

Entertainment

Ethel Simmons editor/644-1100



(CPC)

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Sights, sounds recall an Irish glen

By M.S. Dillon
staff writer

Kentucky cloggers, country western and bluegrass lovers, square dancers and French Canadians are among those bound to recognize sounds and sights

during "Music in the Glen," a concert of Irish champions sponsored by Comhaltas Ceoltuiri Eireann (Association of Irish Musicians) at 7:30 p.m. Friday, Oct. 18 at Orchestra Hall.



Renowned piper Al Purcell plays the Irish pipes, a skill that requires a craftsman as well as a musician, he says. Purcell cuts his own reeds for the pipes since he can't find them in the United States.

and storytellers — 20 in all — the Detroit concert will offer entertainment as varied as unadorned Irish mountain music. (Almost all Irishmen will confide that while North Americans fashioned their own song and dance, many were inspired by fiddlers and set dancers from the Emerald Isle.)

It was Comhaltas (pronounced Col-us) that entertained President Ronald Reagan when he visited his birthplace in Ballyporeen, County Tipperary recently.

The world-class entertainers this year were selected by the European Economic Council (Common Market) to represent Ireland on a 10-nation tour. Detroit is among the 21 stops scheduled on the group's 26-day sweep of the U.S. and Canada. Other destinations include Boston, New York, Chicago, Phoenix, San Francisco, Vancouver, Winnipeg, Toronto and Ottawa.

Though Comhaltas revives for audiences reams of airs, ballads, reels and jigs that lightened the hearts of their ancestors, it wasn't always that way. Along with language, education and religion, Irish music suffered under British occupation and oppression — in fact it almost died out. Established in

1951 in Ireland to prevent that, Comhaltas has since grown to include more than 400 branches in Britain, Australia, Canada and the U.S.

JUST PLAIN fun lovers should enjoy what Comhaltas has in store: look who's gracing the mobile marquee.

Tom Gleeson — "This tall Tipperary man with the splendid voice has been one of the most popular traditional singers over the past dozen years or more. He also is an all-Ireland champion fiddler."

Karen Tweed — "A brilliant virtuoso on the piano accordion and piano, Karen is one of the finest young musicians to emerge on the Comhaltas scene in Britain in recent years."

Paddy Fallon — "The ever-popular Paddy has no peer as a comedian/emcee. Paddy is back by popular demand."

Austin Dawe — "Dawe made a big impression as a member of this year's Tour of Britain group. Austin comes from Dundalk but his fine fiddling is known and welcomed wherever a good session of traditional music is taking place."

"You simply can't get better than the best," says Livonia's Dan O'Kennedy,

president of the local chapter of Comhaltas.

Renowned piper Al Purcell, present at a Detroit Comhaltas' meeting Monday, said a rare opportunity awaits concert-goers.

"Ireland probably is the last place in Western Europe where music is pure and untouched. It's been passed on through an oral rather than a written tradition," says Purcell, who teaches pupils from the tri-county area.

"You never see a conductor conducting an Irish concert. It's spontaneous and that spontaneity is what gives Irish music its sparkle and its uniqueness. There's a sort of feeling among Irish musicians that travels like electricity."

"It gives Irish music a terrific drive. Because of that I love to play Irish music."

"This music goes back to the roots of the Irish culture," says dihard dancer Breege Kelly, also a Comhaltas member.

"It's tied in very much with the history of the Irish people. It was one of the things that sustained them throughout their troubled history of repression and suffering under British rule. Dances represent stories that were made up to

Continued on Next Page



Michael O'Hare of Canton teaches Irish dance students from as far away as Seguin. Winner of more than 150 medals, the stellar step dancer gets a group in the mood for a look at fellow champions during "Music in the Glen," set for Oct. 18.



John and Cheryl McInerney of Plymouth and Norm and Margaret Root of Livonia dance a four-hand reel called "The Walls of Limerick" at a recent gathering of Detroit's Comhaltas chapter — part of an international Irish music association.

'Music in Motion' to be theme

The 1985 Michigan Thanksgiving Parade will come into view with the theme "Music in Motion" on Thursday, Nov. 28, in Detroit. The 59-year-old Thanksgiving morning parade is a kaleidoscope of music, this year featuring Motown to folk tunes, soul to symphonic, gospel to jazz.

Sixteen of the state's bands have been chosen by U-M Music Director Eric Becker. Floats will have music. Some floats will carry performers and some will carry sound systems giving the musical theme of that particular float.

A musical grand marshal will lead the 1985 Thanksgiving Parade with 10 new floats and at least two new balloons, along with favorite floats

and balloons of previous years, the 16 marching bands, the Distinguished Drum Corps, the drum and majorette corps, the floats, puppets, and a myriad of special groups.

More than 600,000 individuals see the parade each year either at curbside from office vantage points or from an adult pair of shoulders. An additional eight million people view the parade on official broadcaster WXYZ-TV's national "Santa Network." CBS is expected to carry approximately 45 minutes of the parade nationally for an audience of 30 million.

Friends of the Parade, a volunteer organization that works behind the scenes, is looking for new members. For information, call 953-8300, or write to Michigan's Thanksgiving Parade Foundation, 1915 Fort, Detroit 48216.

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