

Thursday, March 15, 2001

THE WEEKEND

FRIDAY



Violinist Hilary Hahn returns to Orchestra Hall 10:45 a.m. and 8 p.m. to perform Samuel Barber's Violin Concerto with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra. Call (313) 576-5111.

SATURDAY



Lance Croy of Canton and Debbie Fraser star in the Dearborn Heights Civic Theatre's production of "Skidding" 8 p.m. at the Canfield Center, call (313) 277-7900.

SUNDAY



"Fame - The Musical" dances into the Detroit Opera House. Performances 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. Tickets \$10-\$55, call (248) 645-6666.



"Jigsaw Venus" is just one of the more than 100 independent and experimental 16mm films featured in the Ann Arbor Film Festival continuing through Sunday, March 18 at the Michigan Theater.

SHAMROCKS TO ST. PATRICK'S DAY



Vegetin' the green: Mick Gavin (left) and sons Sean and Michael celebrate St. Patrick's Day by playing together.

Irish come together to CELEBRATE ST. PATRICK'S DAY

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN
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The way Mick Gavin celebrates St. Patrick's Day is not that different from when he lived in Ireland. He'll be picking up shamrocks before going to church just like he did back home. Then Gavin will head over to the Irish Fest at the Hellenic Cultural Center in Westland where he'll play fiddle. Music plays a major role in the lives of the Irish not only on St. Patrick's Day, but all year long. When Gavin came to the United States in 1974, he brought the tradition with him and began sharing it with the community at an annual Irish Fest. That was 16 years ago. On Saturday, March 17, the Redford fiddler will celebrate the day named after Ireland's patron saint with his sons Sean and Michael and dozens of pipers, dancers and musicians.

Religious day

"It's a very religious day, a national holiday," said Gavin, who founded the Irish Fest. "People go to Mass and church. It's a family day like Thanksgiving here. People would come home from England and all over. You'd go out and pick shamrocks and pin them on your lapel, and in the evening there was always music."

All my brothers and sisters played. There were nine of us and we played everything from violin to harmonica and penny whistle. There was always music in the house. My father played melodeon, a form of accordion, and was a step dancer in Ireland."

Gavin, Sean and Michael carry on the tradition in America. Sean, a 15-year-old flutist, won second place in the All-Ireland competition in 1999 in Enniscorthy in Wexford County with Groupal Ceol, an ensemble which includes harpist Colleen Burke of Farmington Hills. Gavin, Sean and Michael, 23, play airs, waltzes, jigs, reels and marches at home all the time.

Over the years their reputation has brought requests for them to perform at parties, weddings, and funerals.

"It's great to have my sons play," said Gavin. "When I see Mike and Sean I think of my father. At the Irish Fest we'll have over 60 performers, pipers, dancers from the O'Hare School of Dance in Westland, a lot of young musicians are coming along and they're the ones who will carry on the tradition."

Pipers were the prominent instrument of Ireland in the 1850s. During the potato famine between the years 1842 to 1847, the population went from 9 million people to 4 1/2. Two million people died and another 2 1/2 million emigrated. It was a devastating time for music. A lot of music was lost in those years. It also gave us a lot of laments for people who died and left."

Keeping the music alive

Gavin is reviving the music passed down from generation to generation. He teaches fiddle privately, and holds Irish celebrations or Ceilidh, which are much like a huge party, on St. Patrick's Day and the weekend between Christmas and New Year.

"I wanted to bring that tradition here and teach the music because trained musicians never get the feeling of the folk music," said Gavin. "I have to lift it and tap out the beat with my feet."

Tom MacNeil learned the fine points of playing Scottish style piano from his grandmother. The Scots and Irish share not only a love of music but a similar sound as well. That's why Gavin invited MacNeil to the play at the first Irish Fest 16 years ago.

"It's Celtic music," said MacNeil. "The music of the Scottish and Irish are identical structures. It's very

related but played in a different style."

Like Gavin, MacNeil has family members playing at the fest. Glengarry Road is a trio of brothers - Tom, Stephen (bagpipes) and Jim (fiddle) who have played at The Ark in Ann Arbor and the Big Pond Fiddle Fest in Nova Scotia. Glengarry is the road their grandfather lived on in Nova Scotia, the eastern Canadian province where many Scots settled.

"My grandparents are from Cape Breton in Nova Scotia," said MacNeil who also studied piano at the Detroit Institute of Musical Arts. "The music comes from the highlands of Scotland. The only difference between ourselves and the Irish is that Scots follow a bag-piper instead of a fiddler. We play reels, jigs, airs and marches just like the Irish do."

And just like the Irish, MacNeil celebrates St. Patrick's Day. Following in his footsteps, St. Columella brought Christianity to Scotland from Ireland in the sixth century.

"St. Patrick brought Christianity to Ireland in 432 A.D.," said Gavin. "The reason the shamrock is a symbol, is because it has three leaves. Legend has it when St. Patrick was trying to explain there were three divine persons in one God. He bent down and picked a shamrock that's in one stem to explain the Holy Trinity."



Stepping out: Jimmy Ward is one of the dancers who will kick up his heels at the Irish Fest.

CONCERT

Air Force musicians command attention

BY KELLY WYOGNIK
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The Air Force is landing Saturday at Farmington High School, but you won't see any airplanes.

They're bringing instruments - the musical kind - to entertain those who troop to the high school for an evening of jazz, classic and everything in between.

"It should be a good program," said Paul Barber, music coordinator for Farmington Public Schools and conductor of the Farmington Community Band. "It's another opportunity to hear live music."

What: Musicians from Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Ohio, featuring a clarinet ensemble, woodwind quintet, guitar, guitar, and jazz band, will present a concert.

When: 7:30 p.m., Saturday, March 17.

Where: Farmington High School, 32000 Shiloh Road, Farmington, Mich. 48333.

Tickets: \$9, \$8 seniors, children free. Call (313) 537-3489.

The concert will feature four ensembles - Night Flight Jazz, Wright Brass, Contemporary Clarinet Quartet, and Huffman Prairie Winds who are based at Wright-Patterson Air Force

Base in Ohio.

"This is the first time in my experience that these small groups are appearing on the same program," said U.S. Air Force Sgt. Roy Olds, a trombonist who plays with the jazz and brass bands. "A great variety of music will be played. When people think of military bands they think of marches."

Olds, a former band teacher, joined the Air Force Band 26 years ago. He's been at Wright-Patterson for the past four years.

"I missed performing," he said. "And strictly per-

Please See AIR FORCE, B2



Jazz ensemble: The Night Flight Jazz Ensemble continues to preserve the "Glenn Miller" sound.