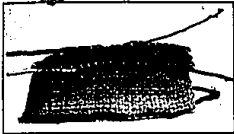


COMING UP

FRIDAY



Waterford weaver Mary Hornig exhibits basketry in the Midwest Surface Design show in the Fine Arts Gallery at the Livonia Civic Center Library, 32700 Five Mile, east of Farmington Road.

SATURDAY



September Productions presents a whimsical version of the Grimm's fairy tale "The Adventures of the Frog Prince" 2:30 p.m. at the Anderson Theater in Henry Ford Museum, 20900 Oakwood Boulevard, Dearborn. Tickets are \$6, call (313) 271-1620.

SUNDAY



The Theater Guild of Livonia-Redford presents the children's musical *Babes in Toyland* at 2 p.m. through Dec. 29, at the theater, 15138 Beech Daly, Redford. For ticket prices and times, call (313) 531-0554.



Celtic Celebration

Fiddlers and dancers gather to celebrate the old country

By LINDA ANN CHROMIN
STAFF WRITER
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It's been a few years since Seamus Connolly used to go from door to door playing his fiddle and singing on the day after Christmas. In Ireland, young and old alike celebrated St. Stephen's Day with music and a form of begging.

"They call it Wren's Day. It's like trick or treating," said Connolly, a 10-time winner of the Irish National Fiddle Championship and director of the Irish Studies program at Boston College. "People go out all dressed up singing The Wren, the wren, the king of all birds and kill the bird. It was a pagan tradition. They don't kill the bird anymore but they continue the tradition in Dublin by giving the money they collect to charity. It's a great tradition."

"I remember at night older musicians would go into my grandmother's kitchen and they'd dance around the kitchen and she'd give them lots of money. Even today, they still say 'are you going out to hunt the wren.'"

Connolly won't be going out to hunt wren after Christmas though. After moving to the Boston area from Ireland in 1972, he found the Irish who'd come over ahead of him dropped the tradition in their new country. Instead they gathered for ceilis, playing music and dancing all night long. Connolly, who usually just spent a quiet evening at home, never took part but that's about to change. This

year he'll leave the comforts of a cozy fire to join friend Mick Gavin and a flock of Celtic musicians and dancers Saturday-Sunday, Dec. 29-30 at The Ark in Ann Arbor. The two originally met as teenagers in Ireland where they played together. Off and on through the years, they've continued to join their fiddles to rekindle the sounds of their homeland. The two reunite again for the Crossroads Ceili at The Ark.

Irish step dancers and fiddlers will join them on stage to celebrate the old country, among them Gavin's sons Sean and Mike, Marty Somberg, Terrence McKinney, Colleen Burke, Colleen Shanks, Celtic pianist Barbara MacDonald Magone, and the MacNeil Brothers from Nova Scotia. The brothers capture the Scottish sound of Cape Breton with their pipes, piano and fiddle. Day-long workshops with Connolly and Magone precede the Crossroads Ceili.

"We'll play a lot of music from old Sligo fiddlers who were in New York in the 1920s," said Gavin who teaches the art of Irish fiddling in his Redford home. "I think this is a great opportunity for us to bring him here. Seamus is a heavyweight in Irish music like Paddy Maloney of The Chieftains. If not for them, you'd never have shows like Riverdance."

That's something Erin Quinn doesn't like to hear. A member of Riverdance's Flying Squad, she travels around the country to pursue her passion of creating percussion with her

soft and hard shoes. Quinn studied at the Michael O'Hare School of Irish Dance in Birmingham and at his brother Tim's dance school in Westland even though she grew up in Battle Creek. When she began studying Celtic footwork 17 years ago the studios were two of the few places offering instruction in Irish dance so once or twice a week Quinn traveled nearly two hours to learn the finer points of kicking up her heels. Today, she teaches at her own studio - Quinn School of Irish Dancing in Marshall.

Crossroads Ceili

What: Fiddlers and dancers celebrate with Celtic music

When: 7:30 p.m. Saturday-Sunday, Dec. 29-30

Where: The Ark, 316 Main S. 734) 761-1451

Workshops: Seamus Connolly teaches the older style of Irish fiddling, Barbara MacDonald Magone, Celtic accompaniment, noon to 5 p.m. both days. \$25; \$15 under age 12. Call (313) 537-3489

"The dancing and music is unique to Irish heritage," said the 23-year-old Quinn. "There really isn't another kind of dancing like Irish dancing. I just love it because I've done it my whole life."



Fiddlin' around: Seamus Connolly joins performers at the Crossroads Ceili celebration.

ON STAGE

Mamma Mia! has audiences dancing in their seats

By SUSAN B. TAUBER
STAFF WRITER
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Debbie Jensen-Miller is in the theater for every performance by the touring company of Mamma Mia!

She's the merchandise manager for Mamma Mia! items that people like to buy and take home as souvenirs. She sells Mamma Mia! T-shirts, tank tops, teddy bears wearing Mamma Mia! shirts, key chains, baseball caps, magnets and more importantly, compact discs of the ABBA songs featured in the musical.

"The CDs sell like hot cakes during intermission and after the show," she said. "People come out so enthusiastic that they have to have the CD if they don't have one already."

Since Jensen-Miller is in the lobby before, during intermission and after every



Girl talk: Nicole Fraser (left to right), Michelle Aravena and Miku Graham sing Honey, Honey during a scene in Mamma Mia!

show, she sees the immediate reaction of the audience. "They are bouncing out of the show, dancing and singing. It's such a very, very upbeat show."

That "very upbeat show" is

coming to Detroit at the Masonic Temple Theatre at 8 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 27. It's slated to close Saturday, Feb. 9, 2002.

If you're one of the few people who haven't heard

about Mamma Mia!, here's some history for you.

Mamma Mia! is a musical with 22 songs by ABBA, the Swedish group that took the popular music world by storm when it won the Eurovision Song Contest April 6, 1974, with its song "Waterloo." The song topped pop charts all around the globe and made number six on the American Billboard chart.

After that, group members Agnetha Foltskog, Benny Andersson, Bjorn Ulvaeus and Anni-Frid Lynstad, whose first initials make up the group's name ABBA, became well known for such songs as "I Do, I Do, I Do, I Do," "Take a Chance on Me," "The Winner Takes All" and "Dancing Queen." ABBA music was featured in the movies, "Muriel's Wedding" and "Priscilla, Queen of the Desert."

Please see MAMMA, B2

Mamma Mia!

Where: Masonic Temple Theatre

When: 8 p.m. Tuesdays through Fridays, 2 p.m. and 8 p.m. Saturdays, 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. Saturdays. Weekday matinees are 2 p.m., Wednesday, Feb. 6 and Thursday, Feb. 7. There also will be a special New Year's Eve performance at 8 p.m., Monday, Dec. 31.

Tickets: \$27-50 to \$72-50. They are on sale at the Masonic Temple Theatre, the Fisher Theatre box office and all Ticketmaster outlets. Group ticket discounts are available.

Call: (248) 645-6666 and online at www.ticketmaster.com.

HOT TICKET



Visit the polar bears in the 4.2 acre Arctic Ring of Life at the Detroit Zoo. The new digs are home to seven bears, seals and snowy owls. For information, call (248) 398-0900 or the Wild Winter Events Hotline at (248) 541-5835.