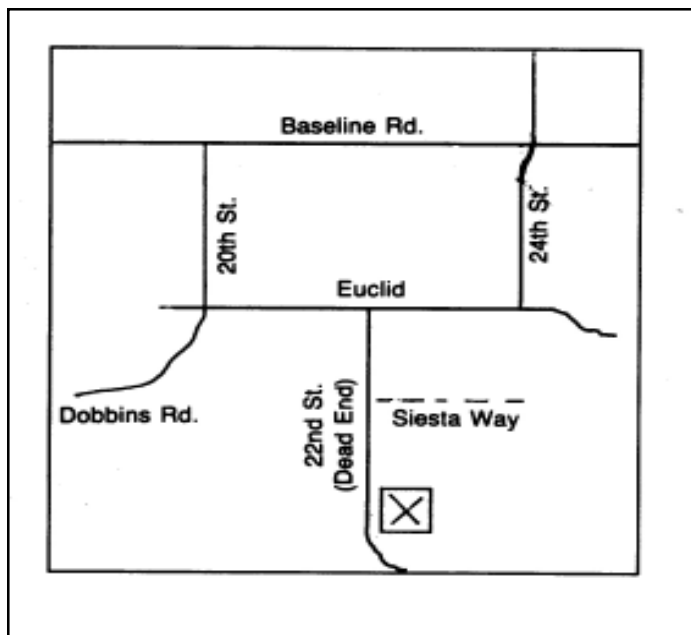
I hope this has been at least insightful and thought provoking. Thanks for taking the time to read. If you have any additional thoughts or responses on the matter, our editor would love to have the content for future newsletter editions so please feel free to submit such. See you at the seisiúns, Johnny

General meeting 4:00 pm February 20

Meeting will be held in a private residence this time. Bring your instruments for a seisiun afterwards. Feel free to bring a snack to share and BYOB. Tom and Beverly Fizzell have graciously offered their home for the meeting.

Directions to the Fizzell's:

From the corner of 24th street and Baseline Road in Phoenix, go south one mile to Euclid, west 1/8th mile to 22nd Street, south to the end of the street. We are on the left side of 22nd Street at the end. Our house is not on Siesta. Go on past that street. GPS directs you to turn onto Siesta. Don't do it! Go to the end of 22nd street.



Kitchen Party - February 6

Laura Strebler lstrebler@yahoo.com

Bring your instruments and get ready to play at our traditional Irish Superseisiun! (Feel free to insert your own clever football metaphor here.)

Saturday, February 6 7:00 to midnight

2191 W Rockrose Place Chandler AZ

Call 855-3233 if you get lost.

There will be a few drinks and snacks but please bring your beverage of choice.

Kids are welcome: we have a wii and there are always marshmallows to roast.

Even if you're not a musician, come on over and listen.

Hope to see you there... let's roll out some tunes!!

Chair letter from page 1

should all thank the anonymous FPIA donors, who contributed a total of \$1500 towards the cost of the band! Thanks to these donations and the excellent turnout (over 115), I'm delighted to tell you we were able to turn a wee profit, which was much needed. We shared this profit with the ICC.

Word is beginning to get out now that traditional musicians can find an audience in Phoenix, and FPIA are the folks to call for a house concert. We are already in talks for house concerts with two artists referred to us by Daithi Sproule! Do you have a favorite performer you'd like to see live here in the valley? What kind of workshops would you like to see? Let us know and we can work together to make it happen.

Since January seems to have got away from us, the FPIA meeting we were to have this month will be rescheduled for a time in February, to be announced.

Remember the Valentines Day benefit for the ICC. It goes on all day Sunday, February 14th at the ICC. There will be lots of good music, and the event is being headlined by Ed Miller.

Again, my friendly reminder about the Comhaltas North American Convention, April 8-11, in Parsippany, NJ.

Dia is Muire Duibh Mary

The Midwest Fleadh has been rescheduled. The new date for the Midwest Fleadh is now June 25-27, 2010



Flo's Column continued from page 3

you come from such a tight knit family as ours. It was fantastic. I was excited and joyous and thankful to be home.

The weather had been terrible the night before we arrived in Ireland. It was minus 2 and 3 degrees, super cold for Ireland. Our plan to get to Clare was to catch a flight down from Dublin to Galway airport and my parents were picking us up there. We had to wait around the airport in Dublin for 3 hours. Now, my sister Gretta lives in Portmarnock in Dublin. She just had a baby and even though she said to me on the phone earlier in the week that she would not be able to greet me at the airport, I had a gut feeling she was somewhere around the arrivals area. You know when you get that feeling that somebody is somewhere around even though they said they wouldn't be. Anyways, true to my gut feeling, my sister came running at me with her baby stroller and showed up to greet us with my new little niece Caoimhe, in Dublin airport. I was so happy to finally see them that we both broke down in tears, of joy of course!!!

Next, after saying my goodbyes to my sister and my little niece in Dublin, we boarded the Aer Arann plane, a 30-minute flight down to Galway. At this stage, my friend Tiffany was fading, the eyes were closing and the speech not making sense. As for me, I was bursting with energy or adrenalin or anticipation, I am not sure what to call it! We collected our bags and I ran into my parents' arms. It was a fantastic feeling to see them both and once again there was more tears!! ? When I got home, my brother was there and within an hour or two, I had managed to tuck into a big Irish breakfast, with the REAL Irish sausages and black and white pudding with the real Bachelor's baked beans! For any of you that have not been to Ireland these beans are a must with an Irish Breakfast! I managed to stay up all day and late into the night, talking and telling everyone about my experiences here in Arizona. The highlight of my trip was to play with my Dad again. He had told me on the phone how he had almost stopped playing since I left which upset me greatly. However, when Dad took out the concertina and started to play, he had not lost it at all. He remembered all the tunes we played together and the changes into other tunes and even played a little on his own too. I was so proud of him and so happy to see him back in action again! Dad and I played out at the 2 local pubs nearby and we had a house session New Year's Day night, but due to the bad weather over the Christmas, the roads were treacherous and few risked the journey to our house. However, the few that did show up had a great night! We had a flute player Cathy Taylor, two fiddle players, Kate Thompson and Paul, my Dad and me and the fantastic accompanist and singer Garry O Bhriain, who is a close friend of my Dad's and a great neighbor. The audience was my family and when we are all together, it is quite big. My Dad went down to the sea earlier in the day and picked a big bucket of fresh mussels from the shore. The mussel is a shellfish with the black shell. My dad's recipe to cook them is to first clean the shells, put them in boiling water, and add cream and then some white wine. When they are cooked the shells open and there is an orange fish I guess you would call it with a beard. You must pull the beard off the little orange fish before devouring it - for anyone that is not familiar with a mussel and how they are cooked. By the way, I was born and reared by

the sea and I HATE seafood. The musicians had a big bucket in the living room for the shells and they all were licking their lips eating the bowls of mussels my Dad had picked. I had sausages and sandwiches instead. Much better and smelt better too!!! ? My dad was looking great and we had many a good tune over the Christmas. My dad can now be found playing in a compilation album put together by Comhaltas Ceoltoiri Eireann in Ennis, Co. Clare. The CD takes in all of the great, older concertina players of Co. Clare, my dad being one of them. The CD is called "Keeping the Tradition – Concertina Players of Co. Clare. This brought about talks between Garry O Bhriain and myself, who is a great producer and musician about the possibility of starting to record an album with my Dad in the summer when I go home again! I am very excited about this prospect and I look forward to putting together something with my father. We play so well together that I think it would be fun. A few beers, a great producer, accompanist and friend in Garry O Bhriain – sounds absolutely fantastic!

Well I should also mention all that another one of the many highlights of my trip was meeting the famous movie star Daniel Radcliffe. Now for those of you who are not "Harry Potter" fans, Daniel Radcliffe is "Harry Potter". Yes! Believe it or not Mr. Potter decided to spend his Christmas break from Hogwarts in the village of New Quay in the Burren, Co. Clare of all places! His girlfriend, who is from Dublin and whose parents own a house in my area, were having Mr. Radcliffe for Christmas. Hence, this is why he was on vacation in Co. Clare. My first encounter with the young wizard was down at my local pub in Linnanes Lobster Bar. I decided to go for a few tunes with Lorraine O'Brien, a great concertina player from Ennis, Mary Shannon, the multi-talented sister of the great Sharon Shannon and Garry O Bhriain, a great friend and neighbor and a fantastic accompanist with Four Men and a Dog. When I entered the pub, I was approached by one or two of the locals trying to tell me Harry Potter was in the house! Of course I thought it was just a look a like or his twin, I just didn't believe it was him. I thought it couldn't be! Why on earth would he be here! When I was first introduced to him I was still very skeptical but he was impressed with our playing and the lovely music and he came down and spoke with all of us musicians tell us we were amazing. I thought to myself, well now is the time to find out if it really is him! I took it upon myself to ask him if he was the real Harry Potter. He says, "Well, my name is Daniel but yeah I am Harry Potter! My nephew had him say a few lines from the movies and he was then questioned as to the whereabouts of Hermione and Ron. That did it. I was convinced. I continued on talking and him telling him how brilliant the movies were and I am sure he had heard that a million times but he still thanked me and went for another pint! I did not take a picture, silly me but I have to say it was fantastic to meet him and what a nice fellow he is in real life. His bodyguards were there and it turned out that the bodyguards were staying at the guesthouse my mother works at in Ballyvaughan. All of New Quay was completely star struck and Mr. Radcliffe was the talk of the small little parish all Christmas! Well I will sign off for now but more stories and happenings from my trip home next month!

"May flowers always line your path and sunshine light your day. May songbirds serenade you every step along the way. May a rainbow run beside you in a sky that's always blue. And may happiness fill your heart each day your whole life through."

