

Ark concert showcases Irish music, song, dance

Crossroads Ceilidh, an evening of Celtic music and dance, 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 30 at the Ark, 316 Main St., downtown Ann Arbor. Tickets \$10, call (734) 761-1451.

By KEELY WYGONIK
STAFF WRITER
kwygonik@er.homecomm.net

Growing up in County Clare, Ireland, Mick Gavin liked hanging around the old-timers who showed him how to play the fiddle. Sometimes they'd take him with them on trips to perform in other parts of the country.

"I guess I'm doing that now," said Gavin of Redford who is presenting *Crossroads Ceilidh*, an evening of Celtic music and dance Wednesday, Dec. 30, at the Ark in downtown Ann Arbor. "I love to see the kids playing. The funny thing about the music is you can't create good students — if they want to play, they'll find you."

The concert will feature a variety of Irish musicians and dancers including U.S. National Scottish Junior Fiddle Champion Jeremy Kittle, champion Irish dancer, Paul Cusak of Plymouth, who will soon be joining the cast of *Riverdance*, Mike Batt and Pat Quinn.

Glengary Road will perform the music of Cape Breton Island, and Charlie Wilkie, Dawn Hulick, Gavin, Terence McKinney and others will perform traditional Irish music and songs.

"The Ark is a well-known folk



Fiddler: Look for Jeremy Kittle, U.S. National Scottish Junior Fiddle Champion, at the Crossroads Ceilidh.

venue," said Gavin explaining why he chose the site. "There are quite a few talented young people around, unfortunately, the clubs around Detroit are not into promoting the kids and their music, they have lost the art these kids are finding."

Kittle, 14, has been playing classical violin since he was 5. He called me, he got my name from the Ark and was looking for someone to teach him the fiddle," said Gavin. "He had a lot of background and also plays with the Saline Fiddler's Philharmonic."

With Gavin's help, Kittle learned how to play the fiddle, and has been the Great Lakes Scottish Fiddle Junior Champion

for the past two years. At the Ceilidh he will be performing alongside Gavin's son, Sean, who plays flute, and Tyler Duncan on uilleann pipes.

Tyler went to see "Riverdance" and wanted to play pipes. He told his parents, and they found a set of pipes for him. He's really good on them. He's going to Ireland this summer with his parents and to study pipes for year."

Sean Gavin, 12, has been playing the flute for about nine months. "I've been listening to Irish music ever since I was a little kid, I just like everything about it," he said. "I think the concert's gonna be great. A lot of people gonna have CDs of Celtic music, and enjoy listening to it."

Cusak, 16, a senior at Catholic Central High School is also looking forward to the concert. This has been a great year. In April he won the All-World Dancing Championships in Ireland. In July he tried out for, and was asked to join the *Riverdance* tour, a dream come true.

"I'll be attending a workshop on Feb. 28, and joining the tour this summer after I graduate. I'll tour for a year and see what happens," said Cusak. "Riverdance has put Irish dancing on the map. It's probably the most popular dance show in the world."

With Gavin's help, Kittle learned how to play the fiddle, and has been the Great Lakes Scottish Fiddle Junior Champion

political office some day. "I haven't planned out my whole life yet," he said. "As far as Riverdance goes, Cusak says, "I will be getting paid for something I really like to do." He has been dancing since he was five years old. To get ready for "Riverdance" he's practicing as if he were preparing for a dance competition.

In March he performed at the St. Patrick's Day Fest at the Hellenic Cultural Center in Westland, which Gavin also organized.

"He gives us an opportunity to put forth our talents," said Cusak. "I enjoy dancing to his music and band. It's a lot of fun."

The concert will be very laid-back. "It won't be organized," said Gavin. "If anyone in the audience wants to come up and sing or dance, they're welcome to."

Gavin describes a Ceilidh as just a gathering of musicians, dancers and singers. About 16 people will be performing including Gavin's other son, Michael, 22, who plays fiddle, guitar, and bouzouki, a long-necked string instrument that originated in Greece. "It's a cross between a banjo and a guitar," said Gavin. "It's been in Ireland the last 40-50 years."

He was thinking about doing something for New Year's Eve, but decided it would be a bit wild, and wanted something parents could bring their children to.



Award-winning dancer: Paul Cusak, the first American male ever to win the All-Ireland senior Dance competition in 1997, and 1998 All-World Championship winner, will be participating in the Crossroads Ceilidh.

Youth theater tracks vanishing amphibians

By LINDA ANN CHOMIN
STAFF WRITER
lchomin@er.homecomm.net

Amphibians rarely come up in conversations, but the Detroit Zoo plans to change that with three new plays it's commissioned the Mosaic Youth Theatre to present Dec. 28-30 in the Wildlife Interpretive Gallery.

The productions run in conjunction with the Smithsonian's traveling exhibition, "Vanishing Amphibians," on display in the Wildlife Interpretive Gallery at the zoo.

Where's Kermit? is just one of the subjects the youth theater addresses in the trilogy of short plays. A search for the Budweiser frog further enlightens audiences about the decline of amphibian populations over the last 50 years. For some species, however, it's too late. An increase in UV-b rays resulting from ozone layer depletion, the effects of pesticides, fertilizers and herbicides and the introduction of predators and competitors has led to their demise. Zoo director Ron Kagan said, that's why a National Amphibian Conservation Center, one of two large-scale exhibits, is scheduled to open in the next two years at the zoo.

"We talked about funny ideas and came up with an Amphibian TV network," said Annette Madina, a Farmington Hills resident and managing director of Mosaic Youth Theatre. "What a fun place to work. The kids

would come back to say 'I got to feed the animals or I went behind the scenes.'

Gerry Craig, Wildlife Interpretive Gallery curator, was looking for creative ways to relay scientific facts when she commissioned the youth theater to write the plays about the disappearing amphibians.

"It was great," said Craig. "There's a news reporter who tries to do an interview with Kermit the Frog and he's vanished, as have the Budweiser frogs. When they first brought back a draft, we decided what points were important — to understand metamorphosis and what is an amphibian. Amphibians always live near water, not necessarily in it. They have soft moist skins that need water and lay their eggs in water. What we didn't realize was how much Kermit was going to get their attention."

Madina, youth theater founder

received the 1998 Governor's Award for Arts and Culture in November and will perform at one of the inaugural events in Lansing. Sperling created Mosaic as a multi-cultural arts organization whose mission is "to develop young theater artists through comprehensive theatrical training and to provide high quality performances for audiences of all ages."

"We try to work that mosaic of racial and economic diversity by bringing in kids who in their everyday life might not come into contact with each other," said Madina. "We've seen what happens when the city and the suburbs come together — black and white and Latino."

The Youth Ensemble consists of 105 students who auditioned in September for the 10 months of free theatrical training offered by Mosaic. There is also a 16-member National Touring Company, and the eighth member Next Stage Company, comprised of youth ages 17 to 23 who are paid "so they're able to go to college and have Next Stage as a



On the trail: Brian McIntosh, an actor with the Mosaic Youth Theatre, is a detective on the case of the "Vanishing Amphibians," at the Detroit Zoo.

part-time job."

Craig originally approached the multi-cultural youth theater to collaborate on a production to celebrate the International Year of the Coral Reef in 1997. The youth theater had held a benefit at the Detroit Artists Market where Craig was then executive director.

"We were looking for someone to collaborate with, to bring these issues to the forefront, the plight of amphibians vanishing worldwide," said Craig. "I see a lot of groups perform. We were

looking for the right flavor and style to appeal to zoo audiences. The Mosaic Youth Theatre has a high energy, hip, engaging style that appeals to teens as well as kids."

Craig plans to expand the performing arts at the theater in the Wildlife Interpretive Gallery. Craig already has booked a variety of entertainment from chamber music concerts to puppet shows since the gallery opened in 1996.

It takes more
than a few million
watts to brighten
someone's face.

WILD LIGHTS

So much to do, you'll go wild.

ANNUAL CELEBRATION OF CHRISTMAS, DECORATING,
CRAFTS AND THE CUSTOMERS' CHOICE TEA, FREE ENTERTAINMENT
AND A VISIT WITH SANTA, AND 80+ YEARS, OVER 400,000 LIGHTS.

ONLY AT THE DETROIT ZOO

Detroit Edison Foundation

NOV. 20 - JAN. 3
BEGINNING NIGHTLY

AT 5:30

CALL (924) 541-5835

The Observer & Eccentric
NEWSPAPER

SEMIJOURNAL

COMPUTER SHOW

BUY TRADE SELL

DECEMBER 26-27

SATURDAY 10-9 • SUNDAY 10-6

OVER 150 TABLES

ADMISSION ONLY \$2.00 PER CARLOAD!
Why Pay \$5.00 Per Person!

SAVE UP TO 70%
ON NEW AND USED PRODUCTS

FREE SEMINARS
"Introduction to the Internet"
BY DRIVEN INTERNET SERVICES

SOFTWARE HARDWARE ACCESSORIES
INCLUDING
1,000's OF C.D.'S &
SHAREWARE GAMES - BOOKS
SCANNERS
MONITORS
MODEMS
KEYBOARDS
& MUCH MORE!

TAYLOR
I-75 & EUREKA RD. (EXIT 36)
734-287-2000

Gibraltar
TRADE CENTER, INC.