

ARTISTIC EXPRESSIONS



LINDA ANN CHOMIN

Irish to gather for music, dance

Every year around Christmas time, Mick Gavin revives a tradition borrowed from his native Ireland. Before immigrating to America in 1974, the Redford fiddler and his neighbors used to gather to play music and dance. The evening began with "gambling dens" where revelers would vie to win two turkeys, two chickens, a pig or a lamb.

While party-goers won't be able to win Sunday dinner at "Crossroads Ceilidh" Wednesday, Dec. 29, at The Ark in Ann Arbor, they will be able to watch world-class step-dancers from Riverdance, hear award-winning musicians, and maybe even kick up their heels a little while listening to traditional Irish and Scottish jigs and reels.

"It's just a gathering that was the social activity in the farming area," said Gavin.

I remember it age 8 or 9 in the 1940s, going with my father in a horse and buggy. After the gamble was over, local guys would take out their tiddies. They would clear the kitchen to play then clear the floor for set dancing."

Four years ago Gavin brought the idea of an Irish gathering to David Siglin at The Ark. This year, Gavin's lined up Plymouth dancers Paul Cusick and Michael Belvitch, and Pat Quinn of Battle Creek. All three went on to perform with Riverdance after studies at the O'Hare School of Dance in Westland. Nick Garriess, who's performed at Westland and other folk festivals throughout Michigan, also will dance.

Family affair

Gavin and his sons Michael and Sean will play as well. Sean finished second in the All-Ireland Championship's Grupal Cool (group music) division in August in the town of Enniscorthy in Wexford County, Ireland. A flutist and student at U of D Jesuit High School, Sean will join three of the original group members - Jeremy Kurke and Colleen Burke and Colleen Shanks - to play their winning number. The fifth member, Tyler Duncan, remained in Ireland to study uilleann pipes.

"We're going to celebrate the end of the century with an Irish bash," said Gavin, who plays 7 p.m. Sundays at Connor O'Neill's Irish Pub in Ann Arbor. "The highlight is these kids from Riverdance."

Seasoned Riverdancer

Paul Cusick's seen a lot of the world since he danced at last year's Ceilidh. Since August, he's performed with Riverdance in Cologne, Frankfurt, Stuttgart, Zurich, Rotterdam, Vienna and Prague.

Cusick arrives home from Germany just in time for the Ceilidh then



World champion Michael Belvitch kicks up his heels at a gathering to celebrate traditional music and dance at The Ark.

"Crossroads Ceilidh"
Annual Art meeting of traditional Irish and Scottish music and dance.
Wednesday, Dec. 29, 7 p.m.
Where: The Ark, 315 N. State St., Ann Arbor.
Tickets: \$15, and available by calling (734) 763-2118 or (313) 945-9993.

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