

Fiddlers, pipers and dancers gather for annual party

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN
STAFF WRITER

Barbara MacDonald Magone broke her finger two weeks before she was to perform at the Crossroads Cella in Ann Arbor last year but that didn't stop her from coming home to Michigan and entertaining the crowds with her Celtic piano.

Magone is originally from southwest Detroit and attended Holy Redeemer School so she supports the Scottish/Irish community that used to exist in that area when they put on a party. This year is no exception, Magone travels from her warm California home for the annual after Christmas celebration and workshops Saturday-Sunday, Dec. 28-29.

Magone says there's a trick to accompanying fiddlers and dancers and she's happy to share it with young as well as seasoned musicians in the workshops. She honed her skills from the age of 7 when the family spent summers in their Cape Breton home in Nova Scotia.

"I come from a large family and music was a part of our Christmas with carols, cookies, lots of good food, an occasional drink and tea. My father was a fiddler from Cape Breton so there was always music in our home," said Magone. "He started dances at the Gaelic League here so that's where I started accompanying Irish musicians. The Cape Breton community is still in this area. The music is still important so I want to show them how to accompany fiddle. The music is not something you can learn by reading music. You just have to jump in with both feet and try it. Don't be afraid to try playing it by ear."

That's how Magone first learned to play piano at age five. She listened to all the music in her home then tried to pick out melodies by ear. At age 7 she began taking lessons. Now her music is often requested at Celtic festivals and workshops across the country.

"I struggled (from age 7) for



Pianist Barbara MacDonald Magone performs as well as gives workshops in the art of playing Irish music.

the next 10 years with lessons," said Magone. "It's better to learn by ear. That's why the Suzuki method of violin is so successful. They try to make it fun. The good thing about playing by ear is you learn to be spontaneous."

Holland Raper took the workshops last year and she's not only looking forward to learning more from fiddler Seamus Connolly but playing her instrument and step dancing at the Crossroads Cella. The 11-year-old Raper studies fiddle with Mick Gavin of Redford and her fancy footwork at Heinzman's School of Irish dance with locations in Taylor and Westland. In August she won second place in the All-Ireland Competition with the trio Next Generation. All of the fiddlers in the Ann Arbor based group, consisting of Maura

Nicholson and Kelsey Lutz, are under age 12. Raper's been playing fiddle 2 1/2 years, classical violin four years.

"I went last year and it's really fun," said Raper. "I played for the first time last year and was in the workshops last year. It was really fun, lots of kids. I enjoyed everyone learning the tunes at the same speed."

Mick Gavin thinks this year's workshops and Crossroads Cella will be better than ever. In addition to Magone and Connolly returning to teach workshops, they'll play the traditional jigs and reels along with himself, Eddie McGillicuddy, Charlie Wilkie and the Detroit Cella Band in the evenings. Connolly is director of Irish Music Studies at Boston College.

"The three girls are really practicing," said Gavin. "They're

really good. They placed first in the Midwest competition in the U.S. but we'll also have performances by three dancers, Colleen Shanks will give a tin whistle workshop and Sean Gavin, flute. Seamus has a new book out, Forget Me Not, and most of the music has never been published before. It's passed from generation to generation."

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The Next Generation Trio of Holland Raper (left back), Maura Nicholson and Kelsey Lutz bring their award-winning sound to Ann Arbor for an Irish celebration.

CROSSROADS CELLI

What: A celebration of Ireland's traditional music and dance
When: 7:30 p.m. Saturday-Sunday, Dec. 28-29

Where: The Ark, 316 Main, Ann Arbor
Tickets: \$13.50. Call (734) 761-1451

Workshops: Fiddle and piano with Seamus Connolly and Barbara MacDonald Magone noon to 5 p.m. Saturday-Sunday, Dec. 28-29. Cost is \$25, \$15 under age 12. Call (313) 537-3489 for information and registration

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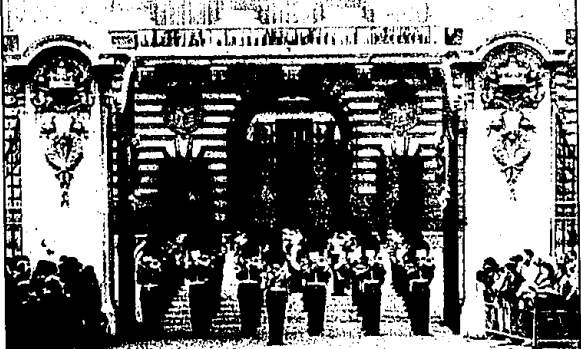
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